

Leaving A Mark

There is more than meets the eye to senior Aaron Boone

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By Stephanie Peterson * Host Communications

There are several adjectives to describe Aaron Boone - humble, driven, dedicated - but one word stands above them all: Unbelievable. His teammates and coaches will readily tell you that the senior wide receiver offers more than just magic hands.

A native of Fillmore, Utah, Boone grew up as one of 10 children, which in part, he believes, is how he developed his competitive edge. A stand-out, three-sport athlete at Millard High School, this quick-footed wide receiver simply wanted to succeed so he could gain some of the attention his older siblings were hogging at the time. As the sixth child, he remembers tagging along with his mom to their various athletic events.

"I saw my older brother and older sisters playing high school sports and I thought 'I can do that,' " he said. "Finally it was my turn for my mom to come watch me."

Boone knows that no sport is complete without passion. It was exactly that fire which led him to choose football for his collegiate sports career in the end.

"I was probably better at baseball in high school - my sister taught me how to throw my curveball," he said laughing. "I always loved football more, though."



Boone first started his collegiate football career at Snow College, a junior college in Utah. His reason to attend Snow extended beyond football - he needed an opportunity to accomplish some of his other life aspirations before settling down at a big school like Kentucky. Two years ago, after deliberating between several schools - including Brigham Young where his father, Coley, and three uncles all played football - he decided that being a Wildcat was the choice for him.

"I felt this was the best football conference in the country and I thought I could get the most exposure here," he said. "I saw a lot of opportunities in Kentucky."

Switching from quarterback to wide receiver might have been a challenge, but it was a transition Boone succeeded at making. For him, learning the routes was the most difficult adjustment. With so many different ways to run to the ball, you either had to master them or forfeit your chance of game time. Wide receiver coach Harold Jackson sees Boone's work ethic day in and day out. A former NFL star himself, he understands what it takes to be great - and he sees it in No. 13.

"He's the kind of guy that makes a coach's job easy," said Jackson. "He wants to hear what you're telling him even though he already knows it. Every time you throw the ball to Aaron Boone, something good is going to happen - he's just that type of player. I like to say that 'the only thing Aaron Boone does is make touchdowns' because he's that focused."

When practice is over, you will still see Boone out there, running a play with the quarterbacks, doing sprints or catching balls that Coach Jackson drills at him.

"Sometimes you have to tell him to go home because he'll just stay there practicing, always trying to get better," said Jackson.

In fact, it is evident that a challenge is something Boone looks forward to. On the football field, he's worked hard to make his position change a positive one, believing that while he has improved along the way, he still has much to learn.

Off the field, Boone has faced more demands than most of us could ever imagine. While most 19-year-olds were adjusting to college and a new social life, he was in South America at the Trujillo, Peru mission helping the people find their faith and enrich their way of life. For two years, Boone spent time building adobe houses, digging ditches and teaching the community.

With only the chance to make two phone calls a year back home - Mother's Day and Christmas - he communicated with his family through letters, all the while appreciating even more the life he was chosen to live.

While serving the mission, Boone's strength was tested more than it could ever be on a football field. In 1998 when



Aaron Boone
Senior * 6-3 * 206
Fillmore, Utah



South America was being hit hard by El Niño, he was right in the middle of the storm that caused so many tragedies.

"At one point this huge cemetery that was up high became flooded and began washing bodies and coffins down the streets and wiping out a lot of peoples' homes," he recounts. "So we had to try and care for a lot of the people who were getting sick from the dust and debris, plus we had to rebuild the adobes that were all lost. It was definitely one of the scariest times of my life."

One adjective that doesn't describe Boone, however, is superstitious. Born in January 1978 on Friday the 13th, he says the number he wears has brought him nothing but good luck. In fact, his says some his most memorable games have been played on the 13th.

For the game against LSU, he had a different sort of good-luck charm. Boone's mother was at Commonwealth Stadium watching her son play for the first time in person since he joined the Wildcat team.

Then again, with the stellar last two years that Boone has had at Kentucky, luck might not have anything to do with it.

Boone's philosophy is "work will win when wishing won't." He said that Coach Guy Morriss and his staff follow the same mantra and this, in part, is what has made UK so strong this season.

"Our attitude this year is more of a winning one," he said. "We have a mental toughness now, lot more confidence and a year under our belts."

"I want to be the strongest link possible," he said. "As seniors we decided to set a standard for Kentucky football. We want to say 'this is what is expected.'"

Boone would like to continue on with his football career but if he doesn't, he will rely on his business management major with a minor in Spanish - in which he is fluent - to achieve success.

"I'm always telling him someday he'll be a millionaire because he always has these ideas and gimmicks," says Jackson laughing.

"Hopefully I can play football beyond this level, get some capital and start a business -I want to be an importer/exporter," said Boone. "No matter in what, I want to leave a mark as a person who has given his all."

From what we've seen of Aaron Boone so far, there's no question he's already made his mark on Kentucky.