



[\[Print\]](#) [\[Close\]](#)

## **Week 10 Highlight Reel: T.O. flap vaults local teen into spotlight**

By Dan Caesar

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Sunday, Nov. 13 2005

The Terrell Owens saga continues to be the biggest controversy in sport. On Sunday, the Fox network said the reason his agent has been so adamant about getting Owens' suspension reduced is because his contract says if he is suspended for more than one game, the team has the right to recoup some of his signing bonus.

And the entire Owens issue came to a head because of an interview he did recently with a teenager who at this time last year was a senior at Mary Institute-Country Day School.

The Philadelphia Eagles dumped Owens because of a series of incidents they said were detrimental to the team. The final straw came because of remarks he made to Graham Bensinger - a 19-year-old student free-lancing for ESPN.com in an interview. Owens said he agreed with commentator Michael Irvin's opinion that the Eagles, who were 4-3 then, would be undefeated if Green Bay's Brett Favre was their quarterback instead of Donovan McNabb.

"I just feel like (with) him being knowledgeable about the quarterback position, I just feel like we'd be in a better situation," Owens said.

That comment, a sound bite from a nearly hour-long interview that was videotaped, created a firestorm in Philadelphia as well as the entire NFL that still simmers as the Eagles prepare to play Dallas tonight.

Bensinger has been a go-getter from the time he began broadcasting his own radio show on the Internet while in the eighth grade, and appeared on numerous national TV shows while in high school. But the Owens flap has vaulted Bensinger, now a freshman at Syracuse University, more prominently into the spotlight. He has been inundated with requests for interviews, and is scheduled to be the topic of an article this week in Sports Illustrated and to be a guest Wednesday on the "Tonight Show with Jay Leno." Later in the week he'll be at ESPN to discuss, among other things, his future there.

### **Getting the interview**

Bensinger already has interviewed many big-name athletes, and his background with Owens help land him the recent conversation. Owens gives few in-depth interviews, especially lengthy one-on-ones. But Bensinger said he's had good rapport with Owens since they met during Super Bowl week three seasons ago, and has had him on his weekly St. Louis radio show (KSLG, 1380 AM) two or three times a year.

"I always had a good relationship with him, never had a cross word," Bensinger said. "I couldn't speak higher of the way he's treated me."

So Bensinger attended an Eagles game recently and requested the interview for ESPN.com, to which he has been contributing for several months.

"He hasn't done virtually any media recently," Bensinger said. "His publicist has a pretty tight rein on him. But he said he'd be more than happy to sit down with me because of our prior relationship."

Bensinger said he spent nearly five hours at Owens' home.

"I certainly never imagined comments he made ... would ultimately either result or be the tipping point of him being suspended," Bensinger said.

But they did, and Bensinger is getting a real-world education as well as the one he's getting at school. To wit: Owens' publicist, Kim Etheredge, was angry.

"I thought the interview was going to be harmless," she told the Philadelphia Daily News. "It's another lesson for T.O. that people you think you can trust don't have your best interests in mind."

Bensinger stands his ground.

"All I did was do my research, come up with probably 75 questions, pose the questions," he said. "Then the ball's in his court. He could have gone with his answers any which way he wanted. The thing about Terrell is he's blatantly honest. If you ask him a question, he's going to tell you how he feels for better or worse. I respect that in him."

### **The longest run**

Ever hear of Nathan Vasher?

Probably not, but the Bears cornerback did something Sunday that nobody else in the NFL's 86 years has done. He returned a missed field goal 108 yards for a TD against the 49ers, the league's longest TD play.

As Joe Nedney's 52-yard try sailed wide on the last play of the first half, Vasher hauled in the ball over his shoulder. He at first hesitated, then hauled it out of the end zone before zig-zagging his way to the record book.

"I'm still speechless," he said.

Vasher was aided because there were a lot of big, slow players chasing him.

"With the field-goal team out there, there were no defensive backs or wide receivers," he said. "You're there with the big boys."

He beat the previous mark - set in 2002 by the Ravens' Chris McAlister, also on a missed field goal - by a yard.

**dcaesar@post-dispatch.com**  
**314-340-8175**

---

If you enjoy reading about interesting news, you might like the 3 O'Clock Stir from STLtoday.com. Sign up and you'll receive an email with unique stories of the day, every Monday-Friday, at no charge.  
Sign up at <http://newsletters.stltoday.com>

---