



**Your on the  
Street Reporter**



**Uyless Black**

**Urlachler Country**

## Urlacher Country

October 26, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Once again, I've detoured from the well-traveled roads of America for this report. I'm visiting a town so remotely located in our fair country that it has no curio shops. This off-the-spot report is from my hometown, the city in which I lived for most of my childhood: Lovington, New Mexico. It is also the high school town for pro football player Brian Urlacher fame. Figure 1 shows the location of this small town (population of around 9,500).



Figure 1. Lovington, New Mexico

Brian Urlacher, the famous Chicago Bears linebacker, grew up in Lovington and played football here. He is a cherished person in my hometown. In an earlier report, I explained how Mr. Urlacher had lent his hand---and those of his sponsors---to fund several programs at the Lovington schools. In gratitude, the city erected a billboard just outside the city limits to honor this fine man, as seen in Figure 2.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 2. Lovington's claim to fame.

<sup>1</sup> Uyless Black, *The Light Side of Little Texas* (Hayden, ID: IEI Press, 2006), 18-3.

Mr. Urlacher is also liked by Lovingtonians because he has chosen to stay close to his roots...and succor those roots as well. He has invested in real estate around the town and has also opened a car dealership, as shown in Figure 3. Yes, I would buy a used car from this man.



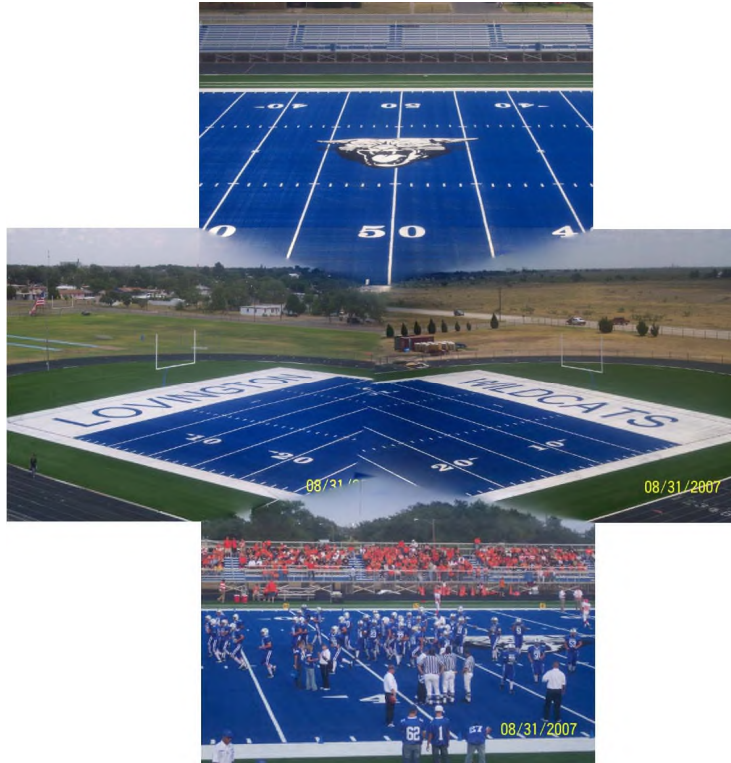
**Figure 3. Other Enterprises.**

Brian (and his endorsing company, Nike) are on display in other parts of town. As seen in Figure 4, I came across a large mural of Urlacher on the side of a building, along with the Nike motto, "Just do it." Just do what? Paint the town of Lovington with Urlacher images. Fine by me and fine by the citizens of Lovington. A person as generous as he deserves this recognition.



**Figure 4. More Urlacher stuff.**

Mr. Urlacher has also paved the way for Nike and others to contribute to Lovington's athletic facilities, the most notable example is the turf for the football field. I spent this evening watching the Lovington Wildcats play the Ruidoso Warriors on this field. Take a look at Figure 5, which is a composite photo of four images.



**Figure 5. The Lovington football stadium. (And a track around the field)**

Blue turf! As you likely know by now, Lovington's team colors are blue and white. I imagine a team color of green would have made for easier turf creation, but I suspect blue was selected for a reason other than team morale. The bottom picture in Figure 5 provides a clue. Notice how the Wildcats' uniforms blend in with the turf.

- Wildcats quarterback in the huddle (who happens to be my great-nephew, Ty Black), "OK, I'm taking the ball around right end."
- Team breaks huddle and lines up against the Warriors. Everything is blue, except the opponents' uniforms.
- "Hut, hut!"...Quarterback takes the snap, and sprints around right end for a touchdown. (Which on this particular evening, my great-nephew happened to execute flawlessly.)
- During the play, the Warrior defensive end shouts, "Where's the ball carrier?"
- Warrior safety shouts back, "How the hell should I know? I just tackled the 10-yard marker."
- As the Wildcats quarterback trots into the end zone.

Camouflage! Normally, the home team wears a light-colored jersey (say, white) and a dark colored jersey (blue) at away games. No way; why give up a home field advantage of letting the foe know where you are on the field of play?

### **Memories**

Many of my readers come from small towns across America and other parts of the world. Others grew up in urban centers, such as Philadelphia and Baltimore. Wherever our roots may be, returning to the past, one with so many pleasant memories, is like taking a drink from the

fountain of youth. I had not attended a small town football game since 1957...which was at the very stadium I sat-in tonight. Coming back as an old man...OK a gray panther...Hmm, make that a gray wildcat, I felt rejuvenated.

The memories from the past almost clouded-out the exciting contest I was watching---which Lovington won 19-6. During the game, I walked around the stadium and the track surrounding it. I recalled my modest Wildcat football career (which ended my freshman year with a shoulder injury). I recalled my modest Wildcat track and field career (which ended my senior year with my barfing at the finish line after the mile run). Nonetheless, the Black family has a proud history on Lovington's athletic fields. Ty represents the third generation of Black Wildcats who have done Lovington proud.

My memories took a back seat to the excitement of the contest taking place before me. The score was 0-0 at halftime. Lovington was missing five starters at skill positions and played a very conservative first half. I could not quite catch-on to their running up the middle time-after-time, especially when the Warriors stacked their defense in the middle time-after-time. Perhaps it was deception to lull the Warriors into complacency. Anyway, Lovington opened up its game the second half and began to dominate their foe. Ty was one of the stars of the night, running for a touchdown and passing for another. He's only a Sophomore. The next day, the local paper carried two photos of Ty, shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 6. Your Reporter's great-nephew in action.**

Walking into the stands with my brother and sister-in-law just before the game, I was greeted by my nephew and niece, the parents of Ty; as well as a high school friend I had not seen for four decades. He sat with me during the game, and we caught up with what we had done with and to our lives. I offered that life had probably treated me better than I had treated life. He spoke of his adventures in the real estate market in Lovington, which had alternately star-crossed and double-crossed him.

We did not have an opportunity to resurrect some of our immature, macho-aspiring exploits, such as the time we sat in a nearby saloon, and had the bar-maid mix up every drink she could think-of which made the cocktail green. Brilliant. The next morning, our faces resembled those drinks.

It seemed almost everyone in the crowd knew one another. By association, it seemed I did, too. And Mr. Urlacher, this evening you would have been proud of your former team. Injury-ridden, they hung-in there. Their defense kept them in the game, as your defense with the Bears often does with Chicago. They then took control and won an important conference victory.

After the game, friends and family mixed with the players down on the field. I greeted and congratulated Ty for his play. The Wildcats coach voiced my sentiments about the boys playing

a fine game. He advised them not to do anything stupid over the weekend, to stay away from alcohol. He did not mention anything about staying away from girls. Of course not, that would have been stupid advice.

It was time to leave memories and my hometown behind, time to hit the streets and highways again. But for a few hours, this gray panther was a young wildcat.