

Britt Tackles Adversity

by keelin davis



Britt helps motivate the lineman while they are on the sidelines. He remembers being in their position and wants to make them the best they can be. "Inside me, I just wish that I could be out there on the football field playing with them but I pushed it to the side and just kept thinking about what this has allowed me to do and if I keep sticking to it, it can bring me far," he said. Photo: Brodie Curtsinger



Britt reviews film with three offensive linemen. He secured a spot on the sideline on Friday nights after paying attention to the coaches in practice. He said, "I started paying a whole lot of attention to our offensive line coach. I started picking up on the coaching points that he gave and I started jumping in and helping share my knowledge that I have learned from him as well as sharing my knowledge from playing for eight years." Photo: Brodie Curtsinger

Never give up and you can accomplish your dreams.

Junior Cole Britt did not let a life-changing injury stop him from doing what he loves.

At the end of freshman year, Britt found out about an injury that would change his football career forever. He now helps coach the football team and contributes greatly to the staff. Britt hopes to pursue a career of coaching football and wants to take his knowledge to greater heights.

Growing up, football was always something that was important in the Britt household. His father played football all through high school and as a child, Britt played for eight years up until his freshman year. "It has been something that I have loved and cared about and played since I was about five. It was something that I took almost as a job. It was all I ever thought about and all I ever cared for and I just kept working at it," Britt said. Football has had a drastic impact on his life and he believes that he would be a very different person without it.

Playing for nearly half of his life, football practice, weekend games and weightlifting was part of Britt's daily schedule. He played a full freshman year of football alongside his friends and going into his sophomore season, Britt was as motivated as ever. With a new staff hired and new players joining the team, he was excited to start the season and work as hard as he could.



Britt walks through a play with a player on the sidelines. He helps walk through film, shoot drone shots and more. Junior Ethan Taipalus said, "The impact that he has is tremendous. He does all of the little stuff, like if we have any equipment issues, he is there to fix it. Photo: Brodie Curtsinger

During the offseason going into sophomore year, the team began weightlifting for the upcoming season. During a session, Britt began to have ongoing back pain which started to set him back as a player. Recent hire at the time, Coach Ethan Atchley, sent Britt to a doctor where he received news that would change his life. "They told me that I broke one of my vertebrae and it slipped seven millimeters which is a whole lot. They told me that I would never play again because I could possibly get paralyzed by a hit," Britt said. He was devastated by this news and did not know what to do next.

The immediate reaction to the news for Britt was shock. The thing that his life revolved around the most had been taken from him with no warning. "From playing for about eight years previously, football was the only thing I really cared about and the only thing that I really worked hard for. It was heartbreaking. I had no idea what to think. I almost blacked out when he told me and it was devastating that I would never get a full high school football experience," Britt said, "it is one of the only times that I really didn't know what to think or do. I had no idea what my life would become." Britt had support from friends and family that helped him get through this tough time and ease the pain.

With such a strong support system, Britt was able to have people around him that kept him going and stable. "They just told me to keep my head up and to think that even though it doesn't seem that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, everything happens for a reason. Without that injury and without the support from my friends and family, I don't think I would have been able to make it through and continue to stick around and be where I'm at now,"

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Britt said. Through his support system, he was able to keep strong mental health and was able to keep pushing.

The day after finding out the devastating news, Britt returned to practice to let everyone know the news. When he got there, he was met by Atchley with a drone. "The day I came back, he handed me a drone. He said 'here, figure it out and learn how to fly it.' So I did that," Britt said. With this drone, he began recording film from practices and analyzing them to help in practice. Although he could not play on the team any longer, he found a role where he could stay involved and really contribute. Atchley said, "Cole is the definition of a 'do-er' that continues to find more ways to help us as coaches and a football team get better all the time and become more efficient in a growing program that now is at the 6A level for the first time in school history." With his work ethic and knowledge, Britt was able to help improve the team in many ways.

Britt uses this opportunity to soak in as much information as possible from the coaches around him. He said, "I started paying a whole lot of attention to our offensive line coach. I started picking up on the coaching points that he gave and I started jumping in and helping share my knowledge that I have learned from him as well as sharing my knowledge from playing for eight years." Britt does all that he can to get more educated about the game to help him share his knowledge with other players and improve the team.

Due to his immense contributions and overall knowledge of the game, the coaches decided to keep Britt around to stay. "He said my help was valuable and he wanted me to continue to stay and help coach and that got me into getting a headset on Friday nights on the sidelines which is a tremendous experience," Britt said, "I get to hear what all of the coaches are saying and all of their coaching points on a Friday night." Opportunities like his are something that you rarely see in high school football.

By providing this opportunity to Britt, Atchley feels like this was a tremendous step for the team as a whole. "There is a gigantic list of things that as coaches nobody tells you about that fall under the category of 'other duties as assigned, or not assigned, but need to be done because no one else will do them' and Cole has been willing to take some of those on without ever being asked! He's as dependable as any single assistant coach I've ever actually had or been around! It's cliché to say, he's built different, but the truth is that Cole is different and has been one of the single greatest kids I have ever been around," Atchley said. Britt also plays a big role with the players and is always there to help. Junior Ethan Taipalus said, "The impact that he has is tremendous. He does all of the little stuff, like if we have any equipment issues, he is there to fix it." With a smaller coaching staff, the little things go a long way.

The constant support and experiences that Britt was provided made him very grateful for the situation that he was put in. "It is really a tremendous thing that he allowed me to have. It is now my second year doing this and it is the best experience of my entire life," Britt said. The whole sport of football has had the largest impact on his life than anything else and Britt does not know what he would do without it. He said, "it's a sport that has an indescribable impact on my life. It's not a job, it's just what I am passionate about and I can't really put it into words what it means to me." He keeps this positive mindset and does not take for granted all the good that the sport and being on this team has brought him.

At times, Britt wishes he could go back and change it all so he could still be playing today. "Inside me, I just wish that I could be out there on the football field playing with them but I pushed it to the side and just kept thinking about what this has allowed me to do and if I keep sticking to it, it can bring me far," he said. Although he still plays a valuable role on the

team, the staff still wishes they could see him on the field. Atchley said, "we as coaches still wish we could put him on the field with the team on Friday nights because he'd be a key contributor for us on the football field with his playing ability before a career ending injury came along." Britt tries to take on the mindset of thinking in the present and future rather than sulking in the past.

In the future, he looks to continue a path in coaching. Once he began to coach for the team he began to realize that, "maybe it could bring me to a college position or push me to be a better version of my current self," Britt said. He feels like the knowledge and skills that he has gained from playing his whole life and now, being mentored by his coaches can take him far in his life and help him accomplish his greatest goals. Britt said, "I wasn't the best football player but I was able to learn a lot through my youth league career and now I am so passionate about it that it is really indescribable." This is now just a starting point in the bigger image Britt holds for himself.

Constantly around the influences of his coaches, Britt was inspired by their success. He said, "Our head coach was one of the youngest coaches to win Kentucky High School coach of the year so I want to strive to be a high school coach that is alongside other fantastic coaches who can win state championships."

With this year especially and the COVID-19 pandemic, Britt has been impacted positively by the world around him. Even though he has such a great love for football, he has been able to distance himself more than usual to work on self improvement. He said, "It actually affected me positively and I think it allowed me time to reflect on life because I am a non-stop, 'go-go-go' type of person with football and it forced me

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to take a break and it forced me to put life on pause to focus on myself." Like many, Britt was able to take more time to work out and make physical and mental improvements. "I focused on things that I couldn't while football was going on. It has been one of the best things that has happened to me because I was able to lose 45 pounds and it really did more good for me than it did bad," said Britt.

Overall, Britt has been able to make the best out of any situation he has been put in and does the best he can to set himself up for success.