

## Blake Lynch

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Does a little guy have a chance in football? The game of football is obviously populated with big, strong players. For example, the players on the K-State offensive line in 2018 averaged 6 feet 5 inches tall and 306 pounds in weight. Those are some big guys. But sometimes I like to cheer for the underdog – the little guy. Today we'll meet a young man from rural Kansas who is small in stature but has made a big mark on K-State's football season. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Blake Lynch from Goddard, Kansas was the starting placekicker on the K-State football team during the past season. His was one of the feel-good stories of 2018.

Blake grew up west of Wichita at Goddard, a rural community of 4,746 people. Now, that's rural. His parents are Jason and Kim Lynch. Jason has a roofing and construction business in the Wichita area. Kim attended K-State and Bethel College.

At Goddard, Blake played soccer in his freshman and sophomore years. During the next two years, he lettered on the football team where his younger sister also took up kicking.

Blake got expert training. He attended camps with former K-State kicker Anthony Cantele.

During Blake's senior year, he made 7 of 11 field goals, including an amazing kick of 51 yards. For his accomplishments that season, he was named an all-state player by the Topeka Capitol-Journal and the Wichita Eagle.

Blake went to K-State where he majored in financial management. He also went out for the football team. He began as a grayshirt and then redshirted the following year.

At that time, K-State's placekicking was dominated by Matthew McCrane, who was the most accurate placekicker in K-State history and went on to the NFL. But when McCrane graduated, K-State fans wondered who would take his place?

Blake Lynch was described by some as the third string kicker on the roster when camp began. One thing was evident when he took the field: He didn't look very big. He was officially listed at 5 feet 5 inches tall and 141 pounds. That made him the smallest player on the K-State roster. A video later in the season noted that he had to jump up in order to high five his holder, who was 6 feet 1.

But something else was evident when Blake took the field: He worked very hard, he was highly competitive, and he sought to improve. That improvement showed itself.

By the time the season began, he had worked himself into the starting field goal kicker position. His performance was tested quickly. In K-State's first game of the season, he was called upon to attempt four field goals – and he made all four.

In fact, all four makes came in the first half, including a long of 44 yards. His four first-half conversions were the most since 1999. That also represented the most field goals of any K-State placekicker in their debut.

In the course of the 2018 season, Blake Lynch was 6 for 6 in kicks from 20 to 29 yards, 5 for 5 in kicks from 30 to 39 yards, and 3 for 3 in kicks from 40 to 49 yards. How does a guy who is not very big kick the ball so far and so accurately? One report said that he focused on contact, not leverage. Whatever his system, it clearly worked.

On K-State's senior day in November 2018, Blake Lynch was again called on four times to attempt field goals. Again, he made all four. His performance in the team's 21 to 6 win over Texas Tech was recognized by the Big 12 Conference. On November 19, 2018, the smallest player on the K-State roster was named the Special Teams Player of the Week by the Big 12.

"It is so fun to watch him," said his mother Kim.

Is there a place in football for a little guy? The performance of Blake Lynch suggests that there is. We commend Blake Lynch and all small town Kansas players who are making a difference with their willingness to outwork the bigger competition. Hooray for the little guy.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.