

# Where are they now: Former Gardner, Fitchburg State football star Carmy Cesaire thrilled to teach and coach in sunny California

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When Carmy Cesaire's younger brother, Jacques, signed with the San Diego Chargers in 2003, the West Coast became an automatic vacation destination for Cesaire and his wife, Dianne, and eventually their children.

"Every year we'd make the trip, and every year it kept getting harder to go back home," said Cesaire, who grew up in Westminster and starred in football at Gardner High and Fitchburg State.

In the summer of 2011, following a winter of multiple blizzards in Massachusetts, Cesaire and his family made the move to sunny Southern California permanently.

"It's been the best thing since," Cesaire said during a most engaging and enjoyable phone conversation Thursday from Catalina Island, where he was helping out on his daughter Gabrielle's seventh grade outdoor educational trip.

Like his mentors, Walt Dubzinski Jr., the former longtime Gardner High football coach and principal, and Walt's son, Steve, who is principal at Leominster High, Cesaire chose a career path that seemed to come very naturally to him — teaching, coaching and nurturing young people.

Cesaire is in his fifth year as a full-time physical education teacher at La Jolla Country Day School, where he is also an assistant football and basketball coach. He previously coached at Scripps Ranch High School. Carmy and Jacques live about five minutes from each other in Scripps Ranch, a community in the northeastern part of San Diego.

Cesaire began as a special education teacher in Leominster Public Schools and was an assistant football and basketball coach at Fitchburg State from 2005-11.

“I get everything out of teaching kids,” Cesaire, 41, said. “It’s very, very rewarding. It’s a little different now because before I was working with kids from different backgrounds, and it was a different style I had to use back then. I’m not in special ed anymore, but I’m still able to use some of the tools that I learned in special ed and coaching to really kind of get through to kids and motivate them and get them to learn. I get everything out of it. I can’t see myself ever doing anything else.”

Cesaire starred as a running back at Gardner and, after graduating in 1997, went on to play one season of football at Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont.

He left Norwich after a year-and-a-half, came home and got into coaching, helping out Walt Dubzinski Jr. and the Gardner football team, and Steve Dubzinski, who was coach of the Leominster boys’ basketball team.

Cesaire took some classes at Quinsigamond Community College, and Walt and Steve, as well as Cesaire’s parents, Carmy Sr. and Jacqueline, continually encouraged him to finish his degree.

Cesaire enrolled at Fitchburg State and after a four-year hiatus returned to the football field. He went on to have a record-setting career as a receiver at Fitchburg State and earned his degree in 2005.

Cesaire had done some substitute teaching at Gardner High, and after working for a few years in corrections, decided the classroom was his calling.

“Definitely Walt and Steve keeping me on track to finish school and do this,” Cesaire said, “it’s a total blessing.”

La Jolla Country Day has a very good athletics program. In the last five years, the football team has won two California Interscholastic Federation championships, and made the state final in 2015. The boys’ basketball team won the CIF Division 3 state title this year.

Cesaire’s parents, who are both nurses, live in Central Mass., but visit Carmy, Jacques and their grandchildren every summer. Cesaire’s other three siblings also live on the East Coast.

Cesaire's wife is also a nurse. Gabrielle plays volleyball and is a club cheerleader. Cesaire's 11-year-old son, Quentin, is in sixth grade, and plays football and basketball.

Jacques, who played on the Chargers' defensive line from 2003-11, is the defensive line coach at the University of San Diego. He and his wife, Jill, have three children. Yes, Cesaire said, it was pretty cool having his younger brother play in the NFL.

USD hosted and beat Harvard last weekend, and Cesaire was excited to catch up with two Crimson assistants, Logan Johnson and Sajan Thakkar, whom he coached at Fitchburg State.

Cesaire also has been proud to see a number of La Jolla Country Day student-athletes go on to top academic colleges like, most recently, Princeton, Virginia Tech and Tufts.

"As the kids get older, kids I've coached are starting to graduate college now and start families," Cesaire said. "That's been exciting to see. I had a little, little part in their development, in their journey, in their life. What Walt and Steve and (former Fitchburg State football coach) Pat (Haverty) did for me, the way they coached, the way they taught, it wasn't just about the sport. They really showed you to believe in the whole kid, the whole child. They were great mentors."