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"He's going to work," Markuson, Oher's third college position coach, says he tells them. "The game is important to him."

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Tuohy, once a record-setting point guard who led Ole Miss to a Southeastern Conference title in 1981 and currently a radio analyst for the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies, thinks Oher's NFL career ultimately will be shaped by the traits that helped him beat life's adversities.

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A competitive fire. A willingness to accept input. An easygoing demeanor.

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"He's not mad at anybody," Tuohy says. "He should be. He has a lot of fire but no anger. God has blessed him with way more than physical ability."

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Tuohy learned something significant about Oher a few years ago, when they were in the process of getting his driver's license and had trouble finding Social Security records. They discovered Oher's legal surname was Williams — his biological father's name. He never knew, as school records listed him as Oher.

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"I hit the ceiling, 'How could that happen?'" Tuohy says. "But it didn't bother him a lick. He just wanted that driver's license."

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Says Oher: "I don't dwell on anything. 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."

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Oher can never forget what he's endured. He says he can't pass a homeless person on the street without digging into his pocket and offering money. "I know how hard it is," he says.

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Holidays spark memories, too. They were never special. Oher would go outside on Christmas and watch other kids play with their new toys. Birthdays were not to be celebrated, either.

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"I went through a lot of those with nothing," he says. "That's why it's just another date to me."

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Oher also has a firm grasp on this exact moment in time.

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"I'm fulfilling my dream," he says. "It's unbelievable, too."

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