

New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight



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HOBBS' REBER IS AN INSPIRATION TO FRIENDS AND FOES

By Jeff Jackson

Watch Hobbs play defense and you can't keep your eyes off the middle linebacker wearing No. 32. Like a whirling dervish, he roams from sideline to sideline, or blitzes into the backfield, searching for a ball carrier.

And when Jared Reber makes a play, be it a forced fumble, interception or just a plain tackle, everyone in the Pecos Valley knows.

The middle linebacker is the cog of the defense, just as the quarterback is for the offense, and Reber is that man for the Hobbs Eagles.

There is another reason, however, why Reber draws attention on the gridiron. His right leg is about two inches shorter than his left leg. Clubfoot is the common term and it was a birth condition.

Reber has played football since he was in the first grade in Hobbs. He played baseball, too, as a pitcher and outfielder but stopped after the 2015 season to give football his full attention.

He was advised at an early age to forget about athletics but he forged ahead anyway.

"Doctors told me when I was little 'Don't expect to be able to play sports, no jumps, no running, don't be like other kids.' But I just couldn't take that as an answer. I grew up playing football with my brothers. I've loved football my whole life. Even though the doctors said what they did, I just really had to overcome a clubbed foot and work twice as hard as the kids with two normal legs," Reber said.

Reber is starting for the Eagles for the second straight season as a middle linebacker, and Coach Charles Gleghorn says the Hobbs staff has made no concession in Reber's favor.

"You have to be the best player at your position or you're a JV guy," said Gleghorn, now in his fourth season at Hobbs, who has watched Reber since his freshman year. "He's really good at what he does."

Last season Reber made 86 tackles (65 unassisted), two sacks, six tackles for loss and also intercepted one pass.

"He's not really vocal. He's not going to stand up and give a speech, but he sure leads by example," Gleghorn said. "When he makes a tackle he lets everyone know. He's very emotional on the field. I've never seen anyone take it easy on him. When other teams watch our films they've got to decide if they want to dou-



ble-team him or run away from him but they never take it easy on him.”

Reber serves as an inspiration to his teammates, but they to him as well, he said.

“They accept my status and they see I don’t party, I don’t drink alcohol,” Reber said. “The weight room is pretty much my home, and they see how hard I’m working. It’s a two-way street. They inspire me to do leg exercises and we always push each other.”

Reber says he senses reinforcement from friends and teammates - and even opponents.

“I think they admire me. They look at me and how hard I play, even with my condition, and what I go through,” he said. “I always try to be the hot man on the field and be a leader, push everyone up on the field. Especially being a middle linebacker. I just want to be like everyone else.”

While most athletes lift weights as a conditioning drill, with Reber it’s a passion all year.

“He’s very determined and he’s the top guy in our weight room,” Gleghorn said. “Anything he knows can make him better, he’s very dedicated to it. It’s a high-tempo atmosphere in the weight room. You always know, even when you’re not paying attention, where Jared is in the weight room.”

Reber lifts 435 pounds on the squat, 330 on bench press and 280 for the powerlift.

“He’s an amazing athlete. He probably could play wide receiver for us, but the middle linebacker position is one of the most important positions on our football team,” Gleghorn added.

Gleghorn recalled a play Reber made as a freshman, when he was a receiver. On an end zone route, Reber leaped and caught a high pass but would have landed out of bounds. Before touching down, Reber lateraled to a teammate and the Eagles scored a touchdown.

Reber’s family operates an optometry practice with offices in Hobbs and Lovington, and he says he likely will enter that field after college, where he wants also to play football, of course.

“College football is definitely my dream,” he said.

Another dream he has is continuing with weight lifting and conditioning and imparting that activity to youth.

“I’m really into fitness. I think it would be cool to have a job in the fitness field and be able to teach children that if you’re able to give whatever you can give, then you can push through anything.”