

Yepi Pauu

Athlete: Football

Santa Ana HS – Class of 1984

Yepi Pauu, a 1984 Santa Ana High graduate, gained notoriety the moment he set foot on the football field. His achievements are especially impressive when considering he spent the first 11 years of his life in Tonga, where he never even watched a football game. Yet his natural athleticism and sheer size, at 6' 0" and 220 pounds, were enough to completely dominate the high school football game as a linebacker and fullback, and more than enough to gain the attention of college coaches. As a junior at Santa Ana in 1982, his first year in football, Pauu was an All-Century League selection. His senior year he was an All-CIF and All-County choice. Pauu led the 1983 Saints to a season-ending win over El Modena, locking up a league championship, and he went on to star in the County All-Star game.

While Pauu may have been able to rely on raw strength and ability at the high school level, the playing field evened out for a short time at the beginning of his freshman year at Saddleback College. But it only took him a few games into his first season before coaches saw the beginning of his transformation into an extremely talented college level football player. He ended that 1984 season strongly and was a second-team All-Mission Conference selection. In 1985 he went on to earn first-team honors and was considered one of California's best community college linebackers; an accomplishment Saddleback College recognized by inducting him into their Hall of Fame.

From Saddleback College, Pauu went on to play for the Division 1A San Jose State football team. He was named Pacific Coast Athletic Association (PCAA) Defensive Second-Team All-Conference his first season in 1986. His senior year, he was selected Defensive First-Team All-Conference (PCAA), and was a 1987 Honorable Mention All-American.

Pauu spent five years playing professional football, first in the Arena Football League where he played for the LA Cobras from 1988-1989, and later signing with the Detroit Drive for the 1990 season. He then closed out his career when he took his talents to the World Football League, competing for the Frankfurt Galaxy in the 1991-1992 seasons.

