

Cook excited to help Hutchinson to national championship



Kody Cook raises the national championship trophy after Hutchinson Community College won the junior college national title on June 5 after a 29-27 win over Snow College.

HUTCHINSON – Everything about this college football season for Kody Cook wasn't what he expected.

At the same time, that has kind of been the story of his life.

Cook, who is currently the wide receivers coach at Hutchinson Community College, had quite the journey through the college football world after he led Louisburg to its first state championship as the team's quarterback in 2010.

He went to Hutchinson in hopes of continuing as a quarterback, but instead was moved to wide receiver. That was until his final game as a Blue Dragon when, thanks to an injury, he took the reins at quarterback and led Hutchinson to bowl game victory and earned MVP honors.

That performance helped him earn a walk-on spot at Kansas State University, where again they saw him as a wide receiver. Then in his senior season, again due to injury, Cook was forced into duty as the team's quarterback and helped the Wildcats to a Liberty Bowl appearance.

“Those experiences throughout my life just showed me that if you trust the process, put in the work, do what you are supposed to do, you are going to get rewarded at some point down the line,” Cook said. “It is never on your time or when you want it to be, but it will happen. I have learned to do that through Hutch and at K-State. The toughest part is to remain focused.”

Cook was tested once again this past season at Hutchinson. The junior college football season was moved to the spring due to COVID-19, and he and the rest of the coaching staff was a little worried about how their roster was going to look.

“The biggest thing we were nervous about, once they said no to the fall and yes to the spring, was that our kids would graduate in the fall and go somewhere else,” Cook said. “That is always great for them and something that we want for all our players, but there was a good chance we could have a depleted team because our kids could leave for other places. To be able to make it through the spring, and not have to deal with much of it, it almost helped us. It allowed our younger players get used to everything.”

Once again that patience and trust paid off for Cook.

On June 5, Hutchinson won the junior college national championship with a 29-27 victory over Snow College in Little Rock, Ark. It was the school’s first national football championship in its 89 years and the Blue Dragons rallied from a 21-10 deficit in the second half to complete the momentous win.

“After going through a year like COVID and watching the players work so hard to try and prepare for a season, it was tough to go through things like that,” Cook said. “It is always special to win a national championship and all the cliché stuff is true. With COVID though, it just meant a little more. Plus being able to do it at my alma mater and to

be able to help give Hutch their first national title in 89 years was really special. It is exciting and we are ready to do it again.”

So happy for and proud of Kody Cook who serves as WR coach for this years national championship team-Hutchison Community College. Deserved

– Bill Snyder (@CoachBillSnyder) June 9, 2021

After leaving Kansas State as a student assistant under then-head coach Bill Snyder, Cook realized coaching was his passion. So, he decided to take the long road toward achieving that goal.

It started in Hutchinson in 2017 as a tight ends coach, before becoming an assistant coach at Mill Valley High School in 2018.

“It has been hard, with the first couple years, especially,” Cook said. “I got the opportunity to coach at Mill Valley for a year, and they have a great program over there and Joel Applebee does a great job as they have won state the last two years. Then the opportunity was presented to me to come back to Hutch and coach with one of my mentors and it was a great opportunity for me. I jumped at the chance.

“I am always looking forward to the future and what it holds. The toughest thing for me is being able to control what you can control. That is the tough part when you have something like COVID or whatever, and I think this season taught me to be patient and just embrace the moment.”

Along with coaching, also comes the challenges of recruiting – which is also something that Cook knows he doesn’t always have control of, either.

Cook is responsible for recruiting the Kansas City area and

also Louisiana for the Blue Dragons and he enjoys getting to tell players about his alma mater.

“It can be stressful because you are playing phone tag with 17 or 18-year-old kids, but I enjoy getting to go to different places,” Cook said. “To be able to go down to that part of the country (Louisiana) that is football-oriented is really awesome. I get to talk on the phone with these young men, and it kind of takes me back to what it was like for me growing up. There are a lot of highs and lows and a lot of unknowns, but you get to experience that with them.

“It is enjoyable for me to be able to be able to tell them about the Hutch program and I just want to tell them the truth and have them make their own decision. It is important to be transparent. Then when you get the official word that they signed on the dotted line for Hutch, you are excited for the player, but at the same time you are excited for yourself at the same time. I just love every part of college football.”

Coaching at the collegiate level is not easy and one where you have to pay your dues and Cook wants to work his way toward the top. He has dreams of becoming a head coach or an offensive coordinator at the Power 5 level, but with everything else in his life, he has learned patience and hard work is key.

“Whenever God is willing and allows it to happen, it will happen,” Cook said. “Everything is already written and you just have to trust the process and when it happens, it happens. I can only control what I can control, but I would love to be a head coach or offensive coordinator at that level one day.”

As for getting back to Louisburg, Cook hasn't had much of a chance to visit his old stomping grounds, but he does have advice for those players who are interested in playing or coaching in college one day.

“If you want to play at this level, you have to have attention to detail and be disciplined,” Cook said. “I think the biggest thing we see from kids coming in is they think they are disciplined, but then they get here and we show them what being disciplined actually looks like. It is more than just football. If you are a hard worker on the field, but if you are not doing the right thing off the field, paying attention in the classroom or not going to class, it is going to be hard to succeed in life. Everything goes together. What is tough for a 17 or 18-year-old kid to realize sometimes is what I do outside of football, affects football. They think it is separate, but it isn’t.

“My advice to them is to put your all into everything. I know it is cliché, but it is true. You need to buy in and trust the process. When I was 18 years old, I struggled with that sometimes and with my school work. It hurt me and that is part of the reason I had to go to Hutchinson. You learn how you are supposed to do things and it teaches you a certain way to be competitive on the football field and in life. Just stay focused, stay humble and stay disciplined and everything will work itself out in the end.”