

COMMUNITY FOCUS

MAX SULLIVAN RECEIVES 2012 HOWARD DREW AWARD

By Coach Larry Libow



Presenting the award to Max Sullivan is Cynthia Roberson of Springfield, the great granddaughter of Howard Drew

High School of Commerce Track Team Captain, senior Max Sullivan, is the 2012 Howard Drew Award winner. The award, given to a Springfield track and field athlete, is for “athletic excellence, pursuit of scholarship and perseverance despite injury.”

One hundred years ago, Springfield High School student Howard Drew was selected to represent the United States at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. An injury in the semi-final heat of the 100 meter dash prevented Drew, the overwhelming favorite, from bringing home Gold in the 100m and 200m events. World War I caused the 1916 Olympics to be

cancelled so Drew never received Olympic recognition. During the years he attended USC on a work-study scholarship, he held every indoor and outdoor sprint World Record. He was the first person to be called “The World’s Fastest Human.” He studied Law at Drake University, became one of only four African-American lawyers in Connecticut, and was the first black judge in that state.

In many respects, although 100 years apart, Max Sullivan and Howard Drew have some uncanny parallels. Both were enthusiastic about football, and both were running backs even though both were/are of small stature, and both were captains of their track teams. Max will be the first in his family to attend college when he enters Franklin Pierce University this Fall and I believe that Drew was the first in his family to attend college.

Both Howard Drew and Max Sullivan had to deal with injury and disappointment. Both sustained injuries that prevented them from

achieving their full athletic potential—Drew at the Olympics and Max during a pre-season scrimmage in his senior year where he sustained a torn ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament), which resulted in his inability to play to his potential during the football season, and seriously affected his senior track season. Max underwent physical therapy and wore a brace in order to lead the Commerce Boys Track Team as a captain and ran well enough to qualify for the Western Mass Championships. Had the injury not happened, Max would certainly have been in the 100m finals at Western Mass and the Commerce Boys 4x1 Relay would likely have repeated as Gold Medalists instead of taking 2nd place. Even though Max was unable to anchor his team’s 4x1 relay, a spot he held since his Sophomore year, in the spirit of Howard Drew, he held the starting blocks for his relay. It was the same selfless act as Drew saying that it didn’t matter who won Olympic Gold as



Max Sullivan receives a \$1,000 scholarship check from the Big-Y, only one of a handful of urban youth to receive such an award long as it was another American.

Max Sullivan is a deserving recipient of the 2012 Howard Drew Award. Like Drew, Max Sullivan is not just a gifted athlete who was denied glory due to injury, but a student/athlete destined to make his mark in his community because of his pursuit of scholarship. W.E.B. Dubois chose to put Howard Drew on the cover of the July, 1915 Crisis. It wasn’t the “sports edition” it was the “Education Number.” ■