

February Athlete of the Month: **ThomasJohn Salmen**

BY MATT NIEDERBAUMER, CFP® Vantage Financial, Partner, Senior Wealth Advisor

ThomasJohn “TJ” Salmen is a senior at Hitchcock-Tulare school where he participates in various sports and extracurricular activities. His parents are avid sports enthusiasts who enrolled TJ in numerous sports activities at an early age. For the past thirteen years, TJ has competed on his school’s football team where he now serves as the varsity tight end and defensive end. Exemplifying hard work and dedication, TJ has earned some impressive titles. He was this season’s team captain and last year was named to the Argus Leader Elite 45, received the 9B All State Defensive End award, and honored on the Academic All-State list. “TJ is a hard worker, dependable, and holds himself to high moral standards. He is a quiet leader on and off the field,” writes TJ’s teacher, coach, and father Thomas Salmen. Amidst these football accolades, TJ has remained humble and honest about the challenges that accompany competition in sports. “When times get hard usually our first response is to shut down or quit. I have found when those negative thoughts and excuses come in, to take a deep breath and focus on positive thoughts,” TJ shared. Currently in his 10th year playing basketball, TJ plays the center and forward position where he has been recognized as the most improved player his freshman year, offensive player of the year his sophomore season, and most valuable player last season. Lastly, TJ is also a member of his school’s track and field team where he competes in the 110- and 300-meter hurdles. Last season at State, TJ placed 7th in the 110m hurdles and 5th in the 300m hurdles. This year he hopes to break school records on both the events.

In addition to his athletic interests, TJ finds time to participate in other school and community activities. As a member of Future Farmers of America the past few years, he has participated in land judging and leadership events. An active volunteer in his church’s youth group, TJ has served as Vice President and President on the leadership team, led bible study, and participated in many fundraising and service projects. TJ is looking forward to his plans for next year when he will attend Black Hills State University to play football and decide the major he would like to pursue.

To obtain an application for the Athlete of the Month Scholarship program email bfast@vfplanning.com, visit Vantage Financial Partners website at www.vfplanning.com, or ask your high school guidance counselor. If you are a high school senior who plays sports, attends a SD high school, you are eligible to apply for a \$1,500 scholarship.



Getting to know TJ:

FAVORITE QUOTE:

“But it ain’t about how hard ya hit. It’s about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward. How much you can take and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done!” - Rocky Balboa, from Rocky movie

FAVORITE FOOD:

Chinese food

HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR SPORT CAREER:

Winning the State Championship my senior season of football.

NICKNAME:

Taco Johns because it went with TJ.

FAVORITE CLASS:

Home Economics because we get to make and eat food.

A FAVORITE FAMILY TRADITION:

Driving to Colorado to see my grandparents for Christmas and eating Christmas cookies for breakfast.

FUN FACT:

I have zip lined across the Royal Gorge in Colorado.



PHOTO TAKEN BY
BENJAMIN CHASE
OF THE PLAINSMAN

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