everything’s bigger in Texas, and Texans will be the first to tell you that. They’ve got big belt buckles, the big D and big hearts. So because of his size alone, Seth Wand ’03 fits right in. At 6-foot-7 and 320 pounds, he wears a size 16 shoe, and his size 20 wedding ring was custom made with a hinge to accommodate his massive knuckles. His favorite snack? A steak dinner at midnight.

Size definitely matters in Texas, and that’s one reason why the NFL’s Houston Texans are counting on the big offensive left tackle to create some on-field magic and let the rest of the league know they don’t mess with Texas.

The third-round draft pick is the first Northwest graduate to have a starting position in the NFL, and as such, he has a multi-million dollar responsibility—protecting the blindside of quarterback David Carr.

But other than his NFL build, big No. 78, or Wando as his teammates call him, defies the stereotype of a professional athlete in the public consciousness.

For one thing, playing in the NFL was not a childhood dream for Wand. In fact, he doesn’t consider himself a sports fan.

“I never watched football growing up,” he said. “I never had a favorite team or player because I just didn’t follow it. I never played football until my brother played in high school, and I only played because he did. I was good at it, so I kept on playing, and then I got a scholarship to Northwest and all of a sudden I’m drafted, and now here I am in the NFL.

“There are only 53 guys on the Texans, and there are probably 53,000 guys who wish they could be on an NFL team. Playing on this level is just not something I thought about when I was growing up.”

Unlike the outspoken, flashy athletes often seen on the highlight shows, he’s shy, laidback, soft spoken and down to earth. He drives a GMC pickup truck, has a soft spot for cats and spends his free time playing video games.

“The only reason I know the NFL teams, what divisions they are in and some of the big time players is from playing football video games as a kid,” Wand said. “Joe Montana on the video games would be really good, and when he threw the ball to Jerry Rice, Rice would always catch it.”

Above all, he has remained level-headed—especially considering a few years ago he was sacking groceries and now has a three-year contract that nets a seven-figure income.

For this gentle giant, playing in the NFL is just a job.

Story by Mitzi Lutz
Photos by Darren Whitley
Before coming to Northwest, Wand was a "small" 240-pound defensive lineman at Springfield's Catholic High School, and "all I ever did was run over anybody," he said.

Northwest's coaching staff convinced him his body was built for the offensive line.

They knew what they were talking about.

"Besides his massive size, he's got feet like a ballerina," said Northwest offensive line coach Bart Tatum who persuaded Wand to give Northwest a shot. "He's very diligent and treats football like a craft. All you have to do is tell him something one time and he'll remember it and execute on the field."

The coach/athlete relationship has progressed to a friendship. Wand and Tatum continue to talk on the phone every week.

"He's as nice, as gentle and as kind of a human being as you'll ever find." Tatum said. "But, you don't have a starting position. 

Wand only seeks one thing. He wanted to be in the NFL. He was persistent and continued to talk on the phone every week."

Springfield's Catholic High School, and "all I ever did was run over everybody," he said. "Grandma (Barbara) Bush was there, so that was pretty cool. I've been to several events were you sign autographs; I recently participated in an airplane towing contest; and I've been a part of a deal where people pay several hundred dollars a plate just to sit and eat with a Texans player."

While signing autographs, rubbing elbows with high profile personalities and a comfortable lifestyle are all part of the job, Wand only seeks one thing.

"I just want respect from my peers," he said.

"That, and a Super Bowl ring would be nice," Beth quickly added.

They'll have to make that ring custom, of course. Size 20.