

# Poyer, Bills on target for big season

Astoria grad in his 10th year

By GARY HENLEY  
The Astorian

Finally, a more routine offseason for Astoria's Jordan Poyer.

No masks required, his youth football camp was back in session, the golf tournament made its second appearance, and Poyer will be entering the 2022 NFL season more motivated than ever.

There is a contract issue, but all that will take care of itself. Either way, Poyer is returning for his 10th season of professional football, this time as a first team All-Pro safety. And assuming he's still with the same team, he and the Buffalo Bills are considered by many to be the leading candidate to be on the field for Super Bowl LVII, Feb. 12, 2023 in Glendale, Arizona.

The Bills recently made their annual trek to St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York, site of their training camp. A minor elbow injury kept Poyer out of action for a week, while — as of early this week — Poyer's contract renegotiation is still unresolved.

But with Poyer, it's all about being on the field. As he recently tweeted, "I'm just excited to be back and playing football with my teammates again. I want to be here and continue to be a leader for this team."

Earlier this summer, Poyer was on the field and the golf course for one fun-filled weekend in his hometown, where the former Astoria High School star did a lot of fundraising, autographing and some golfing with the locals.

For the first time since 2019, he was able to conduct his one-day youth football camp, teaching young athletes the basics of football for four hours at CMH Field.

"It's been a good offseason," Poyer said during his brief homecoming. "My daughter (Aliyah) is 5, going on 18. And it's fun to have the camp again ... we didn't have it during COVID, and last year we did the (Jordan Poyer) Experience," where fans got to witness a routine offseason Poyer workout.

Two days after the camp, Poyer was the host for his second annual "Jordan Poyer Open" golf tournament at the Astoria Golf & Country Club.

Along with locals who took part, Poyer brought teammate and fellow Buffalo All-Pro safety Micah Hyde, who was making his first-ever visit to Oregon.

"Another star coming to Astoria," Poyer remarked. "Every year I'm going to try and get somebody big to come out here."

Meanwhile, Hyde's offseason was much the same as Poyer's.

Hyde also hosts a camp and an annual charity softball game, in which Poyer takes part. The two teammates often attend each other's offseason fundraising events.

"I actually owe him a couple," Hyde said, "because he's been to several events that I've had. It's good to get up here and see where he's from. We kind of come from the same type of place."

Hyde and Poyer are literally brothers in arms when it comes to their NFL experience.

Both were drafted in 2013 — Hyde by the Green Bay Packers, Poyer by the Philadelphia Eagles — and both signed with the Bills in 2017.

The two have spent over half their careers playing opposite each other in the defensive secondary. Both are 31 years old and played football (as all-state quarterbacks), basketball and baseball in high school, Hyde at Fostoria High School in Fostoria, Ohio, and Poyer at Astoria.

Having Poyer playing opposite him in the secondary has "meant a lot" to his career, Hyde says.

"As safeties, we're able to see things alike and communicate on the field. I feel like I've become a better player playing with Po, and I think it's the other way around, too.

"Each and every play we're communicating. We've played so many snaps together, at times we don't even need to communicate. Thousands of snaps, games and practices."

With the season opener less than a month away — the Bills and the Los Angeles Rams play the first game on Sept. 8 — all the NFL experts are busy making their final predictions for 2022.

At or near the top of every list are the Buffalo Bills, who seem to be the consensus pick to represent the AFC in the Super Bowl.

There's no such thing as a sure thing, but Hyde and Poyer both know 2022 could be a special season for the Bills.

"Every year is different, but you always have high expectations for your team and yourself," Poyer said. "Obviously, we have a very good football team, but that doesn't mean anything. We still have to come in and work, take one day, one game and one play at a time."

Even before suffering a hyperextended elbow during training camp, Poyer said, "injuries happen. Stuff that can change things really fast. It's not always the team that's the most talented



Jordan Poyer was back in Astoria this summer having a good time during his youth football camp at CMH Field.

Gary Henley/The Astorian



Jordan Poyer and Micah Hyde during Buffalo's recent training camp in Rochester, New York.

Buffalobills.com

at the end that wins it. It's the team that stays together through all the adversity and stuff that goes on during the season."

During his short time in Astoria, Poyer touched on a few different issues surrounding football, on and off the field.

## Flag or tackle football?

A recent debate among parents of youth football players — should their kids be playing flag or tackle?

"Especially at a younger age, I don't think kids are out there smacking that hard," Poyer said. "They're just learning the game. Flag football at a young age is good to learn the game. Some kids want to go out there and hit a little. But (flag football) is a lot safer at that age than it is when you get to the older levels, when they're learning to tackle."

He added, "it's just important to learn the fundamentals of football at a young age."

For Poyer, "I was in first, second, third grade playing tackle football in Ilwaco, and it was a great opportunity for me to learn the game, learn the fundamentals and how to tackle. Kids at that age aren't out there going 'Ray Lewis' on people. The helmet weighs more than they do, so they're more grabbing and pulling people to the ground. I do encourage parents to at least look into getting their kids out there on the football field at a young age."

## Rule changes

Speaking of tackling, some of the ways Poyer once learned to tackle are almost illegal nowadays, with targeting and helmet-to-helmet rules for defenders.

"The game is definitely changing," he said. "They're trying to make it a lot more safer, which makes it harder on defenders trying to come in and make a bang-bang play."

"You look at films from the '80s and '90s, if (receivers) came across the middle, there were really no limitations for defensive players. Now the target area is so small, when a guy is coming across the middle, that puts an extra thought process in how you're going to take him down."

"Obviously, you don't want money to come out of your pocket," Poyer said, referring to fines. "It's a tough game to play as a defender. It's an offensive game now. It's what football is ... scoring points, and people want to see that."

## Social media

Poyer has learned that anything he tweets or texts on social media will go viral, especially if it's the least bit controversial. There is no privacy for professional athletes.

"I don't like social media nowadays. It feels like you can't say anything without it being magnified. Whether you have an opinion on something or not, it's going to get skewed and thrown around in different ways.

"It's tough for athletes nowadays,

especially the ones coming up. After a game, you can scroll and read what's being said, and that can really mess up a kid's thought process. It's tougher now than when I was growing up, when we

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didn't have social media. Social media, to me, is not real life. What you do, how you speak, how you act ... that's real life."

## Golf tournament host

Poyer has only in recent years taken up golf. Now it's to the point where the Jordan Poyer Open, held June 20 at the Astoria Golf & Country Club, is not the only Jordan Poyer golf tournament of the summer.

Less than a month later, Poyer hosted the "Jordan Poyer Celebrity Open" at Coral Ridge Country Club in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Originally intended to benefit the Erie County Medical Center in Buffalo, the medical center partnered with Poyer to help raise funds for the Buffalo 5/14 Survivor Fund, as a result of the mass shooting on Buffalo's east side May 14.

A number of Buffalo teammates took part in the tournament, along with former Bills running back Thurman Thomas and current Miami quarterback Tua Tagovailoa.

## Painful ending to 2021

Thirteen seconds away from winning a divisional playoff game at Kansas City, the Bills watched as the Chiefs rallied and won in overtime, ending Buffalo's season in dramatic, heartbreaking fashion. Had they won, the Bills would have hosted Cincinnati in the AFC Championship game.

Unless you win the Super Bowl, "every team goes into the next season with that bad taste," Poyer said. "There's nothing we can do to take back that game. It was an amazing game, and a blessing to be a part of it. We were on the wrong side of it, but you learn so much from it, use it as motivation, and try not to make those same mistakes again."

Hyde — who has missed the playoffs just once in his nine-year career — said "until you win a Super Bowl, there's always a motivation. Whether you finish 32nd or second the year before, the object of the game is to win a Super Bowl. We're still chasing that, and until we do it, everyone is going to be chomping at the bit to get back."

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