

4-1-2007

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Recommended Citation

Stewart, Jim (2007) "Step by step, Adi Filipovic handles whatever life throws his way," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 50 : Iss. 1 , Article 27.
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol50/iss1/27>

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STEP BY STEP, ADI FILIPOVIC HANDLES WHATEVER LIFE THROWS HIS WAY

Adi Filipovic has seen enough during his 23 years to believe it's best to take things one day at a time.

"A lot has happened in my life," says Filipovic (Fila-POE-vich), a 2006 Furman graduate, "and I know how quickly things can change, for better or worse. I've witnessed a lot of change, both good and bad."

So he tries not to look too far ahead, or to plan or expect too much.

Sure, he has goals. He wants to earn a doctorate and work in economic development, or perhaps teach economics on the college level.

But for now, he's content to live in the moment and not fret too much about tomorrow.

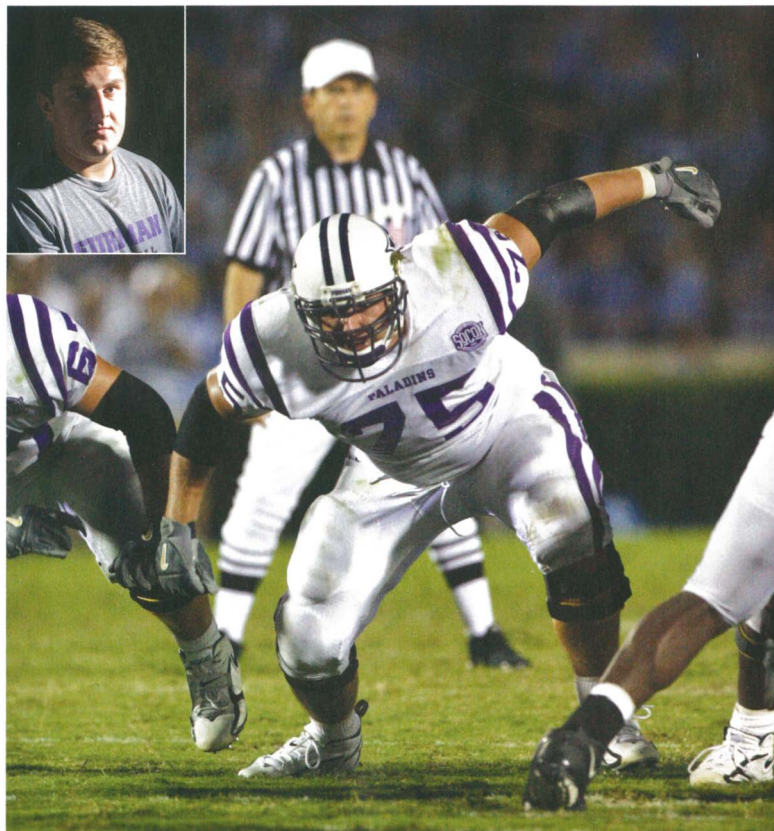
He's already done enough of that.

Filipovic's philosophy emerged from the turmoil of his youth. A native of Bosnia, he and his family were caught up in the ethnic wars that erupted after the fall of Communism and the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Two of his relatives lost their lives in the fighting, and the young Filipovic saw his father, Damir, arrested on the streets of Banja Luka by occupying Serbian forces. Damir was forced to do hard labor in an orchard for several months.

After returning home, Damir hid for eight months before being discovered and arrested again. This time he was beaten severely and told that he would be sent to the war's front lines to dig trenches for the occupying Serbian army, an almost certain death sentence.

The Filipovics, who had hoped to ride out the hostilities in their homeland, knew they would have to leave before Damir became another casualty of the wars. With the help of family and friends, they slipped across the border into Croatia, where they were able to regroup and consider their options.

Eventually they made their way to Augusta, Ga., where a local church offered assistance and hope. They settled in the area, and have remained there to this day. Damir is a project manager for a construction company, and mother Sevlata is an architect.



Adi, 11 years old when the family immigrated, soon learned enough English that he was called on to be his folks' interpreter, scheduler and liaison in their new environment. All this while he, too, struggled to adjust.

Sports offered a haven — and a way to fit in. Although his first love was basketball, there was one problem: He had a body made for football. "I was always the biggest kid," says the 6-3, 270-pounder.

He played both sports at Lakeside High and caught the attention of the Furman football staff, which offered him a scholarship.

At Furman he quickly distinguished himself in the classroom. While seeing limited action on the gridiron during his first three years (he red-shirted his first year), he compiled an exemplary academic record. In 2006 he graduated Phi Beta Kappa, *summa cum laude* with a 3.92 grade point average in mathematics-economics, and walked away with Furman's Student Athlete of the Year Award.

He was also able to take part in a study abroad program to Turkey, Greece and Italy in the winter of 2006, after which he spent a week with family in Bosnia.

As graduation approached, however, his college career felt incomplete. He wanted to contribute more to the football program, and he sensed that he had a shot at starting on the offensive line — if he returned in the fall to complete his eligibility. Yet he was also ready to move on with his studies.

Should he stay or go?

Because football was important to him and his parents, he decided to return for a final season.

It proved worthwhile. He started 11 of 12 games for the Paladins in 2006, helping them to an 8-4 record and the Division I-AA playoffs. Along the way, he completed enough credits to earn a second Furman degree (in mathematics) and was named to several Academic All-America teams.

Now he's ready for the next step.

This fall he'll enroll in graduate school, where he'll study economics with the help of several prestigious postgraduate scholarships, including the TIAA-CREF Award from the Southern Conference and the Division I Football Championship Subdivision Athletics Directors Association Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award.

As he discusses his life, he smiles the confident smile of a young man who's already survived more hardships than most people should ever have to endure. Wise beyond his years, he believes that whatever life throws his way, he'll handle it.

As he told *The State* newspaper in December 2005, "I really didn't know what was going to happen tomorrow or a month from today [during the war]. So, I am comfortable living day to day.

"It's kind of exciting, to some extent. It's not like I am apathetic about the future and that I don't care about the future. It's more like whatever tomorrow brings, you kind of deal with."

— JIM STEWART