



# REZ FOOTBALL

by Max Klinger, photographs by Craig Cameron Olsen

Updated: July 18, 2008, 4:07 PM ET

On a photo shoot in South Dakota for a recent feature (["Outside Shot," 11.15](#)), photographer Craig Cameron Olsen was enjoying some downtime in a high school parking lot when he noticed some kids playing football in a nearby field. Leading drills, was a huge, NFL player-sized man. Turns out, he actually was a former NFL player—tackle Jim Warne—conducting one of several football camps he holds every summer. Olsen took some photos and we tracked down Jim who told us that in addition to hoops, football is thriving on reservations. He was kind enough to remind us that the Carlisle Indian School not only was once a national champion, but invented the forward pass. See the photo gallery, complete with notes from Jim [here](#)



## PHOTO GALLERY: REZ FOOTBALL

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Jim Warne has spent the last five years crisscrossing the country's Indian reservations hosting summer football camps. The former NFL and AFL tackle (he won a Rose Bowl with ASU in '87) arrived here at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota just five days after leading another camp in Seneca, New York. Balancing a schedule with his gig as Director of the Center for American Indian Rehabilitation at San Diego State, he'll also visit Idaho, Washington, Arizona and California this summer.

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Jim is Oglala Lakota and his mother grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, so he's at home there. "The Pine Ridge rez is the poorest county in the U.S.," he says. "Football is so expensive and you need so many kids that they just don't have the resources to support a full-fledged program. But I know the talent is out there." Encouraging talent isn't his only goal. "A big message of mine is that sports is the job, but education and culture are the means. If I only relied on my experiences in the NFL and in Hollywood, I'd be a bouncer today." Yes, Jim's been in a couple of movies, too.



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"We do a lot of NFL combine drills," Warne says, "Agility, speed, and change of direction are all things that will help the kids benefit in any sport whether it be football, basketball or lacrosse." Several of Warne's camps are full-contact but this was a "t-shirts and shorts camp" with both boys and girls encouraged to participate. Thirty participants between the ages of 7 and 18 attended. "Some times they get so into it I'm not sure they know how hard they're working."

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Warne's assistant coach Wade McGee (with the stop watch) is the Athletic Coordinator for the reservation in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho and is a Cherokee. "Wade started the youth football league in Coeur d' Alene. At the first camp there we had sixty kids, last year there were 175," says Warne. It is not uncommon for coaches to travel back and forth helping each other out and many depend on volunteers (like the ones in the picture) who are either local coaches or former players. Jim's sons Ryan (14) and Kyle (7) were also at the camp making it a true family affair.



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While basketball is supported immensely by the communities, many of the reservation football teams have to run smaller eight-man teams. "I know that there are other kids that have the talent," says Warne. "But the challenge is having the facilities to get that base going." Warne works whatever channels he can (even us!). The camp is totally free for the kids and this year, through a donation from an Eastbay Team Sales rep in Wisconsin, he got each camper a new pair of Nike football shoes.

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Warne makes sure all his students know the storied history of Indian football. "I'm always telling these kids that the West Coast offense was started by Indians. The Carlisle Indian School with Pop Warner pretty much invented the forward pass. In their day they were unstoppable and beat all the schools like Notre Dame and Army. I've always got to remind them of the history." Little Wound High School (whose scoreboard is in the background) allows Jim full use of the facilities.

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A "Razzle Dazzle Rez sytle" football game is organized at the end of the camp where everyone is eligible to touch the ball so everybody has a chance to score. "As an old lineman I never got a chance to score, so I like keeping it inclusive as possible," says Warne.



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"At the end of everyday we all gather in the circle to do breakdowns," Coach Warne says. "I tell them to yell and at first they just kind of raise their voices. But by the end they're screaming at the top of their lungs." The circle is a big part of his culture: "I teach them the medicine wheel philosophy. A balance between the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional."

**Source: ESPN.com**

<http://sports.espn.go.com/espnmag/story?id=3495819>