

The Brotherhood of the Gridiron

“Football has been more than just a game—it has been a transformative journey...”

BY JORY CHOATE

Football, at its core, is a team sport that thrives on the power of camaraderie and unity. From the moment I started playing at the age of seven, I understood that success could only be achieved through a collective effort. The bonds I formed with my teammates went beyond the game; they became an integral part of my life.

Together, we endured grueling practices, shared victories and defeats, and supported each other through adversity. The hours spent together while the stadium lights were not shining bright forged unbreakable friendships that extended far beyond the realm of football. We laughed together, cried together, pushed each other

to excel, and picked each other up during challenging times. These relationships were the cornerstone of my football journey, providing unwavering support, motivation, and a sense of belonging.

One memory that seems to find a place in the front of my mind was during fall camp in 2022. Fall camp can be a grueling and exhausting time for players and coaches, both mentally and physically. It really has a way of separating the men from the boys. One evening after a long day of meetings and practice... and more meetings, we had a team bonding activity where we talked about our upbringing in an attempt to find out more

about one another. Eventually, the conversation led to the question, “Why do you play football?” Such a simple question, but a difficult one when you really think about it. I remember exactly what I said, because it is just as true now as it was then. I play football for the brotherhood. Waking up at 5 am to go work out is never fun; you drag yourself out of bed because you know the consequences if you don’t, but when you walk into the locker room you remember the real reason you woke up that morning. You are not going to work alone, and you are not there for yourself. You are there to go to work with your brothers in the dark, so that when the





lights come on you can achieve something greater than yourself.

Often, people will ask me if I miss football. My answer is always the same. I don't miss waking up at 5 am, I don't miss spring ball, and I don't miss running Peet's Hill. I do greatly miss chatting it up with the boys in the locker room after practice or a hard workout. That seems to be an experience that I may never find a way to replicate, but something that I will forever cherish. However, the further I become removed from the daily grind of football, the more I find that I would run Peet's Hill every week, and likely throw up every other rep, just to be around that group of guys on a daily basis again.

From the outside, my career highlights may include earning a scholarship at the beginning of my

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Senior year, or scoring a touchdown in front of College Gameday at the 121st Brawl of the Wild. However, in my opinion, nothing compares to the experiences and memories I made in the locker room.

Being the coach's kid brought a unique set of challenges and opportunities. As a child, I got used to moving every couple years to a new part of the country. In the first 16 years of my life, I lived everywhere from Gainesville, Florida to Seattle, Washington, and countless places in between. I learned to make new friends quickly and find the right group of guys to hang around. My dad has always said, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." I grew up going to football practices whenever I could, and every Saturday in the fall was spent tailgating and going to college football games.



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By the end of my junior year of high school, I knew I wanted to play football at the collegiate level. During the recruiting process, my dad made it clear that if I were to go play for him, I would not be given anything. I would not become a first team All-conference player or break the school tackle record just because of who my dad was. Everything I would make of myself would be mine because of my work and my coaches' and teammates' belief in me.

I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of my time playing under Coach Choate. It was extremely valuable and cherishable to see a side of him that I had never seen before. At home he is my dad, but at work he is 100 people's dad. He has always been known as one of the best motivators in the business, and after sitting in on my first couple team meetings, I could see why. Every time he spoke, he would find a new way to get everyone in the room ready to run through a brick wall. My dad has always been my biggest

role model, supporter, and critic. His way with words and stern but gentle tone constantly motivates me to achieve success in my own life. My life goal has always been to not be known as "Jeff Choate's son," but rather, for my dad to be known as "Jory Choate's dad."

As grateful as I am for the opportunities that were given to me by playing collegiate football under my dad, I am just as grateful to be able to experience life as a normal student-athlete. Playing under Coach Vigen was a blessing and has taught me just as much. Most importantly, I learned that there is never one correct answer to any problem.

Football provided me with a platform for personal growth and development. Beyond the physical demands of the game, it pushed me to hone my mental resilience, discipline, and perseverance. Every setback became an opportunity for self-reflection and improvement. The lessons I learned on the football field continue to guide me in all aspects of life. They have

shaped my character, instilled a strong work ethic, and taught me the importance of humility and resilience in the face of adversity. I learned to embrace challenges, pushing myself beyond my comfort zone to reach new heights. The game demanded mental toughness, requiring me to stay focused, make split-second decisions, and adapt to ever-changing situations. These skills transcended the football field, preparing me to face the challenges of life with resilience and a never-give-up attitude. Football has been more than just a game—it has been a transformative journey that has prepared me for the challenges and triumphs that lie ahead.

As the doors close on my football journey, I am aware of the legacy I leave behind. The friendships, memories, and experiences forged on the field and in the locker room will forever hold a special place in my heart. I hope I will be seen as a selfless teammate who never complained and went to work every day with the goal of pushing myself and everyone else around me to be better.

The players and coaches that are a part of Montana State Football are a group that can be fazed by very little. They will not give up from a setback, because they have all had to overcome much greater obstacles in the past. They will not back down in the face of a superior opponent—they will bow their necks and make sure that opponent remembers the day they played the Montana State Bobcats. This program is built on Character, Accountability, Toughness, and State. If you don't know what that means, you don't need to, but if you do, you know that the Bobcats will always leave a place better than when they found it, and will always Finish The Grind.

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