


BY WENDY RUBICAM EVANS



CORE STRENGTH

Three-time Pro Bowl Wide Receiver Anquan Boldin brings his rock-solid determination to a seventh Cardinals' season and continues to build on his commitment to changing the lives of kids in need.



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Cardinals’ fans know him as a powerhouse wide receiver and one of the toughest birds on the field. From his explosive 2003 rookie season with the Cardinals, when he was unanimously voted Offensive Rookie of the Year by the Associated Press, Anquan Boldin has broken countless franchise records. In his sixth season with the Cardinals, he continued his fierce performance on the field, claiming the franchise record of four seasons of eclipsing 1,000 yards receiving, recording 89 receptions for 1,038 yards, and was selected for a third Pro Bowl. Equally impressive, but perhaps less publicized, is his unwavering dedication to helping others and his continued appreciation of the road he’s traveled to get where he is today.

Boldin was raised in the rural small town of Pahokee, Fla. He was one of those kids who excelled at any sport he tried, and he played them all. Although he says that he was best at baseball, football was the sport he fell in love with. Boldin acknowledges the impact the game has had on his life, saying, “Football has been life-changing for me. It’s afforded me a lot of opportunities that probably a regular person from my area wouldn’t get, so I’m very thankful for that. Plus,” he adds, “it teaches you so much—discipline, hard work—because nobody’s going to give you anything in this world. Whatever you get you have to work for. You can’t expect anybody to lay anything in your lap. Sports have a way of teaching you about life, as well.”

Boldin doesn’t just talk the talk when it comes to the benefits of sports and opportunities in life. In 2004 he established The Anquan Boldin Foundation, which is dedicated to helping the underprivileged both in Arizona and in Florida. He hasn’t forgotten his roots, and through the foundation gives generously to support Pahokee football programs, after-school programs, and is now in the process of trying to establish a Boys & Girls Club in Pahokee. He speaks passionately about the issues affecting the youth in his impoverished hometown and the need he feels to provide an alternative. “I think whenever you have kids in that situation and they don’t have positive male role models around them, they kind of look to gangs or the streets as a form of acceptance, and that’s very unfortunate because we’re losing a lot of our kids.” He adds, “I think when we take the streets away from them, we have to give them something in place of that to keep them occupied and keep them motivated, and I think the Boys & Girls Club does a great job at that.”

His foundation has also partnered with University of Phoenix to provide full-tuition scholarships to single parents and graduating seniors each year. They stay in constant touch with the recipients. “That’s something that I’m very proud of—giving people another opportunity to succeed in life. And that’s the only thing that we all need—someone to take an interest in us and give us an opportunity.”

Taking a brutal hit to the face in the 2008 match-up with the Jets, which resulted in severe upper jaw fractures and reconstructive surgery, also resulted in Boldin’s creating another opportunity for those less fortunate. Boldin is philosophical about the hit, calling it simply “an unfortunate incident.” The toughest

part of the recovery was the fact that Boldin doesn't take pain medications... at all. He returned to the field after missing only two games, and recorded a career-long 30-yard run, as well as nine receptions and two touchdowns against Carolina in that game. Business as usual for Boldin, but his experience had inspired him to again reach out to underprivileged children.

This August, The Anquan Boldin Foundation created the Dental Care Program in partnership with Boldin's surgeon, Dr. Reed Day, and the Oral and Facial Surgery Center of Phoenix. Boldin recalls, "I know for me how tough it was, flying back from N.Y., face fractured and not being able to chew, so I just wanted to be able to help out in any way that I could." The newly established partnership will provide treatment for underprivileged and underinsured children who have severe dental problems.

When asked if he thinks about life after football, Boldin laughs, saying, "In this business, the life expectancy is very short and I've already exceeded that. It's 3 1/2 years and I'm in my seventh year, so life after football probably won't be too far off." His goals for that life? "I am involved with my foundation a lot, but I think that there's a lot more I can do." He's thankful to have a group of people around him who share his values and goals for the foundation, and says, "When it's all said and done for me, I definitely want to be a lot more involved in the activities that we have going on."

His other goal is to spend more time with family and maintain a healthy lifestyle. He says, "For me it's a way of life. I don't just do it because I play football. I have a son and I want to be around to see him grow up, and I think the way that you take care of your body is important to that longevity, so I'm going to continue to eat right, workout and stay in shape."

Name: Anquan Boldin

Age: 28

Relationship Status: Married

TYPICAL EXERCISE ROUTINE: OFF SEASON: I workout three times a day. I do football training at 6 a.m., boxing at 1 p.m., and in the evening I do some other form of cardio—maybe basketball or some other fun activity, but it's cardio. **IN SEASON:** A lot of my workouts are controlled because I spend so much time at the facility during the season. I am there weightlifting around 6 a.m., and don't leave until 4 or 5 p.m.

SAMPLE DAY OF FOOD: BREAKFAST: Three-egg omelet with ham and cheese. I always eat fruit in the morning. **LUNCH:** It depends on the day, but I'm a big Paradise Bakery guy. My favorite is the chicken walnut on a croissant or in a salad. **DINNER:** Dinner might be fish or pasta. I eat early—before 7:30 p.m. If I get hungry after that it's usually just fruit like grapes, pears or watermelon.

STAYING GAME-READY: Staying in condition is probably 50/50 between what you do independently and training with the team. Off season is a lot different from during the season. Your off season is where you build everything—you build your stamina, your explosiveness, your weightlifting—you're getting stronger. During the season is when you maintain everything.

As an athlete there are a lot of factors involved in staying in condition: watching what I eat, stretching on a regular basis, weightlifting, massages, chiropractic work, and IVs to make sure I stay hydrated during the season.

RECOVERING AFTER GAMES: Rest—that's the biggest thing. After games we'll go out and get something to eat with the family, but I'm going straight home and getting some rest. The next day it's important to get the soreness out, and I think the only way you can do that is to get out, workout, run around a little bit and stretch. But the most important thing is to just get your rest.

MY FOOD WEAKNESS: I'm from Down South, so when I go back home I have to be really careful, because my mom and aunts cook BIG. My aunt makes the best red velvet cake I've ever tasted, and she always bakes one for me at the wrong time, so that's the one thing I really cheat with.

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