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Seahawks LB Bobby Wagner Nominated For 2023 Walter Payton NFL Man Of The Year Award

Seahawks linebacker Bobby Wagner is his team’s nominee for the prestigious Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award for the second time in his career.

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Throughout his NFL career, Bobby Wagner has quietly given his time and money to numerous causes with little fanfare.

Yes, sometimes the media would catch wind of a good deed, like the time Wagner surprised people at a Seattle Safeway by picking up the tab for shoppers' groceries two days before Thanksgiving, or the time he and Tyler Lockett quietly called the Renton School District to pay off student lunch debt for families that couldn't pay their bills, something he first did with no one knowing in 2021, and that he and Lockett have done together the past two years.

But for the most part, Wagner was happy to let his philanthropic acts fly under the radar.

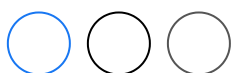
"It comes from a genuine place, so it's not really something I cared about getting attention for," Wagner said.

But when you play in the NFL for more than a decade, building a Hall of Fame resume as a six-time first-team All-Pro and member of the NFL's 2010s All-Decade Team, you can only keep a low profile off the field for so long, and in more recent years those close to Wagner, including family, friends, and current and former teammates, have been pushing the All-Pro linebacker to be a little more public with his good deeds. After all, the more people hear what their favorite athletes are doing to help in the community, the more likely people are to support those causes or to find their own ways to make a difference.

"It was more so the people around me pushing me to be more open about it, pushing me to let people see certain things," Wagner said, mentioning Tyler Lockett, Doug Baldwin, Seahawks VP of player affairs Maurice Kelly and Microsoft Philanthropies program manager La Shanda Hurst, who also serves as Wagner's philanthropic advisor, as just some of the people who have pushed him to open up. "If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't care who knew, because that doesn't matter. The only thing that matters are the people who are being helped."

And over the course of his career, including the past year, a lot of people and organizations have been helped by Wagner, which is why he is the Seahawks' nominee for the 2023 Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award.

This is Wagner's second time being nominated for the prestigious award, which recognizes one NFL player each year for his excellence on and off the field, having



nominated multiple times for the NFL's Man of the Year Award, which was established in 1970, and renamed for the late Hall of Fame running back, Walter Payton, in 1999. Other Seahawks nominated multiple times are Tyler Lockett, Russell Wilson, Jon Kitna, Eugene Robinson and Mike Tice. Wilson (2020) and Steve Largent (1988), are the only Seahawks to have won the award.

"It's a really cool honor to be nominated for something like this, because it doesn't just highlight the stuff on the field, it highlights the stuff off the field, trying to affect people's lives in a positive way," said Wagner, who is [also the Seahawks' nominee for the Art Rooney Sportsmanship Award](#). "It's cool."

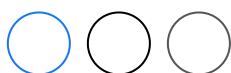
Some of the causes Wagner supports are very personal, most notably [the FAST54 campaign he launched this year in partnership with Virginia Mason Franciscan Health](#), which raises awareness for the signs of stroke and raises money for the [Phenia Mae Fund](#), which is named in honor of his mother, Phenia Mae, who he lost to a stroke when he was in college.

I want to share something important to me. I've partnered with the [@seahawks](#) & [@VMFHealth](#) to create FAST54. Our goal is to raise stroke awareness and provide for patients in need. Please check out the FAST54 comic book and donate to the Phenia Mae Fund. Link in Bio pic.twitter.com/RYCvGyx49d
— Bobby Wagner (@Bwagz) September 21, 2023

But other times, Wagner will just see or hear about a need, do some research, then get involved. That's how he started paying off lunch debt, and why he started the Tackle Everything Tech Tour, which takes students on visits to companies such as Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Snap, Boeing, Bessemer Ventures, Marcy Ventures, and others, in an effort to expose students to tech careers.

"Sometimes I just see stuff, like I heard about somebody not being able to afford school lunch, and I found out that if you can't pay that balance off in elementary school, it follows you into middle school," he said. "I didn't know that. I wouldn't have known that unless I got put in that situation, so you try to help that. It's just being around a lot of people who are doing a lot of amazing things, and seeing if I can either be a part of it or try to do my part to make a positive change."

Wagner has also become a big supporter of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in recent years, starting with the simple act of wearing sweatshirts of HBCUs in postgame press conferences, and continuing with him choosing the HBCU



Nominee in 2019. This year, Wagner participated in the Seahawks' first-ever HBCU tour earlier this year in partnership with Seattle Public School's WHOLE Mentoring Program, and The BE Project.

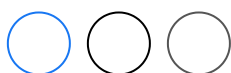
On that trip, Wagner surprised unsuspecting students when the tour stopped at Howard University in Washington, D.C., also spending time with the Howard football team. Then, when the Seahawks recapped the students' trip with a 15-minute documentary, Wagner surprised the group with new Jordans when they visited the team training facility for a documentary viewing.

Beginning in January, Wagner will start an MBA program at Howard, something of a full-circle moment for someone who, being from the West Coast, didn't really know HBCUs were an option for him coming out of high school.

"All the work I've done with HBCUs, it's kind of allowed me the opportunity to go back and get my MBA," he said. "That will be a cool full-circle moment."

These more public acts of giving don't always come easy to Wagner, but with a push from those close to him, he's come to recognize the value of sometimes having his good deeds take place in the public eye.

"People opened my mind up to the concept of, if other people see it, it allows it to become a bigger thing and then people can get more help," he said. "So that was a concept I had to push past, because a lot of it was just me not wanting to lose the

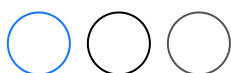


As the Seahawks' nominee, Wagner will wear a Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year helmet decal through the end of the season, and he along with the other 31 nominees will be recognized for their achievements during the week leading up to Super Bowl LVIII.

The 2023 Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year winner will be announced during NFL Honors on the Thursday before the Super Bowl, with the winner receiving a \$250,000 donation to the charity of his choice. Wagner and the other nominees will receive a \$55,000 donation to the charity of their choice as well, and can help him raise more through the league's annual Charity Challenge. Fans can vote on X (formerly Twitter) by posting #WPMOYChallenge along with the name/X handle of their chosen nominee or by voting directly on [NFL.com/ManOfTheYear](https://www.nfl.com/man-of-the-year). The nominee who receives the most collective hashtag mentions and votes will win an additional \$35,000 donation from Nationwide to the charity of their choice, with the runner-up receiving \$10,000 and the third-place winner receiving \$5,000. Charity Challenge voting takes place from Dec. 5th to Jan. 8th.

For more on Wagner's recent community initiatives, see below:

- For the 2023 season, Wagner partnered with Virginia Mason Franciscan Health to launch a new campaign, FAST54. The campaign raises awareness for the signs of stroke and raises money for the Phenia Mae Fund, which is named in honor of his mother who he lost to a stroke. FAST54 features a comic book and video with Wagner as a superhero and educates readers on F.A.S.T., an acronym to help people recall the signs of a stroke (Face drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulties and Time to call 911). Wagner collaborated in the story writing and development of the book, and more than 10,000 copies have already been distributed free to the public. The Phenia Mae Fund provides stroke patients with the equipment needed to aid in their rehabilitation and more than \$250,000 has been pledged and raised to date. Fans interested in donating to the Phenia Mae Fund can do so [here](#). Wagner has dedicated his time to support the initiative, making school visits to read the comic to elementary students, and participating in a speaking engagement at Microsoft to share more about the FAST54 initiative. Wagner has also been a longtime supporter of the American Stroke Association through donations and participation in fundraising efforts.
- In a collaborative effort with Microsoft, Wagner participated in the Seahawks' first-ever HBCU tour earlier this year in partnership with Seattle Public School's WHOLE Mentoring Program, and The BE Project. Wagner joined the students on their tour of Howard University in Washington, D.C. When the Seahawks recapped the students' trip with a 15-minute documentary, Wagner then surprised the group with new Jordans when they visited the team training facility for a documentary viewing.



- Wagner has been a supporter of the Boys & Girls Clubs of King County for more than eight years. In the summer of 2023, he supported their annual Field Day event, which included hosting more than 800 youth at the University of Washington's Husky Stadium.
- In early 2023, Wagner made a generous donation to the [Time for Change Foundation](#), which helps women recreate their life as they move into apartments of their own after they've been incarcerated, in rehabilitation centers or in domestic violence shelters. His donation helped support funding for appliances such as refrigerators, as well as other necessities such as mattresses or towels, to outfit the new apartments.
- In support of youth education, Wagner created a Tackle Everything Tech Tour. The tour took students along to visits at companies such as Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Snap, Boeing, Bessemer Ventures, Marcy Ventures, and many others, in an effort to show them a wide variety of career opportunities they could pursue in the future.
- Behind the scenes and often without fanfare or recognition, Wagner frequently offers community support privately through providing grocery gift cards or holiday meals for those in need. For the past several years, he has also privately paid off student lunch account debts at local schools.



PHOTOS: Bobby Wagner 2023 Walter Payton NFL Man Of The Year Nominee

Seahawks linebacker Bobby Wagner has been recognized as the Seahawks' Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Nominee for 2023 for all the work that he has done in the community over the years. Check out some of the best photos from Bobby Wagner's work in the community throughout his time in Seattle.

