

# "ALL AROUND" KID

By Nicola Freeman

## Hard Work and Determination Equal Results on the Field & Show Ring

He steps onto a sports field or show ring – driven, focused and ready to compete. These are just a few of the attributes to describe Kyle Kerlee of Denair, Calif.

Growing up in a rural community and family rooted in the agriculture and livestock industries, Kyle knows his way around a show barn in addition to a sports field.

The 18-year-old senior at Hughson Union High School in Hughson, Calif., has always been driven to succeed. His determination and work ethic have led him to top achievements, championship honors as an athlete and as a junior livestock competitor.

### On the Field

Kyle has always loved sports. He played in Pop Warner football and other leagues up until high school, and was excited during the summer of his upcoming freshman year to play various sports on a competitive level.

During his freshman year Kyle played both football and basketball, however he found his ability and talents in football to be a natural fit to his competitive drive.

"I really love the aspect of the game," said Kyle. "Both the mental and physical challenges of football. It's me and 10 other teammates on the field, working together to be the more aggressive, tougher, stronger, smarter team in pursuit of the win."

He was moved from the freshman squad to the junior varsity team his first year as the Huskies' middle linebacker and running back. Sophomore year he transitioned to quarterback and safety, and took on a more athletic role on the varsity team his junior year. This past year, as a senior, Kyle played both defensive and offensive roles as outside linebacker, safety and corner positions.

"As I moved up to the varsity level my love and passion for the game has become intense," he said. "My junior year I won the Coaches Award, made second team All Trans-Valley League in both quarterback and safety, and assisted the Huskies to the playoffs my junior and senior years."



*Kyle has played on both the offensive and defensive sides of the Hughson Union High School football team.*



*Kyle serves as a member of the Hughson Union High School Varsity Track team. He is a member of the 4X100 team, and runs the 100- and 200-meter dash and long jump.*

"You hear a lot of people refer to high school football being like the television series 'Friday Night Lights.' I was fortunate that my last game was one of the best games I could have put together. It is a memory I'll take with me," Kyle said.

When Kyle wasn't beating his personal bests on the football field, he was working on marketing himself to the college football world. With his senior year and the prospect of college drawing near, Kyle was diligent in getting his name and stats in the right hands for college coaches to consider him as a prospect for the fall.

Each morning during the football season Kyle would email between 12-15 coaches his stats, performances on the field, and weightlifting scores, along with his academic records and organizational involvement. These were sent to Division I, II & III colleges along with smaller programs in hopes of piquing the interest in him.

Kyle's hard work and commitment to his sport paid off, with seven acceptance letters to play football from renowned university programs throughout the U.S. With these opportunities in front of him, Kyle considered his future and career ambitions and decided on Whittier College in Los Angeles as the ideal fit for him. With an academic scholarship, the Whittier football coaching staff is eager for Kyle to step onto the field this late summer and join the team. He will be pursuing a degree in kinesiology, the study of human kinetics, human movement.

As the high school football season came to a close, Kyle kept a sharp focus on the future back on the field, working five to six days a week with a professional trainer, focusing on speed and weight training. Kyle also sought out track and field as a potential way to take his conditioning to another level.

"Over the course of this past year, I've been working with a personal trainer and my performance on the football and track field has greatly improved. I've been able to work on my speed, explosion on the field in football. I wanted to try track again and have been really surprised by how my abilities have improved over the year," he said.

Kyle is a member of the 4x100 relay and competes in the 100-meter and 200-meter dash and long jump. Currently Kyle is ranked as the best long jumper in Stanislaus County and advanced to the county competition, where Stanislaus and Merced counties face off, known as the County Clash. Kyle was named the Best Long Jump in 2014 and ranks third in the 100-meter dash.

### In the Show Ring

Before Kyle was exploding off the block or calling a play on the field, he was in a livestock barn, learning the ropes and showing some impressive livestock throughout California and the United States.



Kyle's livestock experience started at a young age. Around the time he was four years old he showed his first gilt. With the help from his parents, Chip and Maddi Kerlee, and his uncle, Ryan Watje of W-D Swine Farms, Kyle became a very competitive showman in a hog ring.

"I had a really great run of showing," said Kyle. He attended the 2004 World Pork Expo in Des Moines, Iowa, claiming the Junior Event Champion Gilt and Reserve Open Show Gilt honors. It proved to be a pretty fun and memorable road trip and livestock show with Uncle Ryan.

At 14, Kyle took on the new challenge of showing club lambs. With his physical stature and strength, Kyle found showing lambs to be challenging and rewarding.

Through Kyle's drive and hard work with his club lambs, and his willingness to learn, the results were big. Kyle exhibited the 2012 California State Fair Supreme Champion Ewe, was named the California Junior Livestock Association (CJLA) overall sheep winner and showmanship winner in his age category multiple seasons.

Kyle added another significant win at the California State Fair, winning 4-H Sheep Showmanship, advancing him to the Round Robin competition, where he took home first and a renowned Gold Bear award.

Kyle attributes his success in the livestock arenas to the support and dedication of his parents and brother, Aaron. Going to livestock show and country fairs was a family and team effort.

He was a member of the Turlock Hoof 'N' Horns 4-H chapter for nine years and has been a member of the Hughson FFA Chapter for the past four years.



*"My family are my greatest fans and supporters in all arenas," says Kyle, who won the 2009 Supreme Champion Ewe at the California State Fair. He is shown here with his brother Aaron and his parents, Chip and Maddi Kerlee.*

He exhibits his livestock through the FFA program.

Additionally, Kyle remains active in his FFA chapter and is the recipient of the Greenhand award, chapter and state FFA degrees. He was a member of the opening and closing team for two years and participated in the job interview competition during his junior year.

Kyle is also involved in his school outreach programs,

serving on leadership clubs that put on events throughout the year for students. He also was on the committee for Relay For Life and had his own team to help support funds and raise awareness for cancer.

## Next Steps

A new chapter is on the horizon for Kyle that he is anxious and excited to begin. He notes where he is today is possible due to unconditional love and support his family has given him. They cheer loudly no matter what field or arena he is in.

When Kyle isn't on the football field this fall, he hopes to continue to make it to livestock shows when he can and support his

brother, Aaron. Likewise, when his family can't make a game this fall, you can bet the Kerlees will be on a showbox with a computer or tablet, watching and cheering Kyle from a live stream with their livestock family.

Kyle is humbled by his success as a junior livestock exhibitor and high school athlete. As his focus shifts to attending Whittier College and playing football, he takes with him the lessons he learned in the barns and on the high school fields. Kyle is bound to do great wherever he goes.

## About Whittier College

Whittier College is a four-year residential liberal arts college that pushes students to question the world around them and figure out their place in it. Located in the heart of Southern California between bustling Los Angeles and beautiful Orange County, Whittier is distinguished by its small size, pioneering faculty, and nationally recognized curriculum. Facilities rival those at large public institutions, but Whittier is an intimate setting where students and professors unite in an ongoing pursuit of knowledge.

## Stats on Kyle Kerlee:

- 18 years old
- Senior at Hughson Union High School
- Captain and member of Varsity Football Team
  - Primary Position: Running Back and Safety
- Captain and member of Varsity Track and Field Team
  - Member of 4x100 relay
  - 100-Meter Dash
  - 200-Meter Dash
  - Long Jump
- 40-Yard Dash: 4.47 seconds (Fast!)
- 5-10-5 Shuttle: 4.06 seconds (Explosive)
- Bench Presses 305 Pounds
- Squats 525 Pounds
- Named MVP on Junior Varsity Team, freshman year
- Named MVP in Track, sophomore year
- Tran Val League Academic Scholar 2013
- California Junior Livestock Association, member
- National Junior Swine Association, member, past public speaking winner
- Top 5 Sectional FFA Job Interview Contest
- Rally Commissioner, Hughson Union High School
- Relay for Life chairman, Hughson Union High School
- History Student of the Year, 2011-2012
- Honor Roll
- Awarded Academic Scholarship to Whittier College, Los Angeles. Planned field of Study: Kinesiology. Attending Fall 2014.

**PS**