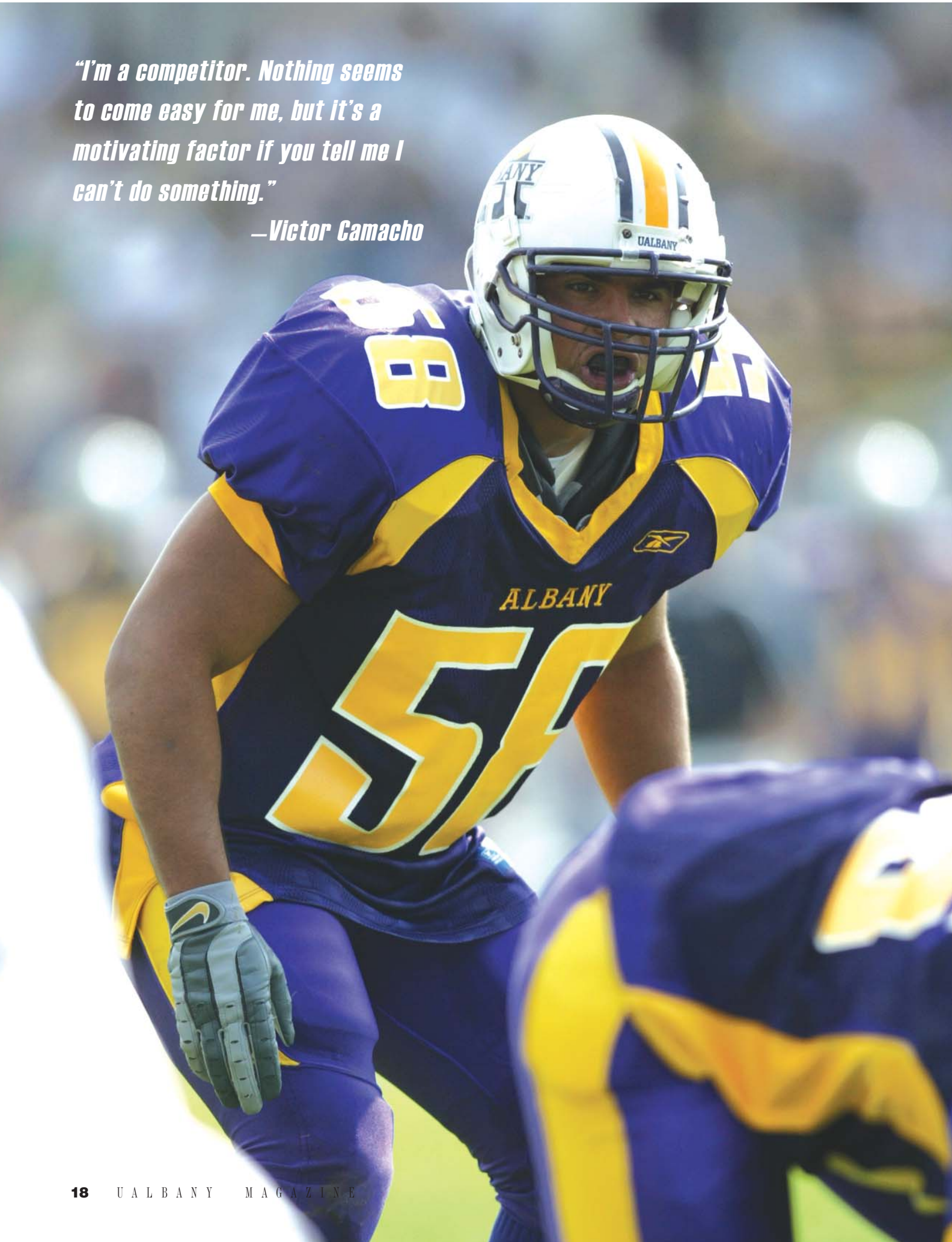


*"I'm a competitor. Nothing seems to come easy for me, but it's a motivating factor if you tell me I can't do something."*

*—Victor Camacho*



# Victor Camacho: Ready for Life's Challenges



By BOB WEINER

Nothing ever came easy for Victor Camacho. He constantly surprised his professors, his teammates and the UAlbany football coaching staff with his resilience and his drive to be the best that he could be, both on the field and in the classroom.

Camacho, a 5-foot-11 senior inside linebacker and business administration/finance major, leaves campus with a 3.79 cumulative grade point average this spring. Not only was he voted the Northeast Conference Fall Scholar-Athlete of the Year, but he was also named to the CoSIDA University Division Academic All-American first team. Twice selected to the District all-academic unit, Camacho also received UAlbany's Spellman Achievement Award, recognizing the academic achievements of students of color, four times.

On the field, Camacho finished his senior season as the ninth-leading tackler in the Northeast Conference with 94, including nine for a loss of yardage. He also recorded two quarterback sacks, recovered two fumbles and intercepted a pass to help UAlbany's defense rank fifth among NCAA Division I-AA teams in total defense (279.1 yards per game), eighth in rushing defense, allowing 104.5 yards per game, and 11th in scoring defense, giving up just 16.8 points per contest.

Now preparing for a career in investment banking, the over-achieving Camacho expects to be just as success-

ful in his next venture. He anticipates plenty of roadblocks and hurdles along the way, but his experience at UAlbany has given him all the ammunition he needs for life's challenges.

Looking at Camacho's academic and athletic exploits, it could be assumed that he was a natural in both arenas. Nothing could be further from the truth. Although he was loaded with academic and athletic honors as a senior, Camacho had to work hard for his grades and fight for his place on the football team.

UAlbany Coach Bob Ford and his staff initially thought that Camacho was too small and too slow to help the Great Danes. "Victor's coach (at St. Mary's Academy in the Bronx) was Mario Valenti, and he had sent us many kids in the past, so we listened to him. He just wouldn't stop recommending Victor. When we finally got the film on him, we didn't think he was good enough to play for us."

Camacho almost agreed, especially when he found out the names of the players he was battling for playing time. "There were nine or 10 players ahead of me on the depth chart, including two of the best linebackers — Mike Grever and Josh Bazan — ever to put on a UAlbany uniform. I didn't see any playing time in the near future," he said.

But Camacho recalled the life lessons he learned from his mother. "My mom

worked two jobs to keep me in private school. She would come home at 11 or 12 at night after working her second job at Caldor's. That's why I worked so hard on my grades when I was in high school, and that's why I kept trying so hard to make the football team. I did it for myself, and I did it for her," said Camacho.

After seeing limited playing time his first couple of seasons, Camacho gradually played his way into the lineup for his junior season, but he wasn't a starter.

"I would say he had an O.K. junior season," said Ford. "But something happened last summer to Victor. He made a tremendous commitment to the weight room, and he came back in great physical condition. He started at linebacker for us, and he had a tremendous season. He was always a scholar, and I think that's what helped him, because he's a student of the game."

"I've learned so much from my time at the University at Albany," said Camacho. "I've learned to defer gratification. You are not going to get everything you want right away in life, but you have to keep going. I didn't quit, and eventually, everything worked out."

"There was no reason to believe that Victor would become the kind of player he became for us," Ford said. "But I think there is a part of him that is driven by an inner fire. Those are the kids you bet on in life."