

= Brian Urlacher =

Brian Urlacher ( / ˈbɪərɪn ˈlækər / ; born May 25 , 1978 ) is a former American football linebacker who spent his entire 13 @-@ year career playing for the Chicago Bears of the National Football League ( NFL ) . He played college football for the University of New Mexico , where he was recognized as a consensus All @-@ American and became one of the school 's most decorated athletes .

The Bears selected Urlacher with the ninth overall pick in the 2000 NFL Draft . Urlacher quickly established himself as one of the NFL 's most productive defensive players . After winning the NFL Rookie of the Year Award in 2000 , he was elected to eight Pro Bowls , and won the NFL Defensive Player of the Year award in 2005 . His playing style , accomplishments and reputation have made him one of the team 's most popular players . After retiring from playing football , he was briefly an analyst for Fox Sports 1 .

= = Early life = =

Urlacher was born to Bradley and Lavoyda Urlacher in Pasco , Washington , and his parents raised him with his younger brother Casey . After his parents separated , Lavoyda raised Urlacher and his siblings in Lovington , New Mexico . He spent his youth immersed in sports , and developed an interest in football , basketball , track and later table tennis ; he graduated from Lovington High School in 1996 . While his mother worked several jobs to keep her family afloat , Urlacher spent his teenage years playing sports for Lovington High School and training in weight rooms . The training helped Urlacher gain the speed , stamina , and strength he would need to solidify his football career .

As he progressed through high school , Urlacher gained experience in all three phases of football . He saw playing time as a running back , wide receiver , return specialist , and defensive back . Urlacher led the Lovington High Wildcats to an undefeated 14 ? 0 season , and a division 3 @-@ A state championship . He finished the season with twelve touchdown receptions , six touchdown returns , and two rushing touchdowns . He additionally merited state @-@ recognized honors in football , as well as basketball . Lovington has since recognized Urlacher 's accomplishments by retiring his high @-@ school jersey number , and naming a holiday after him .

Urlacher wanted to attend Texas Tech University , but the school did not offer him an athletic scholarship .

= = College career = =

Urlacher enrolled at the University of New Mexico , majored in criminology , and played for the New Mexico Lobos football team . The Lobos ' head coach , Dennis Franchione , converted Urlacher to linebacker , but often left him on the sidelines in favor of more experienced players . The team finished with winning records during Urlacher 's first two years and even made a trip to the 1997 Insight.com Bowl . The team 's success prompted Franchione to leave New Mexico in favor of Texas Christian University . His departure prompted the school to hire Rocky Long , a former coach at UCLA .

Urlacher flourished under Long 's tenure . Urlacher not only received more playing time , but also played a more versatile role on both offense and defense . Long converted Urlacher into a " Lobo @-@ Back " , a cross between a linebacker and free safety , and placed him in a 3 @-@ 3 @-@ 5 defense scheme . He spent significant time training with the team 's defensive coordinator , Bronco Mendenhall , who helped Urlacher refine his skills as a defensive back . Long also used Urlacher as a return specialist and wide receiver throughout his final two years with the Lobos . Despite Long 's extensive changes to the team 's roster , formations , and work ethic , the Lobos ' performance declined . However , Urlacher became one of the team 's most productive players during this time . He finished his career with 442 tackles , three interceptions , 11 sacks and 11 forced fumbles . Outside of defense , he caught six touchdown passes , and returned five kicks for touchdowns .

After the 1999 season , he was one of the finalists for the Jim Thorpe Award , and finished twelfth

on the Heisman Trophy ballot . Urlacher received All @-@ American honors from Walter Camp , Football Writers Association of America , and the Associated Press . He played his final collegiate game at the 2000 Senior Bowl , where he was one of the game 's top players . Urlacher led the nation with 178 tackles during his junior year , and also set a school record for most tackles in a single season . He finished with the third most career tackles in the University of New Mexico 's history . The school has honored Urlacher on several occasions . They awarded him with the Male Athlete of the Year Award in 2000 , and held a special halftime ceremony to honor his success in 2006 . Urlacher was also the first person to be inducted into the University of New Mexico 's Football Wall of Fame . On November 9 , 2013 , during halftime of New Mexico 's game against Air Force , the school retired Urlacher 's No. 44 jersey .

= = Professional career = =

= = = NFL Draft = = =

Urlacher was considered one of the most talented collegiate prospects in the 2000 NFL Draft , and impressed spectators and analysts at the NFL Scouting Combine by bench pressing 225 pounds twenty @-@ seven times , and completing the forty @-@ yard dash in 4 @.@ 57 seconds . The Chicago Bears , who were in need of a defensive playmaker after having the 29th ranked defense in 1999 , selected Urlacher in the first round , as the draft 's ninth overall pick .

= = = 2000 ? 2004 = = =

He signed a five @-@ year contract , which was worth nearly eight million dollars with a five and a half million dollar signing bonus , within two months of the draft . Dick Jauron , who was then the Bears ' head coach , recognized Urlacher 's versatility as a middle and outside linebacker , and appointed him as the team 's starting strongside linebacker . However , Urlacher struggled to perform consistently in his first professional game , and lost his starting position to Rosevelt Colvin . Jauron left Urlacher on the sidelines during the following week , as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers shut out the Bears , 41 ? 0 .

He managed to regain a starting spot on the Bears ' roster , after Barry Minter , the team 's veteran middle linebacker , was forced to miss the Week 3 game on account of an injury . Urlacher excelled at the middle linebacker position , and recorded 46 tackles , six sacks , and one interception in his next five starts . Not even a rib cage injury hindered his performance during this period , as Urlacher went on to win the league 's Rookie Defensive Player of the Month in October . He led the Bears with 124 tackles and eight sacks , both of which surpassed the franchise 's previous rookie records . Although the Bears finished with a disappointing 5 ? 11 record , Urlacher received a number of individual accolades for his performance during the season . Many news organizations , such as the Associated Press and The Sporting News named him as the 2000 Defensive Rookie of the Year . Football fans across the nation also voted Urlacher to play at the 2001 Pro Bowl as an alternate middle linebacker . Urlacher 's successful rookie campaign served as the foundation for his professional career and reputation .

Urlacher further distinguished himself as one of the Bears ' most productive playmakers during the 2001 season . He had one of the best games of his career on October 7 , against the Atlanta Falcons . Urlacher held Falcons quarterback Michael Vick , who was well known for his scrambling abilities , to 18 rushing yards , and recorded a forced fumble and sack . He also returned one of Vick 's fumbles for a 90 @-@ yard touchdown . Two weeks later , Urlacher helped set up a Bears comeback victory against the San Francisco 49ers by intercepting a pass , and later setting up a game winning touchdown return for Mike Brown , after causing 49ers wide receiver Terrell Owens to lose control of a pass . He also caught a touchdown pass from punter Brad Maynard off a fake field goal attempt against the Washington Redskins in Week 14 , which clinched a first @-@ round bye . Urlacher concluded the season with three interceptions , six sacks , and was a candidate for 2001

NFL Defensive Player of the Year Award . Football Digest named Urlacher their publication 's defensive player of the year . The 2001 Chicago Bears won 13 games , marking the team 's best finish since 1986 , but lost to the Philadelphia Eagles in the NFC Divisional Playoffs .

Unfortunately , the Bears ' 2001 winning season would be followed by three years of mediocrity . Before the 2004 NFL season , the Bears ' organization fired coach Dick Jauron and then hired Lovie Smith . After starting the season on the lower rungs of the NFC North , Urlacher suffered several injuries that sidelined him for a majority of the season .

= = = 2005 ? 2011 = = =

In 2005 , Urlacher won the NFL Defensive Player of the Year after playing for a defensive team that allowed the fewest points per game , and created the most turnovers in the National Football Conference . Urlacher himself recorded at least 10 tackles in six consecutive games , while finishing the season with a team high 121 tackles . He was also credited as one of the team 's leaders , whose audibles and experience helped develop several younger teammates . Urlacher led the Bears to an 11 @-@ 5 record , marking their best finish since 2001 . Urlacher played his second career playoff game against the Carolina Panthers on January 15 , 2006 . He recorded seven tackles and one interception in a 29 ? 21 loss . Urlacher was also selected to the 2006 Pro Bowl , but declined the position on account of an injury .

The team continued their resurgence into the 2006 season , finishing with a record of 13 ? 3 . During the season , Urlacher had one of the best performances of his professional career against the Arizona Cardinals . He helped the Bears overcome a 20 @-@ point deficit by recording 19 tackles and a forced fumble that was returned for a touchdown . Teammate Devin Hester commented on Urlacher 's performance , stating , " We watched the film and everybody was saying that he just turned into the Incredible Hulk the last four minutes of the game , just killing people and running over and tackling whoever had the ball . " The Bears won the NFC Championship against the New Orleans Saints , 39 ? 14 , but lost Super Bowl XLI to the Indianapolis Colts , 29 ? 17 . Urlacher finished the season with 93 tackles and three forced fumbles . He was elected to the 2006 All @-@ Pro Team and 2007 Pro Bowl , while also earning consideration for the League 's Defensive Player of the Year award .

The Bears were unable to replicate their success in the 2007 season , and finished last in the NFC North . In the middle of the season , Urlacher admitted that he had been suffering from an arthritic back , but later claimed the ailment was not serious . Nevertheless , he finished the season on a high note , registering five interceptions , five sacks , one fumble recovery , 123 tackles , and a defensive touchdown . Following the season 's conclusion , Urlacher received minor neck surgery to treat his arthritic back . During the off season , Urlacher revised his contract with the Bears , who granted him a \$ 6 million signing bonus with a \$ 1 million increase in salary each of the next four years .

Urlacher dislocated his wrist in the 2009 season opener against the Packers . He underwent surgery , and went on to miss the remainder of the season . Urlacher had severely damaged a bone in his wrist that was adjacent to a major nerve . Urlacher was forced to wear a cast on his wrist for 12 weeks and spend a month in therapy to recover from the injury . The Bears began to struggle on offense and defense . As frustration built , Urlacher criticized the Bears offense , stating that the addition of quarterback Jay Cutler had changed the team 's identity . The Bears , who have historically employed a strong running game , were beginning to rely more on the pass on offense . He went on to say , " Kyle Orton might not be the flashiest quarterback , but the guy is a winner , and that formula worked for us . I hate to say it , but that 's the truth . " Urlacher and Cutler later made amends . The Bears finished the season with a 7 ? 9 record , and missed the playoffs for the third consecutive year .

After recovering from the injury , Urlacher stated , " I feel more powerful . I ' m running to the football , my keys are a lot more clear now , and I ' m playing downhill ... So I think it did help my body kind of calm down and relax a little bit . " During the 2010 offseason , Bears general manager Jerry Angelo bolstered the team 's defense by signing free agent Julius Peppers .

With Peppers ' help , Urlacher and the Bears improved to an 11 ? 5 record in the 2010 NFL season , winning the NFC North and earning a first @-@ round bye for the 2011 Playoffs . After leading the NFC in tackles ( 49 ) during the period , Urlacher was recognized as the NFC Defensive Player of the Month during December / January . It was the first time winning the award in his career . Urlacher was also voted to his seventh Pro Bowl for his stellar defensive efforts during the year .

In 2011 in Week 17 against the Minnesota Vikings , Urlacher sprained his MCL when teammate Major Wright and Vikings receiver Percy Harvin landed on him with 5 : 15 left in the game . Luckily for him , there was no ACL damage , according to his MRI . Urlacher was eventually named to the Pro Bowl , but didn 't play due to the injury against Minnesota . Though he participated in the team 's first four training camp practices , he hadn 't participated in any other practices since July 31 . On August 14 , 2012 , Urlacher had an arthroscopic debridement procedure on his left knee , and has stated that his goal is to play in the 2012 season opener . He eventually practiced on September 3 , and played against the Colts in the season opener , though he sat out the second half .

= = = 2012 : Final season and retirement = = =

In 2012 , Urlacher was awarded the Ed Block Courage Award , given to those who showed a commitment to sportsmanship and courage . During his award acceptance speech , Urlacher thanked the Bears for their support after his mother Lavoyda Lenard died . Against the Tennessee Titans in Week 9 , Urlacher intercepted Matt Hasselbeck , and returned the pick 46 yards for a touchdown . Urlacher led the Bears in tackles until Week 13 against the Seahawks , in which he sustained a hamstring injury that sidelined him for the remainder of the season . Urlacher became an unrestricted free agent on March 12 , 2013 . On March 20 , the Bears announced that Urlacher will not return in 2013 after the two sides failed to reach an agreement on a new contract . Urlacher later belittled Phil Emery 's contract negotiations with him as ' lip service ' , and stated the Bears had little intention to re @-@ sign him . In 2015 , Urlacher told ESPN that he still respected the Bears organization and front office , but has yet to speak to Emery , who was fired in 2014 .

On May 22 , 2013 , Urlacher announced his retirement via his Twitter account . In 182 games in the NFL , Urlacher started all but two , the third most in franchise history behind Walter Payton ( 184 ) and Olin Kreutz ( 183 ) , recording a team @-@ record 1 @,@ 779 tackles , 41 @.@ 5 sacks , 22 interceptions , 16 fumble recoveries and 11 forced fumbles .

= = Other work = =

In 2002 , Urlacher appeared on Wheel of Fortune , and won over \$ 47 @,@ 000 for charity .

Urlacher has appeared in several commercials for McDonald 's , Domino 's Pizza , Comcast , Nike , Campbell 's Chunky soup , Old Spice , and Glacéau . He also shared the spotlight with Peyton Manning in a MasterCard commercial at a spa . Nike also aired special commercials about Urlacher 's high school career containing clips and commentary of plays he made . However , Urlacher later stated that he feels " uncomfortable " appearing in commercials . He was also the cover athlete and spokesperson for Sega Sports ' NFL 2K3 . During media day before Super Bowl XLI Urlacher wore a hat promoting Glacéau vitamin water , a non @-@ NFL approved sponsor , for which he was fined US \$ 100 @,@ 000 .

Urlacher wrestled in a pay @-@ per @-@ view event for the NWA @-@ TNA promotion . The Bears organization discovered this and forced him to stop .

In 2012 , with Nike taking over the NFL supplier from Reebok , Urlacher modeled for the new uniforms . In July 2013 , Urlacher announced that he will be an analyst for Fox Sports 1 on Fox Football Daily with Jay Glazer and Curt Menefee ; he had been courted by NFL Network but decided on Fox Sports . On September 16 , 2014 , Urlacher resigned from the role to spend more time with his family .

In December 2014 , Urlacher participated in the USO Chairman 's Holiday tour , which provided entertainment to US troops in five countries around the world .

== Reputation ==

Following his successful rookie season , Urlacher was able to gain popularity with the fans . On a national level , Urlacher 's jersey sales have rivaled those of other NFL players , such as Brett Favre and Michael Vick . Football fans across the nation have also voted Urlacher into eight Pro Bowls . Urlacher 's teammates and coaches have also praised his character and athletic ability . In 2007 , former teammate Tank Johnson called upon Urlacher to testify during one of his court hearings .

Even after winning the NFL Defensive Player of the Year Award for the 2005 season , a 2006 Sports Illustrated poll of 361 NFL players named Urlacher the second most overrated player in the league behind Terrell Owens . In response , Urlacher has stated " Just watch the film . I don ' t know what people are saying , but I ' m not too worried about it anymore . All I can do is go out there and play hard and try and help my team win , and that 's what I ' m going to keep doing . "

== NFL career statistics ==

Source , Retrieved on January 24 , 2012

== Personal life ==

Urlacher has two daughters , Pam and Riley , with ex -@ wife Laurie Urlacher and a son , Kennedy , with Tyna Robertson . Urlacher currently lives with his daughters and has visitation rights with his son . His younger brother , Casey , had a brief career in the Arena Football League , and was later elected mayor of Mettawa , Illinois in 2013 .

In June 2005 , Urlacher filed suit to establish paternity of his son Kennedy . Genetic testing was completed and proved that he is Kennedy 's father . Kennedy 's mother , Tyna Robertson , was already well @-@ known to the media , having made claims of sexual assault against famed dancer Michael Flatley and a doctor from Naperville , Illinois .

In 2011 , Urlacher 's mother Lavoyda Lenard Urlacher died of unreported causes , and Urlacher was granted his temporary leave from the team . However , Urlacher was able to return to the team in time for the season opener .

In April 2012 , Urlacher began dating model and actress Jenny McCarthy . In August 2012 , McCarthy announced that she and Urlacher had ended their relationship . Urlacher married Jennipher Frost , a former contest on America 's Next Top Model on March 13 , 2016 .

He also enjoys golfing in his spare time , and during an episode of AT & T 's Home Turf , Urlacher revealed a room in his mansion containing a plethora of golf paraphernalia . When home , Urlacher revealed that he also enjoys watching the Discovery Channel , National Geographic , and HBO 's Entourage . Urlacher enjoys listening to a wide variety of music , including hip hop , rock , and country music .

Urlacher has also been spokesperson for several companies . Sega Sports selected Urlacher to appear on the cover of NFL 2K3 , while other companies , such as Nike , McDonald 's , Old Spice , and Vitamin Water , have featured him in several television advertisements and promotions .

Urlacher is of Russian German descent . His great @-@ grandfather , Lucas Urlacher , was born into a Black Sea German family in an area that today belongs to Ukraine .