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## Irondale two-way lineman Jimmy Gjere is a no-nonsense guy, a leader and a force on the football field

The state's other best lineman, Irondale's Jimmy Gjere, is a no-nonsense guy, a leader and a force on the football field.

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One dollar and a promise is all it took for Irondale football coach Ben Geisler to swing what he calls "one of the best deals of his life."

During an offseason conditioning session at the New Brighton-based school, Greg Gjere entered the weight room looking for Geisler. Looming behind Gjere, staring wide-eyed at the workout equipment, was his son, Jimmy, a 6-foot-3, 220-pound eighth-grader.

The elder Gjere was hoping to buy some equipment from the varsity program because Irondale's youth development program didn't have any that fit his son. After quickly sizing up Jimmy Gjere and silently projecting what he could become at the high school level, Geisler presented his terms.

"You don't have to buy the equipment from us," Geisler remembers telling Gjere. "All I will charge you to rent the stuff is \$1 and a promise that Jimmy doesn't transfer to another school."

Done deal.

"It was a no-brainer on my part," Geisler said with a laugh last week.

"I remember that day," Gjere said. "I was pudgy back then."

Not anymore.

Gjere has developed into a skilled 6-foot-8, 295-pound offensive and defensive lineman who has given an oral commitment to play with the University of Minnesota. Rated a four-star recruit by [Rivals.com](#), Gjere has quick feet to go with a strong core of mass and muscle.

Last season, Gjere was vital in the Knights' spread offensive attack that generated nearly 2,100 yards during a 6-3 season. Whether it was pulling to lead a sweep or going into pass protection, he was a force. He was selected the North Suburban Conference offensive lineman of the year.

Irondale, which lost many of its skill players from last season's team to graduation, struggled in its season opener last week, losing 35-0 to Totino-Grace and generating less than 100 yards of offense. Part of the Eagles' success came from double- and triple-teaming Gjere and running plays away from him.

"What a tremendous player he is," Totino-Grace coach Jeff Ferguson said. "He's got it all. He is big, talented and is a great teammate. He is an excellent athlete and leader."

Gjere responds to individual accolades with a smile and an "aw-shucks" demeanor.

If it weren't for Cretin-Derham Hall's Seantrel Henderson, a 6-foot-8, 337-pound lineman ranked

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the top college recruit in the country, Gjere might be considered Minnesota's best lineman.

"I am just fine flying under the radar," Gjere said. "Seantrel is a great athlete and deserves the attention he gets. I understood early on that there is no glamour in being a lineman, and that suits me just fine.

"It isn't hard to stay in the shadows. It was how I was raised. Too many kids these days have the 'all-about-me-mentality.' They spend too much time and work trying to put on a show for everybody. I am a no-nonsense kind of guy. If I get some attention, that is fine, too, but I will deal with it in a mature way."

In youth leagues, Gjere played tight end because he was quick and fast for a big kid. He remained with his classmates as a freshman, primarily at tight end.

"I don't think it was real obvious as a freshman that I should have been a varsity player," Gjere said. "It was good for me to stay with my own grade. A lot of the tradition at Irondale is that not many underclassmen get to start. I didn't want to be considered a special case."

As a 6-foot-6, 260-pound sophomore, Gjere didn't figure to play varsity because of depth on the lines. He was fine with that, figuring he still had two seasons to play. But that changed when an assistant coach pulled him aside during a practice and inserted him with the starters.

"We wanted to see how he would do," Geisler said. "Part of the problem with him developing rapidly as a football player was that he played four different sports."

One of Gjere's sporting loves is hockey. A defenseman on Irondale's varsity, he is 7 feet tall on

skates. He also played basketball in Irondale's traveling leagues. But entering his freshman year, he was forced to make a decision about which winter sport to play.

He chose hockey because he loved the hard skating and the checking.

"I didn't mean to, but I think I made the basketball coach here mad," Gjere said of boys varsity coach Jon DeMars.

Gjere is undecided about whether he will play hockey this winter and may focus on starting his workout regimen with the Gophers. In the spring, he will play baseball as a first baseman and pitcher.

"THE GOOD LORD BLESSED HIM WITH GENES AND GOOD MORALS," GEISLER SAID. "ATHLETICALLY, HE IS BETTER THAN ANYTHING I HAVE EVER SEEN." THE JIMMY GJERE FILE

**Age:** 17

**School:** Irondale, New Brighton

**Year:** Senior

**Family:** Parents, Greg and Niki; sister, Megan, 15

**Favorite subject:** Math

**Grade-point average:** 3.5

**College choice:** Minnesota

**College offers:** Minnesota, Wisconsin, Stanford, Tennessee

**College major:** Engineering

**Hobbies:** Hunting, fishing, friends

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**Legacy:** "I want to be remembered as that kid that everyone knew and that they didn't have anything bad to say about him. That he was just a good kid that got it done in the classroom and on the field. A guy that gave it his all."

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