



---

**NEWS RELEASE**

---

**DEFENDING 1A CHAMP MOGOLLON LOOKS TO MANER AT QB**

PHOENIX, AZ (June 22, 2009) – How does Heber Mogollon coach Ron Tenney assess his team’s chances of winning its second straight Class 1A football championship in the fall of 2009?

All he has to do is look at the house next door.

That’s where J.T. Maner lives.

Maner, who will be a junior, is Mogollon’s quarterback, and a good one at that.

At nearly 6-feet-3 and 175 pounds, Maner is a well-rounded athlete. He has a strong arm and the ability to secure the ball and run.

He provided the best example in the state championship game, rushing for 179 yards and five touchdowns and throwing three scoring passes in a 66-34 victory over Pima.

“I guess you could say he is our version of Tim Tebow (University of Florida quarterback who can run and pass),” Tenney said. “He’s a good athlete. He played basketball and did well at the state track meet.”

Maner won the long jump and finished third in the 400 meters and triple jump.

Tenney joked that Maner probably doesn’t always like having his head coach live next door, watching his every move. It is almost like having a second father.

“I ask him, “Who’s that you were with last night?’ Or, “Why were you out so late?’ Tenney said jokingly. “Really, I don’t have to worry about him. He comes from a good family. His parents (Jim and Jill) are both educators and J.T. knows what he needs to do.”

Maner said he is improving in the classroom.

And living next to his coach is fine with him.

“We go over there sometimes on weekends and watch games, and we talk about our games a lot so we’re kind of on the same page,” Maner said.

He enjoys running and passing.

“I think it’s good to mix it up a little bit,” he said.

Maner’s brother, J.R., graduated and will play at Eastern Arizona (junior) College, and Mogollon had a number of other key seniors depart. That will mean that more leadership responsibilities will go to J.T. and some of his teammates this year.

He is looking forward to the challenge.

“I think I have improved more in trying to be a leader,” he said. “I’ve started being more vocal in the huddle.”

Though Mogollon plays 1A's eight-man game, it often works during in summer passing leagues against Mogollon Rim/White Mountain-area teams that play the traditional 11-man formations, such as Class 3A Snowflake and Show Low. Tenney also expects his team to be matched against Class 5A Division I Mesa Mountain View when it comes to Heber for its annual preseason camp in late July.

Mogollon begins preseason practice Aug. 3 and will have some new faces, particularly on the offensive line.

Maner said there might be a period of adjustment for one or two games, "until guys learn where to be, but I think everything is going to turn out all right.

"We know that everyone is going to be after us because we are the champs. We've just got to go out and play every game like it's our last, like the other team is the state champs," Maner said.

Tenney is eager to see how Maner responds under those conditions.

"He is so competitive by nature," Tenney said. "He's hard on himself, and it's a big challenge to leave the last play, if it didn't turn out right, behind him, that it's over. But he showed what he could do last year. Now he's older and we have a lot of confidence in him that he can get the job done."

**Have a Story Idea:**

The AIA is looking for story ideas on member high schools, including its student-athlete, coaches and administrators. Have a story that you think should be shared with the AIA community? Email your idea to Don Ketchum at [dketchum@aiaonline.org](mailto:dketchum@aiaonline.org).