Germain Ifedi is rarely the loudest member of the Texas A&M football team, but he is usually one of the easiest to notice. At 6 feet, 5 inches and 235 pounds, Ifedi certainly stands out without having to say much.

One thing he is not afraid to do is smile. A grin constantly graces his face, and it’s noticeable and sustained. Oftentimes, his facial expression says it all.

“I’ll analyze a situation before I speak on it,” said Ifedi. “I don’t want to speak on anything I’m not informed or educated about. I’ll speak when I need to speak. But I try to always be positive. Even if things are not going according to plan you have to always be positive.”

For many reasons, Ifedi has earned the right to the permanent facial expression. The junior is a fixture on the Aggies’ offensive line and held the starting job at left tackle for much of 2014. In his two seasons at A&M, Ifedi has piled up 24 career starts.

His prowess and power up front have already attracted NFL scouts, and he can solidify himself as an early draft pick with continued quality play. That makes it no surprise the smile has become Ifedi’s signature expression.

Kyle Field has also provided the affable Ifedi with several reasons for joy.

The 2015 campaign marks the maiden voyage of newly renovated Kyle Field. Ifedi, along with the rest of this year’s team, will be the first to take the field following the completion of
the largest stadium redevelopment in college football history.
“IT will be special,” Ifedi said.
Perhaps even a little more so to him. After all, he helped build it.
The Houston Westside product is a construction science major at Texas A&M, and interned with Manhattan-Vaughn Construction this spring and summer. Manhattan-Vaughn is the construction partner that was selected to oversee the ornate redevelopment of A&M’s home stadium.

“I know what it took to build this,” Ifedi said. “I know the man-hours. You get a different appreciation for it.”
Ifedi grew up as the youngest of four boys and had an immediate affinity for construction.
“I was always fascinated by building things,” said Ifedi, who noted that Legos were the toy of choice from his childhood.
His father, Ben, saw it first-hand when Germain was young.
“(Germain) absolutely loved Legos,” recalled Ben Ifedi. “He would build any and everything with the abundance of Legos he had. When asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, instead of giving the typical doctor, lawyer, police response, he said he wanted to be a construction man.”

When selecting a university during the recruiting process, Germain Ifedi looked past his days as a student-athlete. What school would shed the brightest light on his future?
“A lot of things change with a
football program, but one thing that never changes is the school,” Ifedi said. “The academic pedigree (at A&M) is unmatched, and the Aggie network drew me here.”

When it came time to declare a major he set aside a few days to search, and not surprisingly, it led him to construction science. But, the decision didn’t come without some concern.

“Would I be able to do this with football?” Ifedi wondered. “It’s a lot of work.”

Indeed, it is. Construction science at Texas A&M includes classes on construction project management, estimating, safety, materials and methods, surveying and ethics, among others.

Still, Ifedi has maintained, stayed ahead and thrived at both football and school. The internship was another brick in the sturdy foundation he’s built for himself.

“I was able to shadow one of the project engineers in the mechanical, electrical and plumbing department,” said Ifedi, of his time on the Kyle Field project. “We were able to look at and fix problems. It’s about keeping all the moving pieces rolling together.”

By all accounts, Ifedi did just that.

“He also performed inspections out in the field,” said Greg McClure, a vice president with Manhattan Construction and the person in charge of managing the Kyle Field project. “We’d send him to review things once they were installed to ensure they were in per plans and specs. Of course, if he found something incorrect we didn’t hear any complaints about fixing it—I think the average construction worker was a bit intimidated by him.”

Ifedi balanced the work with director of football sports performance Larry Jackson’s offseason training program. After all, there is business to conduct inside the new stadium once the 2015 season kicks off.

Even though he was managing long days, often heading into the office around 6:30 a.m., Ifedi’s sessions with Jackson were unyielding. If Ifedi’s bright smile disappeared much, it was likely because of another grueling workout.

“If guys in the weight room don’t do what’s expected, that grin goes away,” said Jackson. “He’s always in a pretty good mood, but if you challenge him that grin can go away pretty quick. When he gets his mind set it’s going to get done a certain way, you pretty much have to stay out of his way, because he’s like a tornado coming down at the rest of the team.”

In one particular offseason workout, after the internship was complete, the team went through the dreaded Friday sled-pushing portion of Jackson’s program. It’s this kind of session that earned the strength coach the nickname, “Black Death.”

But, Ifedi seemed undeterred. He regularly pushed his sled out in front of the rest, finishing first in his heat on several occasions. While many were doubled-over, or even laid out on the ground, Ifedi still stood tall, ready for the next set.

“He’s had some time under those sleds since he’s been here,” said Jackson. “That sled can seem like a little Hot-Wheels car when he starts pushing it. He’s like a monster out there.”

Similar to an offseason workout, Ifedi’s grin can disappear on game day, too. Opponents have seen that he plays with a mean streak.

“From the field standpoint you’d think he’s a really bad person,” said fellow offensive lineman Mike Matthews. “He can definitely flip the switch on you. When he flips that switch,
everyone looks at him. He’s a really big dude, and he’s a scary guy when he gets angry. He’s a well-known leader on this team, and he’s been a leader since day one. He works out really hard in the weight room and sets a really good example for the young guys.”

While a career in construction may not be in Ifedi’s immediate future, the NFL is a strong possibility. However, he would not be the first Ifedi to hear his name called in the NFL Draft.

Just a few months ago, the St. Louis Rams selected Martin Ifedi, the third of the four Ifedi brothers, in the seventh round after his collegiate career at Memphis. Germain can draw from his brother’s experience, and thus far, that means focusing on successfully finishing his college career.

Said Ifedi: “(Martin) just told me ‘don’t let anything affect your play. Don’t look down the road and think about draft stock. Keep playing football

SERIOUS ABOUT SUCCESS

Germain Ifedi’s game face may be much different than his familiar off-the-field smile, but his dedication and unwavering work ethic in both competition and a Kyle Field construction internship are quite similar.
and everything else will handle itself.””

The Ifedi brothers are not strangers to success off the field, either.

The oldest, Benedict, is currently in his second year of residency at Memorial Hermann hospital in family medicine with a fellowship in sports medicine. Valentine, the second oldest brother, recently graduated from the University of Houston with a degree in biology and exercise science and is pursuing physical therapy.

The accomplishments are not much of a surprise to their father.

“To a certain extent I did envision this as I watched them grow up because they were always good, well-mannered children,” said Ben Ifedi. “They always maintained good grades and stayed out of trouble. They all worked hard, and it’s a wonderful feeling seeing their hard work pay dividends.”

Ben said it’s been a thrill watching Germain play in one college football’s great venues, and he expects the experience this season will be even greater.

“Game day at Kyle Field watching Germain is an exhilarating feeling,” he said. “I’m excited to see the new stadium knowing Germain had a hand in the renovations.”

After A&M and the NFL, Ifedi feels construction may very well be his calling.

“It’s the kind of industry that’s great to go into after football,” Ifedi said.

“We can go into a lot of different areas with the major, and the internship really opened those up to me, because we got to work with a lot of different trades. After football you want to have a focus.”

Judging from the impression he left during his internship this summer, McClure feels the business is Ifedi’s ultimate future.

“I believe he has the foundation,” McClure said. “He comes from a great family that values hard work. He just seems to be the type of person that no matter the fame or riches the NFL may bring, will continue to attempt to achieve great accomplishments in the construction industry.”

The 2015 season is getting closer by the day, and Ifedi looks to be one of the Aggies’ cornerstones.

“I pride myself on being a great leader,” Ifedi said. “It’s not all about yelling at someone. You have to know different types of ways to speak to guys. You have to understand what’s going on. There’s no cookie-cutter way to be a leader.”

Which goes back to Ifedi’s demeanor. He is known to analyze situations, looking deep into them before making a decision. He will likely lead with a smile but can erase it when needed. That’s the leader he’s built himself into.

On Sept. 12, the Aggies will take to Kyle Field for the first time this season, surrounded by a completely renovated stadium. Players and fans will be in awe, attempting to take it all in. Meanwhile, Ifedi will see everything from a completely different view.

“I’ve been thinking about it,” Ifedi said, the grin returning to his face as he pondered the fact that he will be playing in a stadium he helped construct.

“That’s the leader he’s built himself into.”