

MANDEL EUGENE JR. | TULANE FOOTBALL

All right I'm um in De Eugene I go to Tulane University I play football linebacker I say coming into football I had a lot of mentors especially I say in middle school and high school So one of my mentors with coach Drew that was my kind of my first real football coach So that was a little in little League So I think he kind of taught us like mental toughness and what it takes to play in college I mean not college and high school So I kinda took what he taught me into high school and then get to high school I met my head coach was coach Monica I had my defense coordinator Wayne Stein And then later in the years we brought in some more coaches coach Brown coach Talley that taught me a lot of the fundamental stuff cause they coached a lot of college a co a lot of college guys So just having them around they showed me like the things that I should be doing and things that I shouldn't be doing on the field and off the field And then I had a trainer His name was uh Albert Brock A B explode And he taught me a lot also just being around me in high school as a young guy being around all the college kids at his facility working out with them just learning the fundamentals and the ropes and what it really takes to get to that next level Um I feel like the biggest advantage uh um I received from A B was working on my flexibility cause you know me I was kind of a a strong kid I wasn't always the biggest but I was kind of a strong kid muscular kid So I was always tight So and he always focused on me making sure my I was loose my hips were loose stretching That was like a big thing for me So I feel like that kind of gave me an edge a little bit on a lot of people in high school and just having that mindset of being the um the most physical out there and just doing your job to the best of your ability every play every snap Um So kinda like I said with A B um we focus on a lot of flexibility things So I feel like my biggest thing then and still kind of now is me loosening up being flexible stretching as much as I can to kind of help me out with that So I feel like that that was kind of my biggest challenge and especially in high school in high school it was kind of like I don't know in high school you could just at line back you just run around and hit but once you get to college it's more fundamental you have more coverage So you have to be dialed in on more things And I feel like being loose as an athlete is about like the best thing you could do cause I feel like that kinda is overlooked in high school and a lot of places So I feel like that's about the best thing you could do is working on your flexibility and being able to open cause that'll help you with your breaks your cuts all

that up Um For starters I say something that I feel like made me stand out on the field was my work ethic Like you never gave up on the play no matter how hard it was no matter if the other team got a first down the next play mentality that's always a big thing in football no matter what level you're at and just being physical force and making yourself be physical I felt like that was a big aspect in high school for me too Um And I'll say off the field Um It was kinda weird for me because once all of the culture started coming in I started talking to coach started getting office then COVID hit around that time like around the time where I was about to commit and looking at where I really want to be So I would say the in-person um means that I have with coaches I feel like the most important thing with that is just be yourself cause that's the only way you will really find your real home because if you're not yourself and you're acting like you're someone and then you get there and you're a completely different person that'll kind of throw the coaches off and throw your relationship off with the coaches So I'll just say always be yourself and being recruited So um and I would also I think like I said it was kinda weird So a lot of the coaches that came in before COVID that was supposed to come out with spring games and stuff I never really got to talk to them because of COVID I really couldn't take official visits or visits at all So that was kind of a a weird process for me and it was kind of a rush process too at the same time cause with the COVID year in college and having COVID in high school you kinda had to make a decision quick Uh to be honest actually Tulane was my first offer So um we had when I would d lineman at Saint Charles Catholic Mason nai was he was my best friend We grew up together honestly So um he ended up coming on a visit He hadn't already had the offer if I'm not mistaken I think he was committed around that time committed here Um but he ended up de committing on the U Uh but anyways I came with him and Coach Fritz ran up to me at practice and uh he offered me right there So that was big for me And then I started seeing him around school and um with Coach Fritz he was big on he wouldn't even come talk to you He'll come there and he will talk to your teachers your coaches just to see what type of guy you are So that's why it's always I say it's important for you to always be yourself and just don't force anything and always hold yourself to a high standard and be a high character person all the time a cousin that came to Tulane and that was um that was kind of the um the only reason I kinda knew about Tulane and this wasn't you weren't really around that time I was just finding out he was my cousin when I was coming here talking to my grandparents and stuff So um so he factored in that

decision I guess I mean not really because we weren't like he wasn't my cousin that I was always around but I knew about him through my grandparents So like I wouldn't say it was a fact of me coming here but that was just one way that I knew about to man So but before that of course my dream school was like a Bama LSU But once you get to the the um your senior year in high school that's kinda when reality hits you Like you just have to make your decision and go somewhere where you could play ball which I'm grateful that I have to learn because it's a it's great competition a great school great atmosphere to be in a great football atmosphere to be in too So and I feel like coming here made me a part of something big if you uh pay attention to how we've been playing you know you know what I'm for sure One of my challenges well I wouldn't even say a challenge for real but it was a whole different level of what they expected from from you So like high school the ball in the air um If it's ad ball you probably not run into it But here really my first day they threw the D ball I'm just sitting there watching it and coach got on my behind about that So that kinda woke me up a little bit and show me that I'm kinda I'm not in the kiddie pool No while I'm in the deep end So that's why you have to it's either swim or drone you know what I mean Um But I picked up on a lot of stuff cause I had a great guys coming in my freshman year People like Dorian Williams Nick Anderson Taj Spears um Me Clark So just being around them kinda helped me adapt fast So it wasn't I feel like it wasn't it was a a big change but it wasn't too bad cause the guys that I had around me that kind of helped guide me into what I needed to do and where I had to be up I say for sure like just for one being a great leader of the field So kind of little guys up and the freshman that is coming in freshmen are all the guys just giving guys words of encouragement and letting them know where they're wrong and how to fix it So I feel like that's a big part of it And of course I played a lot of um special teams this year So always making sure I'm doing my job and making sure the man next to me is doing his job and we are doing it together as a brotherhood and continue to keep that brotherhood on and off the field I feel like that's a big part of that So and just going into these next few years just working on being better in my position Um Learning more the big thing really is learning more cause when a lot of people come to college they always think it's just a physical aspect but it's really more of a mental aspect like your mental mental health learning on and off the field Cause if you just get complacent then you things just won't work out the way you think they would for sure Coming in I didn't think mental health was that big of a deal

But when you get to college there's a lot of things that that could overwhelm you have class um real life problems football So when all of that started to hit me I kinda felt myself starting to break down like mentally So um for one I started talking to our counselor um started going to see her when I felt things were starting to get too hard I'm getting overwhelmed Um I'll call and talk to my mom She's always been a uh a big point a big part of uh she always been a a big person in my life that I go and talk to when things got hurt but having her and someone else outside of my family to talk to that was good And I worked on breathing techniques um even doing yoga So that was kinda like killing two birds with one stone doing yoga I'm relaxing clearing my mind and also keeping myself flexible And uh I feel like that's that's some of the things that I did And I also started reading more I follow piece and reading like being outside and reading a good book like that kinda helped me clear my mind from a lot of stuff Um I'll say for sure in high school Um I for one the first thing I tell myself is everything is not what it seems So like all the stuff you see on social media on TV like a lot of that just to to get your attention Like it's not it's not real like all the people you see that's doing the big things being flashy and all of that It's really not it's it's it's just I don't wanna say it but it's fake It is cause a lot of people see that and just wanna rush the stuff but don't realize that all of that take time Yeah you can use that as your motivation but it all takes time It takes a word process discipline Um Just just a great mindset Then you just have to be willing to work every day And I say I will also tell myself that no matter what happens just stay on track Like don't be focused on your dreams no matter what your friends say your parents say what no one in your family say Um just stay on track Um I'm I'm a big religious guy So pray and and keep your mind focused on what you have at hand So I think that would be something I would tell myself