

Cook excited to join Hutchinson coaching staff



Kody Cook, who played at Kansas State during the 2014 and 2015 season, will begin his career as a full-time coach this season with Hutchinson Community College – the school Cook signed with in 2011 when he graduated from Louisburg High School.

The last time Kody Cook roamed the sidelines at Hutchinson Community College was as a player as he led the Blue Dragons to a come-from-behind victory in the Salt City Bowl.

Five years later, he is back on the Hutchinson sidelines – this time as a coach.

Cook, a 2011 Louisburg High School graduate, was recently hired to be the tight end coach for the Blue Dragons after spending his last four years either playing or coaching at Kansas State University.

“It is kind of weird how it has come full circle,” Cook said. “It is a little ironic, especially after that last game gave me an opportunity to play football at my dream school (K-State). It put me on a path to having a successful career as a player and now hopefully I can do that as a coach as well.

“The opportunity came out of nowhere. Coach (Rion Rhodes) called me up and said there was a spot available if I wanted to apply for it. So I did and when he called to offer me the

job I was really excited. I have already gotten to know a lot of the players and we have a good room here. We have a lot of talented players and I can't wait to work with them."

To know how truly dramatic the Salt City Bowl was, one would have almost had to have been there to believe it. The story is one Cook will never forget and one that put him back on track to reaching his dream.

After not practicing all season at the quarterback position, Hutchinson head coach Rion Rhodes put Cook, a starting wide receiver, in at quarterback in the second quarter after his starter left with an injury. Cook entered Hutchinson as a quarterback from Louisburg after he helped the Wildcats to a perfect season and state championship in 2010. He was moved to wide receiver later in his freshman year, where he stayed until his final game.

Cook quickly shook off whatever rust he had as he led the Blue Dragons to a 41-21 win over Iowa Central. He was named the bowl's Offensive Most Valuable Player after completing 20 of 30 passes for 277 yards and five touchdowns. He also rushed for another and his six touchdowns was a bowl record.

That performance caught the eye of Kansas State assistant coach Dana Dimel, who offered Cook a preferred walk-on spot.

"The game gave me chance to play for a school I grew up rooting for," Cook said. "It was a dream come true for me."

Cook went on to redshirt at Kansas State in 2013, before playing, and eventually starting at wide receiver in 2014 as a junior.

His senior season was an exciting one, as like at Hutch, he was put in at quarterback against Oklahoma State in an emergency situation. All he did was complete 16 of 22 passes for 122 yards and two touchdowns as the Wildcats almost rallied to beat the nationally-ranked Cowboys.

On senior night in Manhattan later in the season, Cook was once again brought in at quarterback due to injury and he led the Wildcats to a comeback victory over West Virginia, which made them bowl eligible.

Cook then started at quarterback in the Liberty Bowl against Arkansas, where he threw for 163 yards and a touchdown in a loss.

When his playing career was finished, Cook stayed on the Kansas State sideline for the 2016 season as a student assistant coach.

"I knew that when I was done playing football that what I wanted to do was be a coach," Cook said. "I just love the game and being around it. It was a little weird not playing last year because I still have that itch to get out there, but I got a chance to be around former teammates and learn from some of the best there is on how to be a coach. I couldn't have asked for a better start."

Cook was fortunate to spend the last four years at Kansas State under hall of fame coach Bill Snyder and he knows there is no better person to learn from on how to be a good leader.

"Coach Snyder is a legend and such a great coach," Cook said. "I couldn't have asked for a better situation than to learn under him and watch how he does things. When I was playing, I watched how meticulous he was in his preparation and how he led young men like myself. Then I learned a little more when I was an assistant.

"I also got to learn from the best wide receivers coach in the country in coach (Andre) Coleman. Both of those guys have influenced me so much in my career and I can't wait to see what is in store for me in the coaching world."

He hopes like in his playing days, that his position at Hutch could lead to even bigger things down the road.

"My goal is to keep coaching and doing my best at no matter where I am at," Cook said. "Like anything else in life, you strive to get to the highest level you can in your job. One day I would love to be an offensive coordinator at a Division I program. To do that though, I have to keep working, learning and getting better.

"When it comes down to it though, I am not worried about all that stuff. I just want to enjoy all the friendships that come along the way. I just love being around the game and the energy that comes with it every Saturday. I just want to enjoy the ride and see what happens. The rest will take care of itself."