

# Merced College Blue Devil Athletes Adopt A Most Inspirational Boy

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He's the Merced College Blue Devil Football Team's most inspirational player. He's at every practice and suits up for every home game, cheering on his teammates with enthusiasm and passion. He's as much a part of the Blue Devil brotherhood as anyone. And yet, Morgan Boyle can't run or catch a football.

He's confined to a wheelchair.

The 13-year-old Chenoweth Elementary School student lives with the effects of cerebral palsy. Although he is bright and inquisitive—in most ways a typical teenager—he lives in a body that doesn't allow him to experience the physical pleasures of being an athlete. But, that doesn't matter to Morgan. He's found a team to play on.

For the past year, the Blue Devil men have adopted Morgan as one of their own. They've given him access to their practices and games, included him in their team huddles, and have outfitted him in a regulation uniform. He's even pictured in the official team media program.

His parents, Merced College students Dennis and Michelle Boyle, says it's been a blessing for both Morgan and the football players.

"The football players and coaches have made Morgan feel like he's part of something that we, as parents, never dreamed he could be," said Michelle Boyle. "He may be in a wheelchair, but he's become a football player. He's affected the players too. It's made them appreciate and be grateful for the things they can do physically."

Dennis Boyle says the affection and attention Morgan receives from his teammates is inspiring. In a letter given to head football coach Tony Lewis, Dennis writes:

"Coach, all too often young athletes get caught up in their own hype and become nothing more than an attitude with no character whatsoever. But, I want you to know that you should be proud of the job that you and your coaching staff have done with these fine young men. They extended their hands and hearts in kindness toward Morgan and gave him the greatest gift anyone could."

Coach Lewis affirmed his pride in his football players.

"I'm really proud of them," Lewis said. "They never realized that they are role models, but



with Morgan they soon saw the impact they can have on young people.

“I always tell the men how lucky they are to go to college and to be able to play college football,” Lewis said. “Some of us aren’t able to do this. It’s nice to see them follow through and develop this relationship.”

Morgan’s association with the Blue Devil football team began last fall when his father took him to see a practice. The players saw Morgan sitting in his wheelchair behind the fence. Some of them waved to the young boy and soon others were coming by to talk to him. Morgan was thrilled, his father said.

“We made it father-and-son time to watch the practices” Dennis said. “Morgan was in awe of the experience. It was quarterback Dedrick Davis who first approached him. He asked Morgan if he’d like a football and Dedrick had all of the players sign it.”

In no time, the players had Morgan in the team huddle after practice. And, for Halloween last year, after Morgan announced he wanted to go as a Blue Devil football player, the team put together a complete uniform for him. Then came a bigger surprise. A photographer took Morgan’s photo for the team’s program.

“He just about came out of his chair when he saw that photo,” Dennis said.

The team voted Morgan as its most inspirational player. And, in many ways, he is. “Morgan and I talked after one of the Blue Devil home games,” Dennis said. “He told me, ‘Dad, I know I can’t really play football because I can’t run. But, that’s OK because my Blue Devils play for me. I can’t run, so they are my legs.’”

Every victory the Blue Devils achieve on the field is a victory for Morgan Boyle. But, win or lose, the players and coaches are champions in his sight.