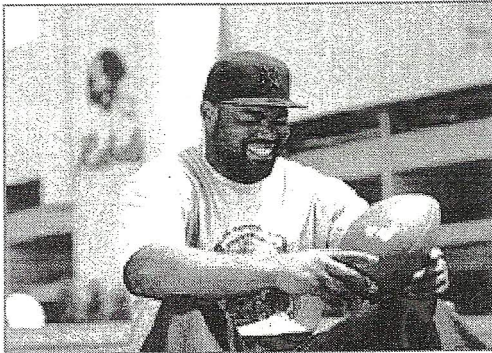




# From homeless to the NFL: Oher's journey to draft unique

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By Jarrett Bell, USA TODAY



By Lisa W. Buser for USA TODAY

Michael Oher says he doesn't hold grudges against anyone for the misfortune he encountered as a child. "I don't dwell on anything," Oher says. "I'm not going to feel sorry for myself because I didn't have a place to stay a lot of time. It is what it is. We've got to go through some things in life. Take it and run with it."

OXFORD, Miss. — He was two years old, maybe, he figures. They were walking alone, dangerously on the side of a highway. Just Michael Oher and his brothers. He has no idea where they were headed, or their condition when they arrived. Details are fuzzy.

But he swears it happened. Oher still sees the cars speeding by, a snippet in the back of his mind.

It is the earliest memory of his life.

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4 "That's all I can remember," Oher, 22, a projected first-round NFL draft pick, said as he tore into a shrimp po' boy last week. "We were trying to get to where we needed to be."

5 The vision apparently does not haunt, badger or even slightly irritate Oher, a survivor who now tools along highways in a black Hummer. He seeks no explanation.

6 "It means absolutely nothing now," he says, cheerfully.

7 Like so many perilous encounters from his life, it rolls more than it lingers.

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8 Meet Michael Oher (pronounced OAR), a 6-5, 309-pound All-America tackle from the University of Mississippi who is the subject of a best-selling book — *The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game*, which is being turned into a movie — but until a few years ago was legally Michael Williams.

9 Among 13 siblings from the poorest part of Memphis, he never knew his father, whose murder he learned of months after the fact in high school. His mother, Denise Oher, was addicted to crack cocaine. The kids were scattered about.

10 Michael attended 11 schools in nine years. If not in a foster home, he lived with friends. He was homeless.

11 "As I look back on stuff, it's crazy how I got here," he says. "But it didn't seem tough at the time. I just lived day to day, did the best I could."

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