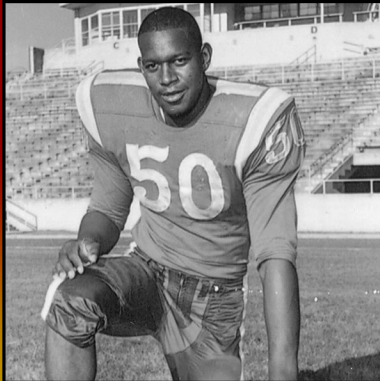


2012 GENE UPSHAW Division II Lineman of the Year Award

Presented by the Manheim Touchdown Club
Selected by Division II sports information directors



Minnesota Duluth's Garth Heikkinen Named 2012 Gene Upshaw Division II Lineman of the Year

Dec. 17, 2012

Manheim, Pa. - University of Minnesota Duluth left guard Garth Heikkinen has been named the 2012 recipient of the Gene Upshaw Division II Lineman of the Year Award presented by the Manheim Touchdown Club, project coordinator Don Harris announced Thursday.

The Upshaw Award is presented annually to the top NCAA Division II junior or senior offensive or defensive lineman in the nation. Sports information directors from each of the football-playing Division II institutions comprise the voters.

As a recipient of the Gene Upshaw Award, Heikkinen receives a trophy in the likeness of Upshaw and an automatic invitation to participate in the East/West Shrine Game held at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, Fla. and the NFLPA All-Star Game held in Carson, Calif. Both games are scheduled for Jan. 19.

Heikkinen, a 6-4, 315-pound senior, was a hometown star for his Minnesota Duluth Bulldogs. He grew up in Duluth and played for Central High School before becoming the first four-time All-Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference (NSIC) honoree in the program's 80-year history.



Heikkinen edged Valdosta State senior left tackle Ryan Schraeder in a close round of national voting to win the award. Winston-Salem State's senior center Markus Lawrence finished third followed by West Texas A&M tackle Manase Foketi, Colorado State-Pueblo right tackle Ryan Jensen, Missouri Western State defensive end David Bass, Bloomsburg guard Brian Clarke and Carson Newman center Kevin Day.



All eighth finalists played for teams that reached the NCAA Division II Playoffs, and Schraeder and Lawrence played in the NCAA Division II Championship on Saturday, Dec. 15.

"Garth Heikkinen was one of eight terrific finalists for this year's Gene Upshaw Award" said Don Harris of the Manheim Touchdown Club. "The All-America honors continue to pour in for him. When you look at Garth's performance and what he was able to accomplish this past season at Minnesota Duluth, it is easy to see why he was chosen as our award winner. At 6-4 and 315 pounds, he certainly has all the ability and the tools to get to the next level. I extend my congratulations to him and his family for an outstanding career. We wish him the best."

Heikkinen, a team captain for the Bulldogs, helped the 2012 team finish 10-2 with a NSIC Championship. He was the cornerstone of an offensive line that allowed the seventh fewest sacks per game. Of the seven sacks the team allowed, not one came off of Heikkinen. The Bulldogs ranked third nationally in scoring with a school-record average of 46.5 points per game. The offense also ranked seven in rushing (280.42) and 11th in total offense (481.0 yards per game).

"No lineman that I have ever coached against compares to him," said Minnesota-Duluth head coach Bob Nielson. "He truly is the complete package—tremendous athleticism, work ethic, leadership, passion, consistency and football IQ. I am extremely happy and

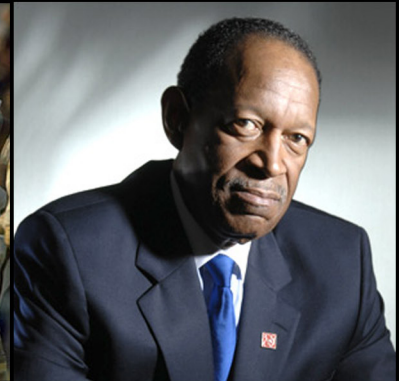
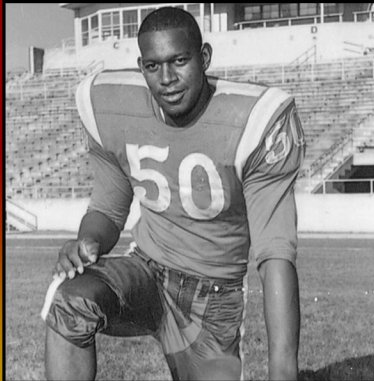
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(Heikkinen Named Gene Upshaw Award Winner - Page 2)

proud for Garth on being named the 2012 recipient of this prestigious award. It's certainly a well-deserved honor."

In addition to his All-NSIC North Division First Team selections in 2011 and 2012, Heikkinen was an All-America first team selection by the AFCA and Daktronics for a second consecutive season. A model of consistency, toughness and production, Heikkinen concluded his career with 54 consecutive starts, which was the most by any active NCAA Division II lineman.

"The fact that he started every one of our 54 games over the last four seasons speaks volumes about just how special a player he is," said Nielson. "When we needed a yard or two in key situations, we always, always went behind Garth. Most importantly, Garth is a quality person and an outstanding ambassador for our football program."

A two-time winner of the team's Duce Ruasmussen Outstanding Lineman Award (2010 and 2011), Heikkinen played an integral part in Minnesota Duluth winning the 2010 NCAA Division II Championship with a spotless 15-0 record. In four seasons as a starter, Heikkinen helped the Bulldogs to four NCAA Division II Playoff appearances and a 47-7 record. His teams averaged 269.5 yards rushing per game and totaled 180 rushing touchdowns in his 54 starts.

Heikkinen is the ninth recipient of the award named in honor of former Texas A&I (now Texas A&M Kingsville) University and NFL All-Pro offensive lineman Gene Upshaw. Upshaw, a 1987 inductee into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, served 25 years as the executive director of the NFL Players Association until his death in 2008.

Previous winners of the Gene Upshaw Award include Wayne State University offensive tackle Joe Long, Slippery Rock (Pa.) University offensive center Brandon Fusco (2010), West Liberty (W. Va.) University offensive tackle Ben Staggs (2009), Abilene Christian center Sam Collins (2008) and Pittsburg State (Kans.) offensive lineman Nathan Baker (2004).

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