



TEXAS TECH

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SEPT. 30, 1972  
TEXAS TECH  
UNIVERSITY

# TWO POWERHOUSES - COTTON AND FOOTBALL

*Texas Tech Athletics celebrated the West Texas Cotton Growing Industry by showing cotton everywhere with machinery, cotton bales, t-shirts and posters. “Celebrate Cotton – We Clothe America” game brought awareness to cotton in our everyday lives, and gave attention to local producers.*

After the devastating 2011 drought that reduced West Texas cotton production by more than half, farmers were hoping to see the light at the end of the tunnel. They never thought that would include Texas Tech University football players running out of the Jones AT&T Stadium tunnel.

Mary Jane Buerkle, director of communications and public affairs at Plains Cotton Growers, said this was a positive outlook before harvest. After the drought last year, Buerkle said they still had producers across this region that faced challenges this year.

“This game was definitely a morale booster for a lot of people in this industry,” Buerkle said.

Blayne Beal, associate Texas Tech athletic director for football and men’s golf, said there were several people involved who worked extremely hard to make the gameday experience happen. He said it was a big undertaking that began four months ago with Plains Cotton Growers.

Buerkle said the chance to have something so positive like this game, after last year, is a complete 180 for their producers.

Steve Uryasz, senior associate Texas Tech athletic director, said the main focus was to recognize the economic engine of West Texas – the cotton industry. He said cotton and oil in West Texas, are essential economic stabilities for their success in athletics.

“As those succeed, those dollars turn into season tickets, donations, and other things to help our program,” Uryasz said.

He said the athletics department wanted to recognize the importance of the cotton industry to West Texas and Eastern New Mexico, and cotton’s impact on our daily lives. Uryasz said many people in college athletics forget where they came from.

“Our base in West Texas is our student athletes, students and our surrounding businesses like cotton,

oil, gas, and local companies,” Uryasz said. “It strengthens our relationship.”

Summitt Hogue, a special teams Texas Tech football player, said West Texas revolves around cotton and farming. Hogue said without farmers, we would not have clothes; we would not have jeans or any of that.

“I think it was really cool they did the game on cotton, because it showed everybody that the clothes they are wearing, and all the hard work these people are doing out here in West Texas,” he said.

Uryasz said Kirby Hocutt, Texas Tech athletic director, started the Committee For Champions after 15 years of being inactive. He said the committee went away for a period of time, and the committee wanted to resurrect the organization to bring new and innovative ways to involve local communities, businesses, and agriculture.

Uryasz said they were hoping to provide a base level education about the cotton industry. He said farming is a risky business and a massive investment; the athletics

department wanted to show the sacrifices the producers go through to put clothes on their back. Uryasz said helping to educate younger generations about the importance of the cotton industry, and how much West Texas contributes to the commodity, was the focus.

**“When the farmers win, we win.”**



“Just letting the growers know that we know they have run into some hard times,” he said. “We want to help and be a part of this growing industry, was our key message to the producers.”

“If you take a look at our season ticket sales, and take a look at our industry like cotton, when they struggle we struggle as well,” Uryasz said. “When the farmers win, we win.”

Beal said they hoped to create awareness and the game sets the stage for future growth, so every year they are able to do more, and hopefully, call more attention on a state and national level.

Uryasz said his department acts as facilitators, and their job in athletics is to take those things that will make the overall experience better and make it happen.

“We had the fourth largest crowd in history at the Jones for that game,” Uryasz said.

Hogue is proud to represent his family on the football field and in the cotton fields.

“Being a walk-on, you’re the bottom of the barrel,” Hogue said. “You are the guy that gets knocked out and nobody cares, but I got my opportunity.”

Being a farmer’s son from Brownfield, Hogue said cotton farming runs in the family. When he was old enough to grab a hoe and chop weeds and drive a tractor, he was out there all summer. Hogue said it has been a blessing and dream come true to be a preferred walk-on for on the Texas Tech football team.


Hogue said he holds pride in representing his family on the team while getting a degree in agricultural communications. He said many people do not realize the impact agriculture has on our

lives and he hopes to bring attention to agriculture’s importance some day through communications with Deltapine.

While interning with Deltapine for the second summer, Hogue said the farms he observed in West Texas, Eastern New Mexico and Southern Oklahoma were devastated by the drought. He said his father had three or four wells turned off.

“This summer is a positive for the local farmer,” Hogue said. “They will have a better crop this harvest.”

Beal said this cotton-themed game was a stepping-stone for years to come. He said their department plans on incorporating a style show and various community wide events the week before the next themed game so more people are involved.

“We hope the community understands what a big business cotton is, and how vital the industry is,” Beal said. “We hoped we shed light on the researchers here on Texas Tech campus doing work with cotton to hopefully make huge impact on the world.” 

Lauren *Beal*  
Cotton, 2018

