

GREBE BROTHERS SADDLE UP FOR THE GRIDIRON

BY PAUL BURNS



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- COACH BRENT VIGEN



Yes, Brody Grebe does know how to throw. An elite high school quarterback for Roundup, he threw and ran the football all the way to Class B playoffs. He also threw his share of basketballs into the hoop or to his teammates while playing for Melstone.

But perhaps his best knack for throwing comes on the back of a horse. He’s a master at throwing a lasso at a running calf, a skill that’s useful on this family’s ranch some 20 miles northeast of downtown Melstone, which is nothing more than a dot on the map. The skill served Brody well when he traveled the high school rodeo circuit, competing in calf roping and steer

wrestling. That is, when he wasn't competing in football, basketball, or track.

While this isn't a rodeo story, Brody doesn't care. After all, he's not at Montana State to throw a rope, or a football for that matter. He's at MSU to wrestle opposing running backs and quarterbacks to the ground, a knack that's getting him plenty of publicity. "I try to take a few steps forward every day," he says. "Stopping the run is first and foremost."

Still, you can't talk about Brody or his younger brother Bryce without touching on their rodeo skills. Growing up on horses, both could fit in seamlessly on the Bobcat rodeo team. They're wearing the blue and gold, but their field of competition is Bobcat Stadium.

Brody joined MSU back in 2020 (the year that wasn't, due to Covid). His first action was in the fall of 2021, helping as much as a true freshman can to get the Bobcats to the national championship game. Last season, while playing with a leg injury, Brody was an All-American defensive end as MSU finished 12-2.

Bryce will join the Bobcats this fall after a standout season playing for Custer-Hysham-Melstone. He started at Class B Roundup, some 30 miles down the road from Melstone. That was where Brody made a name for himself. But as a junior, Bryce opted to play for the Class C co-op. And, like Brody, Bryce excels in basketball and track as well.

The duo is one of several pairs of brothers currently or formerly playing for the Bobcats. Also on the roster this fall are Justus, Jaden, and Jaren Perkins; Danny and Taki Uluilakepa, and Taco and Caden Dowler. Fraternal ties



go deeper than that. There are high expectations for McCade O'Reilly this season, just as there were for older brother Callahan, who's hoping to get a roster spot this fall with the Chicago Bears. Jace Fitzgerald is expected to play a big role on defense, just as brother RJ did for many years at MSU on offense. Brock Steel is on the team, replacing his brother Coy, who graduated last spring. Tayvian Williams came to MSU after his older brother Amandre had a stellar blue and gold career.

"It's a deal where you know how the older brother has been and what he comes from and how he operates. It is a benefit to the next brother," says MSU coach Brent Vigen. "Generally knowing how one is, at least from the intangible perspective, the next one is pretty similar. There are all different shapes and sizes."

A 23-year-old junior this season, Brody is listed at 6-foot-2, 245 pounds. Bryce, living on a less than stellar high school diet and nutrition plan, weighs 200 pounds

soaking wet. But a few years at MSU and he'll beef up. Set to play linebacker for the Bobcats, he may never get as heavy as Brody, who must battle hefty offensive linemen on every play. "Brody and Bryce are somewhat similar but they're different sizes," Vigen says. "We feel real good about who they're going to be, what they're about, how they're going to work."

Being an outstanding academic institution as well as home to one of the best football teams in the nation year in and year out makes MSU an easy choice for a candidate; having an older brother on the team doesn't hurt.

"Brody and Bryce have never been on the same team together. It was clear that Brody wanted his brother here, but he wanted Bryce here on his own terms," Vigen says. "To Bryce's credit, he earned the opportunity to come here. Some of that had to do with who Brody is, but we were not recruiting him just to make Brody happy. That's where you run into some issues

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It’s a little early for Bryce to know where he wants to be in five years, but Brody says he’s dialed in as a mechanical engineer. Way back in 2018, while still roping and riding, he was quoted as saying, “I really want to be an engineer.” A few years ago, another Bobcat All-American came from a small town to MSU to be an engineer. Perhaps you’ve heard of Troy Andersen, who grew up on a ranch outside of Dillon, spent hours and hours on the back of a horse, was all-state in two sports, majored in engineering, and is now playing for the Atlanta Falcons. Brody says he wouldn’t mind playing in the NFL before using his engineering knowledge back on the 18,000-acre family compound on Grebe Road in Rosebud County.

The ranch life, while a lot of hard work, has its pluses. The Grebe place sits where Antelope Creek flows into Rattlesnake Creek before it all dumps into the Musselshell River a few miles to the west. The land is rolling plains scattered with coulees and an occasional butte. It’s land folks drive by when headed for their annual elk hunt in the Missouri Breaks to the north. The Grebes wave at those fellows as they themselves head south into the Bull Mountains for their elk. Not as well known, but they’re just as big, and the backstraps are just as tasty.

Unlike Bryce, Brody didn’t come directly to MSU from that part of Montana where a kid learns to drive long before he’s 16 years old. The second most prolific scorer in Montana high school history, Brody gave as much thought to playing college basketball as he did college football. His dad, who through the years has coached Melstone to over 400 basketball victories,



played at Dickenson State in North Dakota, so the hardwood pulled strong. After his Melstone days were over, Brody packed his bags and headed east in the fall of 2019 to Choate Rosemary Hall prep school in Wallingford, Conn. His football season went so well that, shortly after the basketball season started, Brody said, ‘the heck with it’ and came to Bozeman in January 2020—only for that fall’s season to be wiped out by the pandemic.

“It gave me some clarity,” Brody says of his time back east. “I didn’t know if I wanted to play (college) basketball or football. There’s no regret not playing basketball.” It was playing basketball that enticed Brody to wear No. 10. It was the same number his dad wore in college, and Brody continues to wear it today. He’s a defensive lineman wearing a quarterback’s number; it’s

the same number quarterback Sean Chambers sports.

During the spring of 2020, Brody was an unknown quantity. He was recruited to Bozeman by Jeff Choate, who preceded Vigen as head coach. Shortly after arriving on campus, Brody started grabbing Vigen’s attention. “He was one of those guys where you said, OK, that’s a guy that has to figure in (the team plans). What’s his story?” When football resumed in 2021, Brody was part of the defensive line rotation, getting more playing time than a typical undersized freshman. “I’ve really appreciated his growth in the time he’s been here,” Vigen says.

Bryce, just the 32nd Montana prep to tally 2,000 points in basketball, is ready to add his name to the Grebe-Bobcat story, if not right away. A learning curve

is expected after playing six-man football in tiny Melstone. On signing day last November, defensive coach Bobby Daly said, “Bryce is very different from his brother in a lot of ways, but very similar as far as athletic ability. Coming from six man football, he’s just scratching the surface as far as what he needs to know as far as 11-man football goes, but without a doubt he has the athletic ability to be a very good football player for us.”

The brothers are happy to be playing football but yearn for their days on horseback. Back in his Roundup days, Brody would finish his Friday night games and then head to far-flung places like Wibaux, Lewistown, Glasgow, or Malta for a Saturday rodeo. For now, those days are over for both Grebes, yet there’s no doubt that life on horseback remains in their futures.