

Deseret Morning News, Sunday, August 14, 2005

Utes center is leading by example

By **Dirk Facer**

Deseret Morning News

Jesse Boone isn't the most vocal player on the University of Utah football team. Though, at 6-foot-5 and 305 pounds, the Utes' starting center easily could be.

It's just not his style, nor is playing the role of a gentle giant.

"He's not a rah-rah guy," Utah coach Kyle Whittingham said. "But his example and work ethic is excellent."

So much so, notes quarterback Brian Johnson, that Boone was pretty much a unanimous choice to be a team captain.

"You see him in the weight room and he's just working like no other," Johnson said. "He really cares and is really passionate about the game and he's really passionate about this team. If we all match his intensity level and work ethic, we'll be tough to beat."

Boone is a preseason all-Mountain West Conference pick and a candidate for the Rimington Trophy, presented annually to the nation's best center. He earned second-team all-conference accolades a year ago.

"I've been watching Jesse Boone closely for five years now. He's a guy that comes out and does everything right every single day. I don't care if it's for stretch, specialist period, whatever, he's into it 100 percent," Whittingham said. "He's doing it the right way. I've got the utmost respect for Jesse Boone. (Becoming a captain) didn't surprise me at all because he's got the respect of his teammates. People look up to him as an example."

Johnson considers Boone the apex of Utah's offense because everything goes through him. He makes the calls on the line and has the trust and faith of his teammates after helping the Utes and quarterback Alex Smith succeed last season.

"He's definitely one of the best in the country. He's the hardest-working man. I've never seen anybody work as hard as him or be more dedicated and more focused," Johnson said while reeling off such attributes as "great person, great football player and great leader" to describe Boone.

"You can't say anything bad about Jesse," Johnson said.

Not even younger brother Jason Boone, a tackle slated to start alongside his sibling on the offensive line, could dig up much dirt.

"He's all business," Jason Boone said while revealing a competitive aspect to their brotherhood.

"He does something and I want to do it better. If I do something, he wants to do it better. We're always pushing each other," he continued. "All summer, he runs, I run. We're just trying to beat each other. It doesn't matter what anybody else is doing."



Utah center Jesse Boone, right, was chosen to be a team captain.

Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret Morning News

Though separated by two years, the brothers played football together at Millard High School in Fillmore. They shared the same number, however, and waited until last season at Utah to finally be on the field at the same time. It consisted of just a few plays, a situation that promises to be vastly different in 2005.

"As starters it'll be way sweeter," Jason explained. "It'll be the best thing ever."

Jesse Boone feels the same way. He's convinced Jason will be an all-conference tackle.

And big brother should know.

"Jesse is a stabilizing factor up there in the front. He's the one that makes all the calls," Whittingham said. "Shoot, he's a graduate student. He's a smart kid. He's got his act together, no question about it."

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