

Introduction to Bryan Crawford:

Bryan Crawford was born February 18, 1982. Raised in Hamilton, he is the son of Glenn and Elaine Crawford, and is an older sibling to his brother Brad and his sister Lauren. Crawford attended Barton Secondary School, which is located in Hamilton, this is where his love for sport began to grow. He started to develop and recognize his talents in sport, but little did he realize that his talent would make him an amazing success story. It was at Barton Secondary School in which Crawford was named the team MVP, Athlete of the Year, and game MVP of the Hamilton Steel City Bowl.⁷

Life as a University Student:

Crawford joined the Golden Gaels of Queen's University. During university, Crawford discovered he had more interest than simply football. He pursued academics in politics with great interest, in which he strived to receive a degree. On top of all of this, Crawford was also active in track and field. He received two bronze medals in the 2004-2005 track championship. First and foremost, Crawford excelled in football. Bryan was named Queen's Rookie of the year in 2001, Queen's Special teams Player of the year in 2002, and MVP at the 2004 CIS East West All-Star game. It was in the busy seasons of papers and assignments that Crawford would fantasize in becoming a football star.

"I spent that Sunday evening sitting at my desk with the game on, while I finished a paper due the next day, but as I wrote I struggled to remain focused. I couldn't help but watch the game and dream of being in a CFL game one day myself. I knew that the dream was within the realm of possibility. I had played well over my 4 years at Queen's and I had shown well the previous spring at the CIS all-star game but I knew that I wasn't guaranteed an invitation to the CFL evaluation combine and if that didn't happen the likelihood of being drafted was minuet (Crawford, www.argonauts.ca)."^{3,6}

The Road to the CFL:

Crawford knew that if he wanted his football dreams to come true he would have to put his mind to it and work hard. *"I began by doubling my training efforts and training harder than ever. I spent my evenings going to the gym and lifting, as well as running around the RMC track (Crawford, www.argonauts.ca)."* Along with Crawford's training, he also put together a scouting package with highlight film, gathered biographical information, and contacted an agent for assistance. Crawford's dedication and hard work finally paid off as he was invited to Ottawa to participate in the CFL evaluation camp.^{4,5,6}

Crawford's training and track and field experiences became useful and transferred well in the game of football. His swiftness was an asset and helped him get noticed in the 2005 CFL evaluation Camp. He ran a 4.50 second 40-yard dash at the evaluation camp. He felt comfortable at the training camp; he went with his teammate from Queens, Iain Fleming (who now is a Ti-Cat). He also recognized other players that he had competed with in the past. With high hopes Crawford continued to work hard to pursue his dreams of being a CFL player.

"I felt confident that I had performed well and would be picked in the upcoming spring draft, so I continued my rigorous routine in order to prepare for the possibility of getting the opportunity I desired (Crawford, www.argonauts.ca)."

When the draft day eventually came around, it was a stressful day for Crawford.

"As the rounds continued to peel away, my anxiety continued to build. People tell you before hand where they think your going to get drafted and who is most interested but as picks go by and your name doesn't come up the pit in your stomach just continues to grow (Crawford, www.argonauts.ca)."

Crawford's anxieties were relieved when he was drafted in the fifth round, 44th overall in the 2005 CFL drafted by the Grey Cup champions; the Argonauts. "The feeling of being drafted is one which was nearly indescribable. I felt an incredible sense of relief like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders (Crawford, www.argonauts.ca).” Being drafted to a CFL team Crawford realized his journey had just began and he would need to continue to work hard in training. Crawford attended training camp; this required dedication and strength -- physically as well as mentally.

“Gong into training camp is a difficult thing no matter how long you have been on the team, but it is especially difficult for a rookie who doesn't know what to expect. Never mind that, I'm also in camp with the Grey Cup Champions and among the ranks of future Hall of Famers...early on it is easy to become star-struck but you put that aside and remind yourself why you are there and then go right at them (Crawford, www.argonauts.ca)”.

Crawford was taken back by the physical and mental demands of the training camp. The tests were designed to test the limits of both mental and physical strength.

“The alarm goes off before 7 am and you just want to roll over and sleep for the rest for the week. Every inch of your body is sore and stiff, no matter how hard you trained in the off season(Crawford, www.argonauts.ca)”.

Not only were the two-hour practices hard for Crawford but also the hours of meetings in which it was vital to retain a lot of information.

Practicing with the team and being on the road from game to game, Crawford became close to the guys and in fact realized that professional organization was more than just a team, but was also a family and a place of belonging. They were always there for each other through both the ups and the downs.⁶

Not only were his teammates there for him, but his family was also very supportive for him. In fact, Crawford's parents lived very busy lives not only was Bryan involved in sports but his brother Brad was also involved in football and later joined Bryan and the Argonauts. His sister was also actively involved in sports as she played soccer for the University of Buffalo. Bryan's brother Brad claims, "it is because of his parents that all three of them have had athletic (and academic) success".^{1,2}

In the CFL:

Crawford was relieved when Miles Gorell notified him that he had done a great job during training camp and he would be placed on the practice roster. For two months Crawford remained on the practice roster, which became challenging to be an optimistic team player when he never got to experience the playing field.

"It's difficult not playing. You play the game because you love it and it is hard to sit and watch, unfortunately practice is only so fulfilling. It is difficult because you don't really feel like you are contributing, you are part of the team but to an extent you feel like an outsider (Crawford, www.argonauts.ca)".

Crawford found the first two months very frustrating, as he knew in the back of his mind that he would still be eligible to return to Queen's and play for the Gaels for one final season. He could return to his original teammates and most importantly he could play the game he loved. Yet, he decided to remain an Argonaut. Crawford's loyalty and dedication paid off and in 2007 Crawford's football career took off. He was one of only four players on the Argonauts offence to play every game. He led the Argonauts with a career-high 27 special teams tackles. He was well recognized for his hard work, team spirit, skill, and strategic play. He was co-captain for the

Argonauts and on January 8, 2008 his contract was extended through the 2010 CFL season.^{4,6}

When we look at the life of a local boy, Bryan Crawford, we see a talented young man who was able dream big and with his skills is able to successfully achieve his goals. Bryan Crawford is living proof that if you dream big and set goals with hard work, dedication and support you can make those dreams a reality.

Interview with Bryan Crawford

We met with Bryan Crawford at his work in Hamilton on March 29, 20011.

Question and Answer Interview:

Question: Can you describe to us what the road to the CFL was like?

Answer: Bryan Crawford explained that the road required a lot of hard work and dedication. His career to football began in grade eleven at Barden Secondary School in Hamilton. He only played two years of high school football. In grade 12 winning the champion brought over many scouts and helped with recognition to University's. He went to Queens University and played football there from 2001-2004. In his first year of University he started as a running back as well as playing special teams. Crawford distinctly remembers being big rivals with McMaster, as they had lost to them countless times. Crawford found that his speed and endurance was the key to his success. He admits he was not the biggest on the team weighing in at only 185 lbs. Determination and hard work pushed him to make it into the CFL.

Question:What made you go into political Science at Queens?

Answer: Crawford was unsure of what he wanted to get into so he enrolled into a General Arts Program. Political Science seemed interesting to him and was a functional route to go. It was in his third year of studies that he realized he could potentially make a career in football.

Question: What made you choose football?

Answer: Growing up as a Canadian boy Bryan showed great interest in the sport of hockey. He played for the AAA Hamilton Reps. He played in Hockey until grade eleven in which the politics of hockey took over and he moved on to other sports. He was introduced to football by his best friend Chirs, who also found a great career in football.

Question: Who was the greatest influence in your life?

Answer: Crawford confirms that family was very important in his life. His parents supported him financially as well as emotionally while pursuing his dreams. They always encouraged him to succeed academically and participate in other areas. Crawford admits he was enrolled in music lessons as well as his sports. Crawford's brother and sister also participate in sport at high level and have pushed him to become that athlete that he is?

Question: What should be the priorities as an athlete?

Answer: Crawford believes that family should be first and foremost. He also believes that the athlete needs to focus on what is that they are trying to do. It is necessary to clearly define goals. If your goal is to be a member of the CFL you will have to sacrifice your social life. Crawford knew that to become a better player it was necessary to up his weight class, dedication in the weight room changed his 185 lbs to a respectable 214 lbs.

Question: What would a basic schedule look like?

Answer:

In season: day begins at 9:00AM with team meetings and treatment

- They hit the fields around 11 until 1 PM. And meet again with the team and work on personal training in the weight rooms. Also work in the pool. This activity goes until 3:00 PM.
- They routinely do this 3 times a week, the day before the game is a light practice focusing on strategy and watching film.
- Game day consists of mentally preparing.
- Day after Game- consists of a rundown, injury reporting and treatment.
- Crawford explains how it is important that during the week to maintain a balance between family, his football career, and OUA work.

Off Season:

- Continually train three hours a day every week.
- OUA work is more demanding, Crawford works specifically in Sport Programming and Coordinating. He organizes officials, awards and funding.

Question: What is the greatest moment in your football career?

Answer: Crawford explains getting drafted to the CFL was a huge turning point, as well as suiting up officially as an Argonaut. He recalls the thrilling moment of running through the tunnel and stepping onto the field for the first time. Crawford is not ready for that to be his one and only greatest moment in career football. He continually sets high goals and claims "Some day, when I hold up the grey cup, I will retire the next day".

Question: After your pro career do you still plan to be active in sport?

Answer: Crawford explains that it is important to do what you love to do and make a career out of it. He was focused on the long term, and realized if someday the CFL came to an end due to injury he would have backup work with the OUA. He knows his love for sport will always be a part of his career. Crawford goes on to explain that by working with OUA he is participating in sport beyond playing on the field.

Question: What is your relationship with our Professor John Byl?

Answer: We tediously work through scheduling of all OUA games. Crawford states, "John Byl finds scheduling fun, and I don't why, but he does a great job"!

“The Journey of Bryan Crawford”



Daniel Buisman and Rhonda Koopmans
History of Sport

Professor Byl
March 30, 2011

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