

ESERA TUAOLO

b. July 11, 1968

In 2002, Tuaolo came out on the HBO series “Real Sports.”

The emotional interview dealt with Tuaolo’s constant fear of being outed and the homophobic culture of professional sports.

“I feel wonderful. I feel like a burden has been lifted. I feel like I’ve taken off the costume I’ve been wearing all my life.”

Professional football player Esera Tuaolo became the third NFL player to come out.

Tuaolo was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, to a banana-farming Samoan family. He attended Oregon State University where he played football.

The Green Bay Packers drafted him in 1991. A defensive lineman, Tuaolo was the first rookie in NFL history to start in all 16 games. His record earned him a spot on the 1991 All-Rookie team.

While he was with the Packers, Tuaolo was asked to sing the National Anthem for a Thursday night televised game. He refers to this as one of his most memorable moments in professional football.

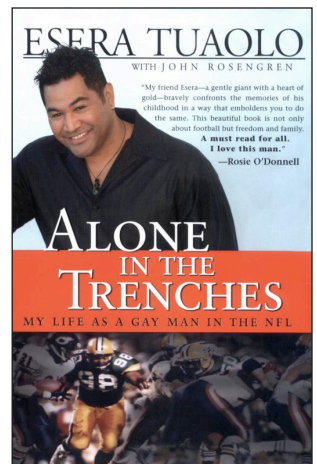
In 1992, the Packers traded Tuaolo to the Minnesota Vikings. From there, he went on to play for the Jacksonville Jaguars and the Atlanta Falcons. He played in Super Bowl XXXIII with the Falcons. After a season with the Carolina Panthers, he retired in 1999.

In 2002, Tuaolo came out on the HBO series “Real Sports.” The emotional interview dealt with Tuaolo’s constant fear of being outed, the homophobic culture of professional sports and the responses of former teammates and friends.

In 2006, Tuaolo performed the National Anthem at the opening ceremony of Gay Games VII. The same year, his autobiography “Alone in the Trenches: My Life as a Gay Man in the NFL” was released. The book made Tuaolo a spokesperson against homophobia, particularly the unofficial policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in professional sports. He served as a board member of the Gay and Lesbian Athletics Foundation.

Tuaolo is also an HIV/AIDS activist—his brother died from complications of the disease. He has appeared in public service announcements and is a major fundraiser for Camp Heartland for children and youth with HIV/AIDS.

Tuaolo shares custody of his adopted twin children with his former partner Mitchell Wherley.



© ESERA TUAOLO

gloT
HISTORY
MONTH

www.glbHistoryMonth.com

Copyright © 2009 – A Project of Equality Forum