

Letters to war

By Kyle Fredrickson

Sports Reporter

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Courtesy of Roger Koehler

Capt. Roger Koehler stands in front of a Southern Afghanistan military base.

It was just after 6:30 p.m. in Stillwater.

Under the lights at Boone Pickens Stadium on Sept. 18, junior wide receiver Hubert Anyiam caught his first touchdown pass of the season against Tulsa with 1:26 left in the first quarter. The 18-yard pass from junior quarterback Brandon Weeden meant the Cowboys were up 20-0, but it also meant a promise had been kept.

Nearly 4,000 miles away at a U.S. Naval Base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, a framed letter addressed to Dustin Hefley, petty officer in the United States Navy, was hanging on the wall. The letter was from Anyiam. It promised that his first touchdown of the season would be dedicated to Hefley.

It was just after 4 a.m. in Southern Afghanistan.

In front of the bright light of a computer screen in a military base, a group of American soldiers listened to the radio broadcast as Anyiam ran into the endzone. Capt. Roger Koehler of the 335th Signal Command of the U.S. Air Force was in attendance, holding on to an orange OSU flag.

Koehler, a 2002 OSU graduate, was also in possession of a letter. This one was signed by Weeden, thanking him for all he has done for his country.

Anyiam has never met Hefley. Weeden has never met Koehler. But because of a simple idea presented by wide receivers coach Gunter Brewer, all four have made connections that cross thousands of miles and different time zones.

The Dedication

At the beginning of the 2010 football season, Brewer had the task of teaching his young wide receiving corps how to succeed in first-year offensive coordinator Dana Holgorsen's spread offense. But he said that there was more than just x's and o's on his mind.

"It was coming up with 9/11 pretty soon before we started the season. Just thinking about the people that have given their lives or different guys that have enabled us to do what we do," Brewer said. "I said it would be pretty neat for our guys to thank those guys for doing what they do."

Brewer began searching for OSU graduates and fans that were currently deployed in the armed forces overseas. With the help of offensive secretary Shanda Smith, he found soldiers who had connections to OSU through message boards, e-mail and various military bases throughout the world.

"I just did it on my own basically," he said. "They don't get any recognition and we've got a lot of people that are going to be deployed from or are tied to OSU and OSU fans over there."

Brewer first brought up the idea during a wide receivers' meeting in late August. He told his players they would be writing weekly letters.

"To be honest, at first when coach Brewer said we were going to be writing people, we didn't know who we were going to be writing," Anyiam said. "I was like, 'Man, why are we writing people during meetings?'"

But after discovering the reason behind the letters, Anyiam said he realized the importance of reaching out to those in the military.

"Then he said we were going to write to people in war and he started talking about how much they really mean to our country," Anyiam said. "It's really important to dedicate touchdowns and plays out there to them because they don't have the chance to come out here and watch us live."

Anyiam did just that against the Golden Hurricane when he scored his first touchdown of the season.

"It was real special. I dedicated one of my touchdowns to this man in the military," Anyiam said in the post-game press conference. "To score my first touchdown for me and him, it just felt good."

Close to home

For Anyiam's teammate, sophomore wide receiver Justin Blackmon, writing the letters has a personal touch.

Blackmon, who grew up in a military family in Ardmore, said he knows what it's like to wait for a loved one to return from war.

"It means a lot," he said. "My dad was in the military. He was in Iraq for almost a year, so I know how it feels to be a family member back home, thinking about your family over there. When you go so long without seeing somebody and not that much contact, it was good to have him back."

Blackmon was also able to get in touch with Hefley.

"Dustin has wrote back and said that he received the letter. He said thank you and how it meant a lot to him," Blackmon said. "Just knowing that I sent it and that they are going to read it, knowing that it can make their day is enough for me. "

Hefley thanked the team for contacting him in an e-mail to Brewer.

"I would really appreciate it if you would pass on my sincerest thank you to those players taking time out of their busy schedules to write a serviceman serving our country," he wrote. "The letters are framed and on my wall."

Waving orange pride

One of Weeden's first letter assignments was for Air Force Capt. Roger Koehler, who is stationed in Afghanistan. In an e-mail sent to secretary Smith, Koehler said even though he is continents away, he represents his orange pride.

"I don't go anywhere without my OSU flag and I make sure everyone knows that I bleed orange," Koehler wrote. "I have included another picture of my flag at a marine base in Southern Afghanistan."

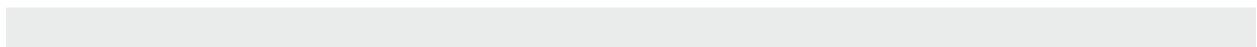
When Weeden wrote to Koehler, he said his response came back quickly and showed how thankful he was for the letter.

"He said he wakes up at 2 or 3 in the morning and watches our games and stuff like that," Weeden said. "He's a diehard OSU fan. He carries a flag with him everywhere he goes. We forget sometimes that those people are the reason we're here doing what we're doing. That's actually what I told him, 'We're over here having fun because of you guys.'"

The Message

As part of the Cowboys efforts to give back to the community, the team has participated in many different volunteer campaigns, including hospital and school visits. However, Brewer said this project brings a whole new perspective for players who want to give back.

"It's the fact that someone is sacrificing for you to do something else," Brewer said. "Your part in this deal is to give back and do what you're supposed to do. That's to get an education, play as hard as you can, represent your school and family, but also your country."



Column: What it means to be a hero

By Kyle Fredrickson

Sports Reporter

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Courtesy of Justin Plunk

Justin Plunk thinks about his brother Jared every day.

"It's almost constant," he said.

It's a brother-to-brother connection - unbreakable. Justin is four years younger than Jared, but as kids they worked on the same farm in Turpin. As students they attended the same high school and as soldiers they were in the same basic training.

"We were bunk mates," Justin said. "I got to sleep on the top bunk. I outranked him."

Justin cracked a smile

"That made him mad."

Justin and Jared joined the U.S. Army in 2006 because they love their country. They did it because they wanted to be on the front lines. They wanted to make a difference.

But this decision was not made over night. Justin said they tossed around the idea for a few years before they signed up. In that time, Jared was an offensive and defensive tackle for Turpin High School's football team. Justin said he would sometimes lift weights with his older brother.

"He had work ethic from growing up on a farm. It really wasn't comparable, especially with his teammates," Justin said. "I don't think it was his first priority though. Football wasn't exactly what he wanted to do with the rest of his life."

So with the sport behind him, the brothers moved to Stillwater and enlisted in the Army. For so many years they had stuck together and followed similar paths, but the hands of fate changed everything.

Justin's duty was cut short when he broke his leg after a parachute landing during basic training.

Jared's duty was cut short after insurgents fired small arms and rocket-propelled grenades at his unit while serving in Bagram, Afghanistan, on June 25. He was 27 years old when he was killed. He is survived by a wife, two sons, three siblings and a step-father.

"A lot of recent memories have to prevail, that's what we're left with," Justin said. "The biggest thing that is going to stand out to me is he that he was a father."

I never met Jared. I've never been in war. But Jared's story and the Oklahoma State football team writing letters to the troops got me thinking. When Dan Bailey kicked a 40-yard field goal to beat Texas A&M on Sept. 30, he was declared the hero. No disrespect to Bailey, but is there anything heroic about kicking a ball between two goal posts?

Jared Plunk's story puts everything into perspective. Jared was a family man, an athlete and a soldier, but these things do not solely define him. Because at the end of the day, it doesn't matter what your political affiliation is or what your stance on the war is - Jared Plunk is a hero.

So with this said, it is time to stop using words like "battle" and "war" as metaphors in sports. All it does is downplay the significance of Jared and every other American soldier who has died for their country. The true heroes.

Justin has put his own military career to the side. As a senior at OSU, he is looking to get into veterinary school. But he said that the values his brother lived by in battle will always stick with him.

"Jared had a very strong stance to be on the right side of the line between right and wrong," Justin said. "His heart was steadfast, yet warm."

All in the family

By Kyle Fredrickson

Sports Reporter

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Mark Nelson/O'Collegian

Senior receiver Colton Chelf caught one pass for seven yards in OSU's 65-17 victory against Washington State on Saturday. It was his first career start as a Cowboy.

In football, the word "family" is often used to describe the close relationships among players and coaches.

To an extent, the phrase is overused, becoming a standard cliché expression in locker rooms and press conferences across the nation.

But the true meaning of the word found its place during the second half of the Oklahoma State football home opener last Saturday against Washington State.

With 8:36 remaining in the third quarter, the Cowboys found themselves with a comfortable 51-10 lead against WSU, giving reserve players on the roster a chance to get some game experience.

When starting quarterback Brandon Weeden left the field to watch the rest of the game from the sideline, redshirt freshman Clint Chelf was under center. Lined up at wide receiver to his right was senior Colton Chelf.

As brothers, roommates and teammates, the moment was something they had anticipated for a long time.

"That's been a dream, playing somewhere together Division I," Colton said. "Our parents, that's all they care about, seeing us out there together."

The Chelf brothers attended Enid High School, and despite the two-year age difference between them, Clint said the competition between them began at a young age.

"I was a couple years younger than him," Clint said. "It was kind of tough, but I think it made me better, competing with older guys all the time. Just getting beat up sometimes. It was fun."

In high school both excelled on the football field. Colton was recognized as the top wide receiver on the Class 6A All-District team in 2006. That same year he hauled in 41 passes for 773 yards and seven touchdowns. His efforts landed him a spot on the West team in the Oklahoma Coaches Association All-State football game his senior year.

Clint's numbers were also impressive at Enid. In his senior season, he passed for more than 2,200 yards, rushed for more than 700 yards, scored 31 touchdowns and was selected conference player of the year. Coming out of high school, Rivals rated Clint the No. 34 dual quarterback in the country.

While both garnered the attention of college programs, the brothers took significantly different paths to eventually end up in Boone Pickens Stadium. Colton did not receive the consideration from Division I programs, most likely because of his size. At 5-foot-9, Colton spent his first two seasons at Northeast Oklahoma A&M College in Miami, Okla. After leading the Norse in receiving in 2008 with 561 yards and two touchdowns, he walked onto the Cowboys roster in January 2009.

Clint found himself in a different situation out of high school. As a former commitment to Tulsa, he instead came into Stillwater as an athlete on scholarship. However, he said he can respect the way his brother earned his spot on the team as a walk-on.

"He can run the routes, he can catch the ball, he can do everything. He just doesn't have the size," Clint said. "But he's proven everyone wrong now by getting out there."

So, with the opportunity to be on the field at the same time against the Cougars, Colton said he had just one thing on his mind when he got to the line of scrimmage.

"I was just waiting for him to sling the ball out there to me," Colton said.

Under first-year offensive coordinator Dana Holgorsen's direction, the tandem was given specific instructions on what to do.

"I specifically remember once on third down, they had called time out. I came over and I called a specific play and I said (to Clint), 'Look now, I don't want any favoritism with your brother. I want you to make this read and if that guy is open, throw it to him, no favoritism,'" Holgorsen said. "Well he did the opposite. He ignored his brother who was open and stayed on the other read and we ended up punting. I wasn't very happy about that."

While the two had hoped that a brother-to-brother completion would be made, the opportunity never presented itself.

"I would have liked to complete a pass to him," Clint said. "It just didn't fall that way."

As far as team chemistry is concerned, the brothers bring an unusual aspect of family to the locker room. Like most locker rooms, Clint said he and his brother were not cleared from catching flack from teammates.

"Obviously because of our hair, we get called the Jonas brothers," Clint said. "That was pretty big when I first got here."

Because Colton is a senior and Clint is a freshman, the number of chances the two will have to connect in a real game will be limited. However, considering their father, Randy Chelf, was once a walk-on quarterback for the Cowboys, the two said they believe anything is possible while on the same team.

"It would be amazing to throw a touchdown pass to my brother," Clint said. "My mom has always wanted to hear that. It would be an experience that not many people could have."

Cowboys step up intensity in win

By Kyle Fredrickson

Sports Reporter

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Zach Gray/O'Collegian

Junior guard Keiton Page scored a team-high 18 points in the Cowboys' 75-56 win against Nicholls State on Sunday.

After two games of inconsistent play, coach Travis Ford said his basketball team needed more defensive intensity.

On Sunday afternoon, the Cowboys listened with a 76-56 win against the Colonels of Nicholls State at Gallagher-Iba Arena.

"I think our defensive intensity was good tonight," junior guard Keiton Page said. "That led to better offense, as well."

Junior forward Darrell Williams notched a double-double for the Cowboys with 11 points, 14 rebounds and three blocks. Page added 18 points to lead the team in scoring.

"It was going to be interesting to see how our team came out and responded in this game," Ford said. "They responded tremendously. I thought the effort and the focus was there."

The Cowboys (3-0) came out strong defensively in the first half, holding the Colonels (1-2) scoreless for nearly six minutes. Colonel senior guard/forward Anatoly Bose, who entered the game averaging 25 points per game, only connected on 2-of-10 field goals and one 3-pointer in the first period.

Because of constant pressure from OSU's guards, Bose could not find offensive rhythm and committed two turnovers after 20 minutes of play.

"We stuck to our defensive principles most of the time, we had a couple of slips," Page said. "(Bose) is a heck of a player. I feel like he earned a lot of his shots tonight."

Sophomore guard Fred Gulley spent a majority of the game defending Bose. Despite a four-inch difference in height, Gulley was able to force Bose to take contested shots all game.

"Fred's a tough customer," Ford said. "He's going to get through screens, he's going to get low, he's going to do exactly what we tell him to do and he loves the challenge."

Page led all scorers heading into the half with 13 points. The Cowboys found themselves up by as much as 18 with two-minutes remaining in the half, when senior center Marshall Moses rebounded a missed Page 3-point shot for an uncontested put back.

"I came out and got in a rhythm early," Page said. "My teammates were doing a good job of executing plays and getting me open shots."

Moses finished the night with 16 points and six rebounds, but it was behind Williams' 12 defensive rebounds that gave the Cowboys the major inside advantage.

"Coach kept letting us know they lead teams in offensive rebounds," Williams said. "My thing was just to out-rebound everybody."

Bose still had a strong showing in the second half, finishing with a game-high 37 points. But Bose took 24 shots in order to secure that point total. He found most of his scoring success from the free-throw line, going 14-for-15.

Ford said that while Bose was effective scoring, the number of shots he took to get to that point was a good sign for his defense.

"When he's going to shoot 20 more times than anyone else on the team, that's going to happen," Ford said.

The Cowboys will hit the road for the first time on Thursday when they head to Anaheim, Calif., to face DePaul University as part of the '76 Classic. Ford said that he is looking to his captains to lead his young team away from home.

"I'm anxious to see how our team responds away from Gallagher-Iba," Ford said. "It's going to be a good test for our team mentally."

Proposed Facilities Fees Spark Debate

By [Kyle Fredrickson](#)

Sports Editor

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In what is being considered the largest student fee increase plan in Western State history, the Facility Fee Proposal has generated debate among both students and faculty before the final student vote takes place April 26.

According to Western's "2009-2014 Strategic Plan", the creation of a facilities master plan is required. This plan indicates that Western has over \$100 million in capital construction needs to academic and athletic buildings such as the Shavano Apartments, Quigley Hall, Ute hall and others. Paired with the needs to construct new buildings is a \$26 million audit in maintenance needs to existing academic buildings.

According to Vice President of Finance and Administration Brad Baca, the full plan is not just to create new places to learn and update existing buildings, but to also attract perspective students to Western State.

"There is one piece of literature that shows the number one reason why institutions of higher education are rejected as a place to attend is the condition of the residence halls," Baca said at an April 8 forum held in the College Center. "We also want to build on the success of the College Center."

According to the presentation given at the open forum, Western has invested over \$62 million in capital construction in the past five years. However, with an economic climate that has changed since then, the state of Colorado is cutting back heavily on funding higher education, leaving the burden to pay for new projects solely on the students themselves and private donations. With the support of the student government association (SGA), Western is pushing this fee proposal to attempt to turn around declining enrollment and improve existing buildings.

According to SGA president Cory Vander Veen, efforts have been made to get students to attend open forums to discuss the proposal through student e-mail accounts. However, at the April 8 meeting held in the College Center's south ballroom, the attendance was just over 30 students and the April 13 meeting drew the same number, with over 90 percent of those students being athletes. Vander Veen says that approximately only three percent of students have attended the meetings.

"These meetings are very neutral," Vander Veen said. "(They) don't push one way or another."

The Cost

If the Facilities Fee Proposal passes, student's fees will begin to increase beginning in the fall of 2010 and continue to increase over a ten-year period. Based on a 30-credit class schedule, Western students will pay \$398.27 extra next year to begin funding for the project. In five years, the number increases to \$1,317.15 per year, and in ten years, \$2,688.45 per year. In ten years, the fee revenue created will be \$4.157, 214. These numbers all came from the presentation given at the open forum.

The revenue created will be divided into three separate parts; 70 percent bond repayment for capital construction, 20 percent for financial aid scholarships for students, and 10 percent for deferred maintenance.

According to Baca, the timing of this plan goes hand-in-hand with the current economy.

“Interest rates for borrowing are at all time lows,” Baca said. “If we do not act now, the potential increase in the long term costs of these projects may make them impossible to finance.”

New Additions

According to the proposal, the first project that would be funded by this fee is the rebuilding of the Shavano apartment complex. With the design of the units beginning in the fall of 2010, construction would follow in the summer of 2011, and occupancy starting in the fall of 2012. The new complex is said to feature apartment style living, including common spaces and a sustainable design.

The next project is an entirely new facility that is currently known as the Rec Center/Field House. Design is also scheduled to begin in the fall of 2010, with construction not beginning until the summer of 2012. By the winter of 2014, Western hopes to have a full-scale facility that meets the needs of athletes, students and community members. As an upgrade from the current exercise facility in Escalante Hall, the new center will feature a recreation center with all the amenities needed for weight lifting, cardio, rock climbing, multi-purpose rooms and locker rooms with showers.

The facility will also feature a 200-meter track that meets NCAA requirements for the Western Indoor track team to train and compete on. The center of the track will feature multipurpose areas for activities such as basketball, tennis and soccer.

The Debate

Despite just three percent of Western students showing up for the open forums concerning the facility fee proposal, there has been debate as to whether or not this is a good plan for helping new students find Western, and keeping students here for the long term. According to Vice President of Student Affairs Gary Pierson, the retention rate from freshman to sophomore year at Western is just 60 percent. That paired with an enrollment that has declined by 195 students from 2005-2009 is why this proposal's intentions rely heavily on recruitment.

However, some students at the April 8 forum expressed their concerns about the possibility of the growing number of students at Western

“I chose Western because it's small, because I get to know my teachers and because it is not a university,” sophomore Laura Heck said.

Pierson responded that the proposal does not look to change the small college culture at Western, but rather make the school more competitive as compared to other small Colorado colleges. He said the prime number of students that the school would like to see is 2,800. As of 2009, the enrollment at Western was listed at 2,062.

Faculty have also voiced varying opinions on the proposal. Professor of Communication Terry Schliesman believes that the process seems, “rushed.” Because there is just a thirty-day window until the proposal must be voted on after it was passed by the SGA, students do not have a plethora of opportunity to get educated unless they attend the open forums.

Through student email accounts, Pierson has sent alerts to students as to when the meetings occur. However, it was not until April 16 that the full PowerPoint presentation detailing the proposal was sent out.

"Understanding the minutia of the proposal is what students owe to each other and Western's future classes," Schliesman said.

The financial burden on students is something else that worries Schliesman in this proposal.

"I'm concerned about how large of a financial burden this presents to our prospective students," he said. Schliesman sees the possibility of enhancing the campus with the new buildings, but also sees the price as "daunting."

There are also those who see the prospect of investing in Western State's future more important than the financial stigma the proposal has gained. BUAD professor at Western, Phil Klingsmith believes that "we should support the proposal."

"Anytime we can invest in education, or in the future of American young people, we should," Klingsmith said.

Michelle Young, a graduating senior can see both the positive and negative effects the proposal may have on the campus.

"I think the renovations are a good idea, however the way they will be funded worries me. I think new facilities will be great, but will the students be able to afford them?" Young said. "College is expensive enough now. If the new renovations are all paid for by students, I worry that the student numbers will decrease greatly."