

# Maryland

## Terrapins: A Kicker's Story

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Kickers are not ordinary football players; they don't throw game winning touchdowns, or tackle other players. They are the players that must come through in the clutch when it matters the most. However, they also receive criticism if they miss just one kick, but that kick could mean all the difference. In my opinion, kickers are one of the most important players in football because they have the chance to score many points.

Chad Ryland is a phenomenal kicker who set a Big Ten record for 24 straight field goals. He is also the first Terrapin since 1996 to have two 50-yard field goals in the same game, a 52-yarder and a 53-yarder, which is the third longest in program history.

While in high school, during his sophomore year, he went to a football game with his dad who recommended that he kick for the football team. Chad played football at Cedar Crest High School, located in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, where he excelled by being awarded all-county and all-league kicker twice over, a 5-star recruit, as well as being ranked 24th in the nation for his class of 2018. Chad averaged around 61.9 yards per kickoff. However, he wasn't just a football player he was also a varsity starter baseball player and varsity starter soccer player. I watched one of his football games from high school and he scored a 75-yard kickoff with 3,84

seconds of hang time, during the same game he also kicked a 73-yard kickoff with 3.64 seconds of hang time.

In his first year of college at Eastern Michigan University (EMU), he made all 41 Points After Touchdowns (PAT's), 12 of 20 field goal attempts, and had three field goals against Northern Illinois, which was his season high. He made the game winning point against Purdue 20-19, and was named Mid-American Conference (MAC) winner of the week September 19. All of this while having a career long kick of 51 yards against San Diego State. Chad Ryland would continue to do very well at Eastern Michigan University until transferring to Maryland University. He has hit the ground running since attending Maryland University by earning academic All-MAC honor, ranking 18th nationally in field goal percentage, setting the school record with five made field goals in one game, and making 141 field goals out of 145.

Chad Ryland is currently a senior at Maryland University and has already made program history. During his time at EMU he has scored a total of 309 career points. He has proved to have a tremendous amount of talent and I know for sure he will carry it onto Maryland. In the season opening game he scored a 45-yard field goal and four-extra points against Buffalo. He has already set the Big Ten record for 24 consecutive field goals made against Michigan State.

According to an article I read from "testudotime", Chad is a perfectionist and always working to get better at football. He used to be an under-recruited kicker to one of the most accurate kickers in college football, and has a great chance of going to the NFL. Although Ryland was a varsity soccer player he didn't get his kicking strength overnight, he had an "extraordinary work ethic and uncanny mental discipline to get to that point", according to

“testudotime”. Ryland never stops practicing and that's what you need to become a successful kicker.

I had the amazing opportunity to interview Chad Ryland. The first question I asked him was “What made you want to be a kicker?” He said that during his sophomore year at Cedar Crest High School the football team needed a kicker. At this point Chad was already a varsity soccer and baseball player, so he was a great kicker already. He explained how his dad encouraged him to try out and they practiced together. When he practiced kicking field goals he was making every one of them from the 50-yard line. During his first game against Lebanon City, he did really well and during the interview said, “It was a great atmosphere and fell in love with it”. Chad then went on to become 24th overall during his junior year for the class of 2018.

I asked him “Who is your favorite NFL kicker and why?” He responded by saying that Matt Prater was his favorite. He looked up to him because during his time at Eastern Michigan they trained and kicked together and it was just really fun. When I asked him what skills he thinks are needed to be a good kicker he felt that mental skills are the most important. He stated that you must stay mentally balanced, but of course you should also have a strong leg and to continue working hard. I asked him “What encouraged you to be a kicker?” He said his dad encouraged him to try out for the team and keep practicing, but his mom supported him mentally.

I asked him “What are your best and least favorite moments of football? He said that his favorite moment of football was when he was a freshman and he kicked the game winning field goal against Purdue, he kicked two 50-yard field goals that game and he was only a

freshman. He said he didn't have any bad moments and that he doesn't try to see the bad moments, and only looks for the good ones. I asked him if he ever thought about playing a different position in football, other than a kicker of course. He said that he always wanted to be a kicker and he hilariously said that he also didn't want to get tackled, Chad said he would have been a baseball pitcher if he didn't play football. The last question I had for him was "How has your college experience at Maryland University been so far?" He said that he was having an amazing time meeting new people and making connections with people, especially the coaches and the football team. My interview with Chad Ryland was very interesting. I was able to learn more about him from the interview than from the information on the internet.

I also had the opportunity to interview Maryland's head football coach, Mike Locksley. The first question I asked him was "How do you identify a good kicker?". He responded by saying that the percentage of the field goals are really important, and of course they need a great leg. He also said that confidence, the ability to undergo a lot of pressure, and mental toughness are very important as well. I then asked him, "How important is a kicker to the football team?" He responded by saying a kicker is very important because they have the ability to win a game in one or two shots. He recalled a game when a missed field goal cost them the game.

I asked him, "How has Chad Ryland improved over the course of his time at Maryland?" He responded by saying that Chad had come to Maryland as an established player and was already showing a lot of leadership, and that Chad has adjusted really well because of his great personality. I asked "What makes the kickers different from the rest of the team?" He said that it is very important because they have one shot to make the field goal, but the other positions

on the team have more than one shot, such as, they have multiple chances to get the 1st down. The last question I asked him was “What's your favorite part of being a head coach?” He responded by saying that he loves impacting these players' lives and becoming a big part of their lives.

Even though it's Chad Ryland's first year and last year at Maryland University he has definitely stood out from the team. He has already broken records, connected with the team really well, and made his fans and coach proud! He has a bright future ahead of him! As for the team, they have played strong this year!