



IN One of 33,000

One day before the Holiday Bowl, members of the competing teams sat aboard an active Navy ship in San Diego, Calif. These players listened with anticipation as only one athlete was about to receive the Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp Trophy. Given once a year during the Navy & Marine Corps Luncheon, this award signifies the selflessness of one player and his dedication to the betterment of his team. No one thinks they will be named, but one young man has earned this distinguished trophy.

Johnathon White, a Junior majoring in Agricultural Business from Bremond TX, suffered a neck injury in a football accident during his senior year in high school. Three herniated disks were out of place toward his spine with one having spinal cord encroachment. This resulted in an injury which can only be completely fixed with a complex neck surgery.

According to Barbara White, White's mother, Johnathon finished the football season and competed in track without the proper use of his left arm and tingling from his neck to his feet. Johnathon said he never knew he was not cleared to play as his doctor at the time told him he would be fine.

Johnathon never expected to attend Texas Tech University or play football for a NCAA Division I school. A phone call six weeks before high school graduation changed Johnathon's plans dramatically. Defensive Coordinator at the time, Chad Glasgow, invited Johnathon to be a member of the Texas Tech football team as a safety. Moving to Lubbock two days after graduating, Johnathon encountered his first challenge.

Upon arrival in Lubbock, the assistant strength coaches at the time told Johnathon they would never play him due to his neck injury. With his dream being so close and about to be taken away again, Johnathon sought a second opinion from a specialist.

"They said 'There is nothing we can really do to help you, you're going to have to deal with this the rest of your life,'" Johnathon said. "He said 'We can go in and do surgery' but they're afraid going in they might hit my

spinal cord."

Extensive therapy and constant hard work allowed Johnathon to be cleared to play. Johnathon went from being just a Texas Tech student to being a Texas Tech football player.

Coming from a 1A school and weighing only 170 pounds, Johnathon was the smallest member on the football team. In the first meeting with the whole team, Johnathon was excited and nervous for his dream to begin. But with it came his second challenge, the challenge of being accepted.

When the time came for Johnathon to introduce himself, emotions took over, and Johnathon's voice failed him. Fellow teammates laughed at him. Several players

instantly started making comments about what was going to happen to Johnathon in practices, and assistant coaches advised him to just quit.

"It was just fueling it up, you know," Johnathon said. "I've got to prove myself every day and show that I deserve to be here, and I can do it."

Johnathon made every practice along with weights five mornings a week and

seven-on-seven in the afternoons. Johnathon also had a job working part time, and was able to maintain a 4.0 grade with a course load of 15 hours a semester. Coming from a hard working agricultural background, Johnathon kept busy doing all he could to be the best possible in everything.

Agriculture was also a large part of Johnathon's high school career. He was president of his FFA chapter, showed livestock, and worked on farms in his local area. Agriculture is a passion of Johnathon's he said. It showed him how to work hard and the results which come from it.

As a Texas Tech freshman in fall of 2011, Johnathon was a preferred walk-on and redshirted. During this year, Johnathon also worked for a landscaping company. Johnathon was a scout team member in 2012, and he continued to work part time as an electrician. During these two years, Johnathon lived on campus to be closer to resources needed for him to succeed. Johnathon sacrificed

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most of his socializing to ensure he avoided distractions and stayed on top of his work.

The 2013 season opener against Southern Methodist University was Johnathon's career debut. Throughout the season, Johnathon played a total of eight games and was one of the leading tacklers on the kickoff team. Johnathon worked hard, and it showed on the field. The coaches noticed also. After the season was over, Johnathon was awarded a full scholarship.

"Honorable, character, and class," said Trey Haverty, assistant coach for Texas Tech Football, of Johnathon. "Just his work ethic and his character, I mean everything he does is first class."


Johnathon said it is a blessing to go from being a walk-on player paying normal dues like a regular student to having a scholarship where everything is paid for. This scholarship covers everything for the remaining time Johnathon is at Texas Tech, about two and a half years. Johnathon has now entered a category only few can achieve.

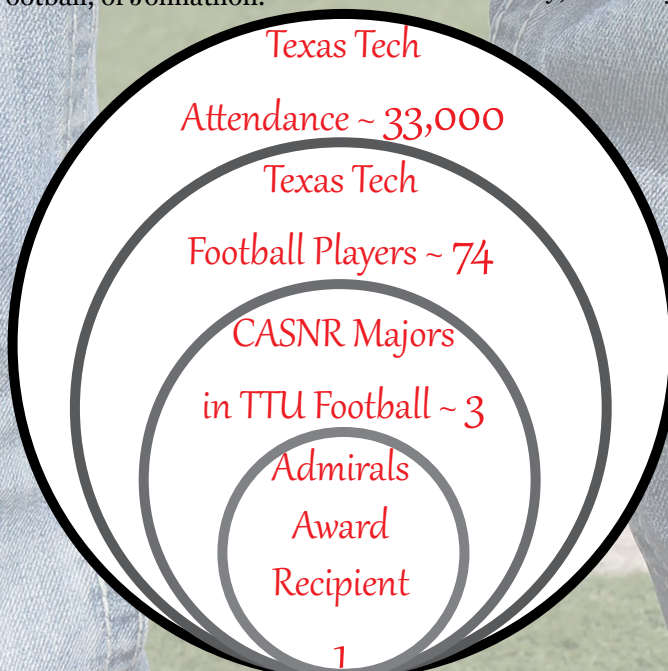
He is a Texas Tech football player on a full scholarship.

As the Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp Trophy speech winds down, Johnathon began to think it can't be me. That would be awesome, but I don't deserve it the most. It can't be me... Johnathon's name rang out. He was surprised at first then grateful to the coaches and players, Johnathon said. The winner was voted on by the Texas Tech football team. Johnathon said he was blessed and thankful to know he had been truly accepted by the team, and they respected him enough for this award.

"He is the type of kid you want your own kid to hang out with one day," Haverty said. "He is just a first-class person."

Even with all the newfound attention, Johnathon said he does not measure success by the big goals he has achieved. At the end of the day, Johnathon looks in the mirror and asks himself if he gave it all that day. It was never Johnathon's intention to call attention to himself by winning an individual award. He is a hard worker and carries his strong work ethic into every aspect of his life.

Johnathon said, "That is my kind of mentality." 



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