



GIVING BACK

Oakland Raiders Rob Thomas is fierce on the field and a great joy when he volunteers his time with children. By Amanda Beckman • Photos courtesy of Rob Thomas

As a child, you often find yourself dreaming of what you'll be when you grow up. For most of us, we decide we'd like to be just like one of our role models, such as a professional athlete, a parent, a sibling, you name it. For Rob Thomas, a 27-year-old linebacker for the Oakland Raiders, all of the above apply.

"I grew up in a sports family. My father played professional baseball and my brother played professional football," Rob said. "Growing up in an athletic family, my childhood dreams and goals were to be a professional athlete. I'm living my childhood dream."

After more than five years in the NFL, Rob has come to acknowledge his ability to inspire others as the most rewarding aspect of his career. Being considered a role model, he loves letting kids know that their dreams are within reach, but emphasizes the importance of hard work and dedication. These principles are certainly not foreign to Rob. His work ethic is evident in his accomplishments.

As a senior at Imperial High School in California in 1997, he was rated the nation's No. 1 linebacker prospect by most scouting agencies. In 2002, he entered the NFL as a top pick for the St. Louis Rams. He was named a Rams Walter Payton Man of the Year finalist in 2003 and 2004 and was selected for the Sporting News Good Guys list in 2004 and 2005. And, since 2004, he's brought hope and joy to kids in children's hospitals through the Robert Thomas Foundation, which plans and arranges special outings for the children.

The inspiration for starting his own foundation came in high school when he played in an all-star football game and visited a children's hospital afterwards. Meeting those amazing kids left a lasting impression on him and he knew he wanted to stay involved in some way. "I feel so blessed that I have this

opportunity to give back to those in need," he said.

There's no denying he's got a passion for helping others. And his family is just as important to him. During the off season, he makes it a point to spend quality time with them, going on vacations and surfing at his beach house in Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California. After his short break, it's back to work in March with plenty of non-weight bearing workouts including yoga, Pilates, boxing and spin classes. But of course, as football season closes in, he jumps right back into football specific drills to prepare for game day.

Professional football can take a serious toll on even the healthiest, strongest bodies. With that in mind, Rob is a firm believer in nutritional supplementation. Since entering the NFL draft in 2002 and being introduced to Max Muscle Sports Nutrition by fitness model Shelly Pinkerton, he's been a happy and loyal customer. In addition to utilizing Optimal Nutrition, Inc.'s food service for great-tasting meals, shakes and meal replacement bars, Rob uses Max Vit-Acell, Max Glutamine, GlutaMatrix, Max Joint Relief, Amino Max, Max EFAs, Max ZMA and Max ITRX. As a result, he's noticed that he can work out with more intensity for a longer period of time and recover faster!

In all aspects of his life, it's obvious that Rob takes the time to prepare himself, put in the necessary work and is able to truly appreciate the success that comes of his efforts. But even more than that, his spirituality and faith in God have given him the confidence to know he can overcome all obstacles if he relies on his beliefs. And that's exactly what he'd like to impart to his fans.

"There are two things you can always control in life and that's your attitude and your efforts," he said, adding that it's important to remember, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). **MS&F**