

KELECHI OSEMELE

Langham Creek graduate and Baltimore Ravens tackle shares about life before and after the Super Bowl

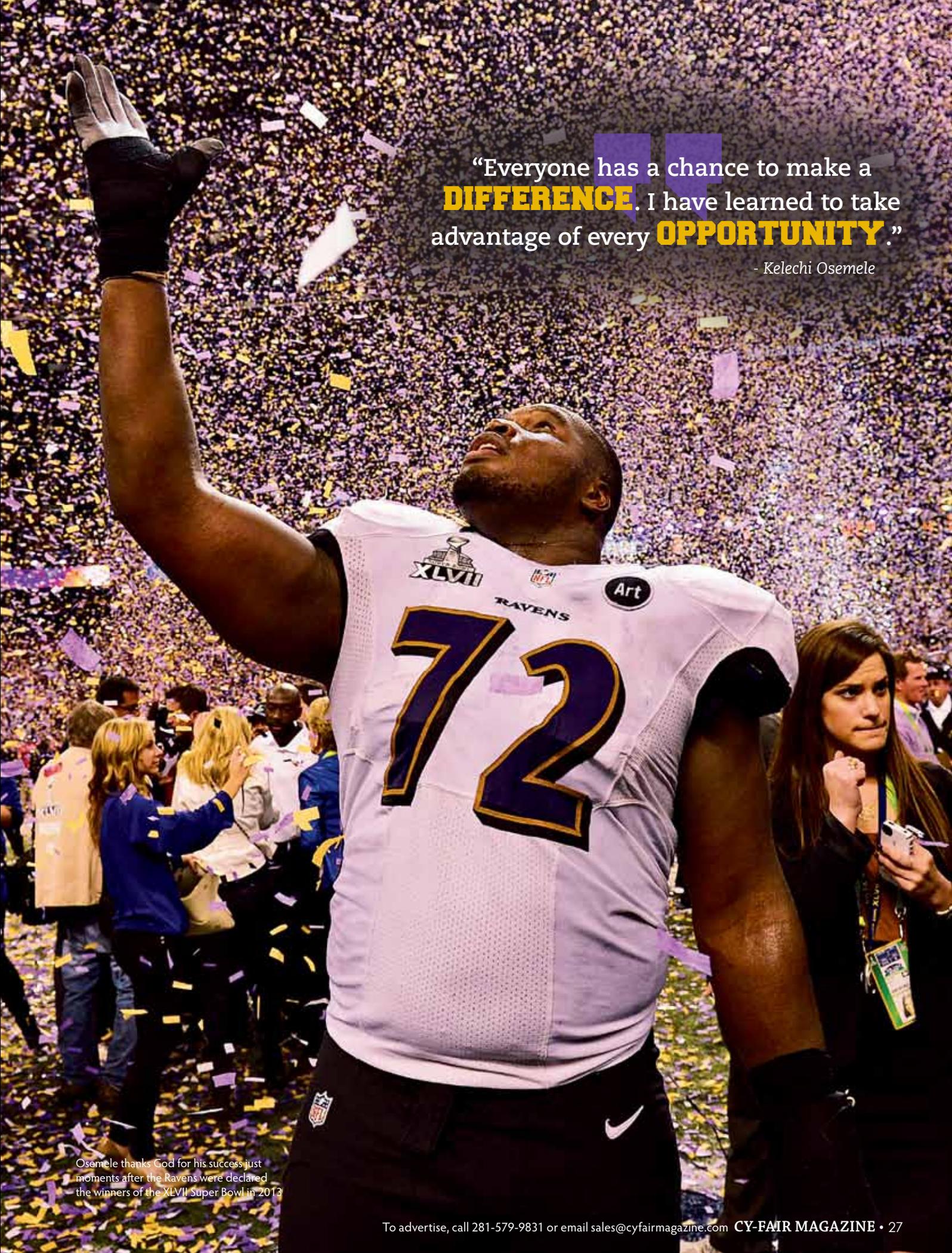


Kelechi Osemele plays the position of guard/tackle for the Baltimore Ravens

Written by Kirsten Cornell | Photography by Shawn Hubbard

Being drafted into the National Football League (NFL) is the dream of every pee wee football player that steps onto the AstroTurf. Dreams of cheering crowds, packed stadiums, and carrying the name of professional teams they watched when they were young inspire them to train hard and stay on top. The culmination of these dreams would end in a championship, namely, the Super Bowl.

For Langham Creek football player Kelechi Osemele, those dreams proved more viable than he had ever imagined when he was chosen as the second round 2012 NFL draft pick by the Baltimore Ravens. Osemele now finds himself at the beginning of a whirlwind success.

A full-page photograph of Kelechi Osemele, a Baltimore Ravens player, celebrating. He is wearing a white Ravens jersey with the number 72 in purple and gold. The jersey also features the XLVII Super Bowl logo, the NFL shield, and an "Art" patch. He has his right arm raised, wearing a black glove. The background is filled with a dense shower of purple and gold confetti. Other people are visible in the background, some looking towards the camera and others looking away.

“Everyone has a chance to make a **DIFFERENCE**. I have learned to take advantage of every **OPPORTUNITY**.”

- Kelechi Osemele

Osemele thanks God for his success just moments after the Ravens were declared the winners of the XLVII Super Bowl in 2013.

TEACHERS OF INFLUENCE

When Osemele was a mere 3 years old, his father, Paul, moved back to his native country of Nigeria. This left his mother Imelda taking on additional shifts at her nursing job while raising Osemele and his three older sisters by herself. In a house full of women, Osemele often felt like an outsider and due to his Nigerian roots, the world outside his home didn't always seem that much more inviting.

This sense of isolation led Osemele to two primary outlets – writing and football. “My elementary teachers growing up gave us free time to write during class,” Osemele explains. “That’s where it all started.” With a lot on his mind and a creative imagination, he often exceeded his allotted time limit, and his teachers encouraged him to continue writing at home. “I don’t have as much time right now to write like I used to,” he says. “But if I have stuff to get off my chest, I write.”

A man of humble beginnings, Osemele cherished having supportive teachers and coaches. “My kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Hayes, had a pretty big impact on me,” Osemele recalls. “When things weren’t going well at home, she could tell I needed the extra attention. She kept in touch with me from kindergarten all the way through fifth grade. She wanted to make sure I was okay.”

Osemele continued his education, graduating from Langham Creek High School, and is grateful for the opportunities

offered to him by the award-winning district. “Cy-Fair did a really good job of influencing us to be well-rounded in the classroom, community, and in sports,” he says. Perhaps it was this encouragement that led Osemele to pursue higher education at Iowa State University.

CYCLONE TO A RAVEN

Trying to further establish his independence, Osemele accepted the invitation to wear the cyclone jersey representing Iowa State University. “It was one of the biggest decisions I had to make, spreading my wings a little and going somewhere different,” he says.

Osemele, an obviously gifted athlete, decided to pursue a degree in liberal arts and has never lost sight of the big picture a college education provided. “College is an important step in a young individual’s life,” he stresses. “The opportunities and the doors that open up for you after you earn your college degree are crucial in what happens next in your life.”

For Osemele, his skill on the field opened the door to professional teams taking notice of him and he was invited to be a part of the 2012 NFL draft. “Being a part of the draft was something that I have dreamed about since I was a little kid,” he says. “It was a really big deal for me.” In the second round, Osemele walked away with the signature purple and metallic gold of the Baltimore Ravens.



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AN EMOTIONAL WIN

Osemele joined the team as right tackle and began rigorous strength training and conditioning, practicing five times a week during the season. All his dedication paid off when the unimaginable happened – during his rookie year, Osemele competed in Super Bowl XLVII. The Ravens went head-to-head with the San Francisco 49ers defeating them 34 - 31. “It was a shocking moment that didn’t really hit me until after the game - I just played in the Super Bowl. It was definitely a dream come true,” he shares.

It was an extreme honor to compete at the highest level in his first year of professional football, but it was watching the reactions of his veteran teammates that really drove the reality home. “We were all happy of course, but looking at the guy’s faces, knowing that they spent their entire lives trying to get to that point and finally got the win was a great feeling.”

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Being a professional athlete comes with perks, but in turn, just as many expectations. “Production is important. If you can’t do your job, they will find someone else that can do it for you,” Osemele says. “You have to be consistent and prepared.”

Though his life has drastically changed, Osemele often flies his family to games and still makes time to visit his hometown of Cy-Fair. In his off-season, Osemele enjoys simple pleasures such as watching movies, hanging out with friends, and making up for lost sleep.

Osemele encourages anyone, regardless of social or economic status, to strive for success. “Everyone has a chance to make a difference. I have learned to take advantage of every opportunity.” CFM



KIRSTEN CORNELL is an associate editor for Cy-Fair Magazine and was impressed by Kelechi Osemele’s humble and gracious attitude.

OSEMELE HONORS



- First-team All-American by *The NFL Draft Report* and *Sports Illustrated* (2011)
- Second-team All-American by *The Sporting News* and *Lindy’s Sports* (2011)
- Third-team All-American by *The NFL Draft Report* (2010)
- First-team All-Big 12 from the Associated Press and league coaches (2011)
- Second-team All-Big 12 from the Associated Press (2009 to 2010)
- Three-time Cyclone Academic Honor Roll selection (2009 to 2011)



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