**Gardner Howard**

Gardner Howard was a two-sport standout at Defiance High School earning three letters in both basketball and football before graduating in 1994.

In basketball, Defiance finished as Western Buckeye League runner-up in Howard’s three years playing for the Bulldogs. Gardner was a starter on a 16-4 team that finished in second place in the Western Buckeye League his junior year. A year later, Howard led the Bulldogs to an 18-4 record and a final ranking of 10th in the final Associated Press Division I state poll. Gardner led the team in scoring during the 1993-94 season at 15.1 points per game, rebounding at 10.1 per game and field-goal shooting at 60 percent. For his career, Howard scored 704 points, an average of 14.6 points per game.

In football, Gardner was a standout tight end and defensive end earning all-WBL recognition. As a junior, Gardner was second on a 7-3 DHS team with 19 receptions for one touchdown. He was the WBL and Crescent-News Offensive Lineman of the Year while also earning first-team laurels in the WBL. As a senior, Gardner was a member of an 8-2 team that finished fifth in the Division II Region 5 when only four teams qualified for the playoffs. He was a first-team all-WBL performer at tight end.

Gardner went on to play football for four years at Bowling Green State University where he was a starter at defensive end, graduating with a Bachelor’s Degree in 1998. He furthered his education earning a Master’s Degree from the University of Toledo.

Howard went on to coach high school football as head coach at Toledo Scott and Waite and as an assistant at Woodward, St. John’s and Start. He taught junior high life sciences in Toledo Public Schools for eight years and rose to the Dean of Students role at Waite, where he was an assistant girls basketball coach.

He passed away suddenly in late May of 2017 at the age of 40 while visiting family in Georgia.

Two statements from a Toledo Blade article two months after his death help describe Gardner.

Said Toledo Start football coach Tyson Harder: “As a person, he really cared about the kids in the city. In everything he did, he was always striving to do more for them.”

Said Waite girls basketball coach Manny May: “He just had a love of people, and it didn’t matter what color or culture you were. He drew you in. You couldn’t do anything but have fun around him.”