

*SI.com has dispatched writers to report on the 32 NFL training camps across the country. Here's what [Ross Tucker](#) had to say about the Ravens' camp in Maryland. August 2, 2009*

## Setting The Scene

The [Baltimore Ravens](#) practice on the campus of McDaniel College, formerly known as Western Maryland, in Westminster, an hour northwest of Baltimore. Like a lot of these training camp locations, Westminster is the quintessential small-college town in which the basis for all of the activity around the town revolves around the college. Except for late July through early August that is, when the Ravens take center stage.

**Peter King** and I were there on the first day of full-team practice and the place was an absolute madhouse, which has its pros and cons of course. The pros are that the atmosphere for practice was festive and energizing, with the Ravens estimating over 10,000 people in attendance and a standing room only crowd that surrounded the field lined up almost ten-deep in some areas. The cons were that it took at least a half hour to go a quarter of the mile up the hill to the practice fields due to the traffic congestion and the parking situation was so overflowed that Peter finally just parked on the side of the street on a portion of the road in which the sidewalk was painted yellow. Alas, he received a nice parting gift of a parking ticket.

## Three Observations

1. [Haloti Ngata](#) has a great chance to be the best defensive tackle in the league. Ravens defensive tackle [Justin Bannan](#) told me that he would absolutely take Ngata over any other interior defensive linemen in the league and said that Ngata has "Hall of Fame potential". That is high praise for a player only going into his fourth year in the league but Ngata is undoubtedly worthy. He is blessed with extraordinary agility and cat-like quickness for a man that weighs 340 pounds and really took the league by storm last season, especially during the playoffs. One player I spoke with compared Ngata's lower-body to a rhinoceros while veteran center [Matt Birk](#) said Ngata's natural ability makes him a "next generation" type of player, comparing his physical dominance at the defensive tackle position to his former teammate **Adrian Peterson's** exceptional traits for a running back.

Ngata, for his part, knows that his reputation is on the rise.

"I think the games at the end of the season really helped to put me on the map because everybody is watching the playoffs at the end of the season since there are only a couple of games left" said Ngata.

And what about the Hall of Fame talk?

"It is really humbling and an honor to even hear somebody say that, especially a teammate like Bannan," said Ngata, "But we already have a couple of Hall of Famers on that defense so I really just try to watch them and do what they do. I would love to get to that point some day."

The scary part for opposing offenses this year is that it sounds like the Ravens are going to turn Ngata loose even more in 2009 than in year's past. Whereas in past years there was a certain number of plays in which he would either be a decoy or take up blockers in order to allow other defenders to get free runs at the quarterback in **Rex Ryan's** system, new defensive coordinator **Greg Mattison** appears poised to allow Ngata to rush the passer every chance he gets.