

Personality Profile

Hines Ward

A most valuable person

BY DANIEL CASCIATO

It was a hot, hazy August day at St. Vincent's College in Latrobe and the Steelers' morning practice had been over for about 15 minutes. Most of the players had already gone to their dorm rooms.

Hines Ward didn't budge.

Despite a slight hamstring injury, last season's Super Bowl MVP spent some time working out with the other wide receivers, including Santonio Holmes and Willie Reid. Holmes told reporters later that it was Ward who suggested they do some extra work after each practice. That shouldn't come

as a surprise to anyone, considering that Ward is highly regarded as the NFL's hardest worker.

Ward, 30, has had that incredible work ethic his entire athletic career. He went to Forest Park High School in Forest Park, Georgia, where he was a two-time Clayton County Offensive Player of the Year. As a quarterback, he earned All-American honors from *Super Prep*, *Blue Chip Illustrated*, and *USA Today*, as well as All-State and Super Southern Top 100 honors.

Converting to wide receiver for the University of Georgia Bulldogs (1995-1998), Ward had 144

career receptions for 1,965 yards, placing him second all-time in Bulldogs' history. He gained 3,870 all-purpose yards, second all-time.

Since being drafted by the Steelers in the third round of the 1998 NFL Draft, Ward has been named team Most Valuable Player three times. He is also a four-time consecutive NFL Pro Bowl selection (2001-2004). In 2002, he set a Steelers single-season franchise record for receptions (112), and touchdowns (12), and was named to his first of two consecutive All-NFL teams. When the 2006 season opened, he held the team record with 574 recep-

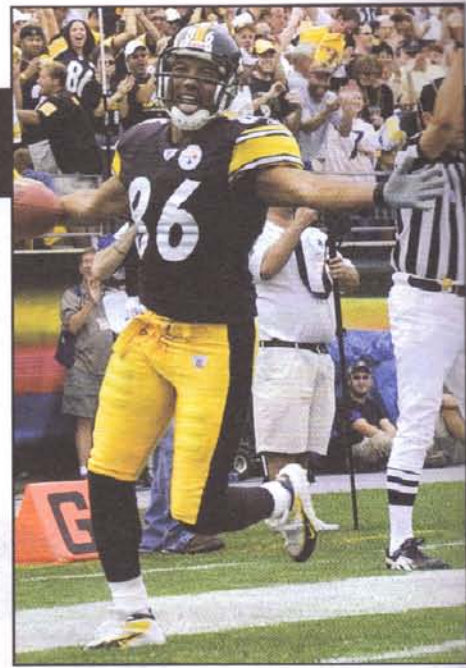


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tions, needing only 1,694 yards to pass John Stallworth for the all-time team lead.

But Ward's accomplishments transcend the gridiron. This past spring, he returned to his birthplace of Seoul, South Korea, and announced the formation of a charity foundation for mixed-race children in South Korea. Ward, the son of a Korean mother and African-American soldier father, donated a million dollars to create the Hines Ward Helping Hands Foundation—a foundation to help mixed-race South Korean children overcome discrimination.

Ward tries to keep a low profile these days, but his celebrity stature grew moments after Super Bowl XL ended and he was named the game's MVP.

After spending several years living in Shadyside, he currently maintains a residence in O'Hara Township during the season and lives in Atlanta in the off-season.

How long did you live in Shadyside?

I lived there for almost three years. I lived right off Fifth Avenue and Highland. It's one of my all-time favorite places in Pittsburgh.

What did you like about living there?

It's such a great community and it has a cool atmosphere. I just love everything about it. From where I lived, you could overlook the entire neighborhood of Shadyside from my rooftop, and a lot of the guys used to come over to hang out. I really enjoyed Walnut Street too.

Why did you move out to O'Hara?

Well, once we started having some success, there were more people banging on the door. So I had to move out of there for some privacy.

What do you like about living there?

It's a great neighborhood too. It's very peaceful. It's just nice to get away from the city and be able to relax. But most of my teammates live elsewhere, so I'm kind of out there by myself. They say Coach Cowher lives somewhere out there too, but I have yet to see him (laughing).

How does our area compare to living in Atlanta during the off-season?

Weather-wise, Atlanta is great. It gets cold there too, but not as cold as it does here. Pittsburgh is a great place. Atlanta is always home to me because that's where my roots are. But Pittsburgh is my home away from home. The city has embraced me and taken me in. People go out of their way to make me feel welcome. That's what I always liked

about Pittsburgh. It's a great, family-oriented place to be. I enjoy the time when I'm up here—other than the weather. It can get pretty cold here. I'm not big on snow, especially since I have a bald head (laughing).

What do you do in your spare time?

I like to shop. I'm probably worse than most females. I like to go out and get shoes. I try to go undercover, but it's kind of hard to do that in Pittsburgh.

Where are your favorite places in Pittsburgh to hang out?

I like to go out and eat, especially at Pamela's. They serve great food, so you can always catch me there having breakfast. You can also find me down at The Locker Room in the South Side. I would say those

are my two favorite places to hang out in my spare time.

Tell us about some of your charitable work.

I started up the Hines Ward Helping Hands Foundation and doing some work with that over in Korea. But I also want to really try to do some things with inner city schools, especially with their literacy program. I want to help those schools with their reading programs. I remember growing up and people kept teasing me about me trying to be smarter. Or they would come up to me and say, 'oh, you trying to be white,' just because I would read all the time. I don't want to see any kids have to go through that. There's nothing wrong with reading. If a kid wants to get ahead in life, he should have the right to do that.

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