

Jonathan Truman – Weston Hiebert

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“The Back Stops Here.” No, that’s not quite right. The famous saying was “The Buck Stops Here.” It was President Harry S Truman who put that sign on his desk in the White House in the 1940s to appeal to people who were tired of politicians avoiding responsibility by “passing the buck.” Today, however, I am referring to a different Truman. This Truman plays football. As a linebacker, part of his responsibility is to keep the running backs from advancing the ball. His teammate plays on special teams to stop the returner, so it might be said that “The Back Stops Here” could be their motto. It’s today’s Kansas Profile.

Jonathan Truman and Weston Hiebert are captains for the K-State football team. They are examples of Kansas kids who were walk-ons to the program and have become key contributors.

Jonathan Truman - no relation to the former President - grew up near Wichita. His parents are Tom and Jane Truman.

At Kapaun Mt. Carmel High School, Jonathan was a three-year letter winner and an all-state linebacker as a senior. He led his team to three straight district championships and was a state champion wrestler in 2010.

None of that translated into football scholarship offers from Division I teams, however. He took the opportunity to walk on at Kansas State. He redshirted and eventually worked his way onto the field, contributing on special teams and earning a scholarship.

In 2013, he earned the starting nod at linebacker. In 2014, he was voted as a team captain. During his junior season, he started every game and was second on the team in tackles. As a senior, during the Oklahoma game, he recorded a career-high 17 tackles – accomplishing as many tackles in one game as he had all season in 2011. Wow.

His family lives in the community of Kechi near Wichita. Kechi is a town of 1,072 people. That’s rural – but there’s more.

Weston Hiebert also grew up in central Kansas. His parents are Myron and Ann Hiebert. This family lives near the rural community of Goessel, population 561 people. Now, that’s rural.

In fact, it is so rural that the local high school didn’t have enough players to play 11-man football. As do many of the smallest rural schools, Goessel played eight-man.

At Goessel High School, Weston was a four-year letterman. He was a three-time all-league linebacker and tight end and a first team all-state linebacker. Weston set the career tackle record at Goessel with 389 stops while forcing 18 fumbles and intercepting nine passes. He led his team to four league championships, four district championships and two bi-district championships.

Not many eight-man schools have athletes who advance to the Big 12 level, but Weston made the transition. He became a walk on at Kansas State where he is majoring in agricultural economics. Weston has made tremendous contributions in two areas: One is the classroom and the other is on special teams. Weston has made first-team Academic All-Big 12 two years in a row.

He also became a key contributor on special teams. During 2013, he was second on the team in special teams tackles. Against Texas Tech, he recovered an onside kick to protect a lead. In the Baylor game, he blocked a punt which led to a K-State touchdown two plays later. That is a remarkable accomplishment for a player who had never played 11-man football before coming to Kansas State.

His contributions have not gone unnoticed. He was elected by his peers as a player representative. In spring 2014, he was named the special teams captain, making he and Jonathan Truman two of the six captains on the team.

“The Back Stops Here.” No, it’s not quite the famous slogan of President Truman, but it might be an appropriate theme for Jonathan Truman and his teammate Weston Hiebert. We commend these two young men and other athletes who are making a difference with their hard work, competitiveness, and commitment. With these two playing on defense, they can assure opposing teams that “The Back Stops here.”

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.