

# Devin Gardner

## *My Black Hero*

By Muhammad El-Mubarak



Since I was little I always loved playing football. I dreamed of being a NFL receiver and looked up to players like Terrel Owens and Odell Beckham Jr. But for some reason my favorite two players of all time were Cam Newton and Michael Vick. So I guess I was just destined to eventually become a quarterback.

When I was 8 years old, I started running track (because I was slow as molasses). During track I met a personal trainer named Coach Huff. I started training with him and before every morning training there was a group of football players practicing (All of them were quarterbacks and receivers). I later learned that they were YG2, Young Go Getters. One day after a vacation to Las Vegas my mom said I would be training with them. That day we got back and I trained with them for the first time. The coach was named Devin Gardner, former University of Michigan quarterback and professional football player. The training was very hard but I became a much better receiver because of it. I was shy and not very confident back then and he was very hard on me.

After my first year playing tackle football, Devin wanted me to play quarterback because I didn't get enough passes thrown to me. So he started training me at quarterback but I wasn't ready. My confidence wasn't there yet and I couldn't play quarterback like that. The next football season I played receiver and I didn't play that much. The following spring, my middle school team started practicing and they needed a quarterback. So after a week or so I got the job. That's

when training with Devin was very hard and there were some training sessions that were 4 hours long.

Devin played at such a high level so he knows what it takes to be a successful college quarterback. Somehow, he always had more confidence in me than I had in myself. Not only that but we would also spend hours doing drills that benefit me the most.

During the 3rd quarter of my first game as a quarterback there was a shooting outside the stadium. Everyone in the stadium started running and the game was over after that. It was a very difficult experience but Devin made me feel better and really helped me continue my season after that happened. During that season I played great at quarterback and had 27 total touchdowns and only 3 interceptions.

Devin is not only a great football player and coach but also a great person. He went to meet with Tom House, pitching and throwing guru, three times over the past two years to learn new techniques to teach us. He took us to dinner, went to the store with my mom and I for hours so I could get the right football cleats and even paid for them. He even took me with him to Ypsilanti to get me a haircut, which is a 45 minute drive. Last year he took us to the University of Michigan. We got to work out at their practice facility and go into the Big House to watch a spring football practice. He even took me to my first concert (it was amazing).

The way he persistently coaches and teaches us when there are millions of other things he could be doing is extremely special. Whenever he has time, he makes sure he spends it teaching us. There are so many things Devin has done for me in the last three years and I don't think I could ever repay him. After all this time, he feels more like family than just a football coach. This is why I think Devin Gardner is my Black Hero.