

Schmidt will follow his dream with Hawkeyes

Written by Jim Ecker

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Ryan Schmidt began attending Iowa football games with his parents when he was in grade school. He loved cheering for the Hawkeyes at Kinnick Stadium, especially since his father was a defensive back for Hayden Fry back in the 1980's.

Someday those 70,000 fans at Kinnick might be cheering for Schmidt, who has grown up to be a talented 6-foot-6 quarterback with a dream.

Schmidt has happily accepted Iowa's offer to join the Hawkeyes this summer as a preferred walk-on, which means Coach Kirk Ferentz and his staff want him there and think he can help the program.

"I'm really excited," Schmidt said Saturday night. "Ever since I was kid, I was a Hawkeye fan. It's been my dream to run out at Kinnick and play for Iowa, so I'm really excited."

His father, Rick, has Iowa football memorabilia around the house in Marion. Now there will be a picture of Ryan in a Hawkeye jersey as well.

"When I was little, we went to probably every home game," said Schmidt. "These past few years, I've been a little busier with high school sports, but I've been to three or four games each year."

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"They're all fun, with the energy and the crowd. I really like the night games."

The Hawkeyes have two talented in-state quarterbacks joining the program this summer with Ryan Boyle of Dowling and Drew Cook of Iowa City Regina. Boyle and Cook are getting scholarships and probably will be listed ahead of Schmidt on the depth chart when camp opens, but that's OK with him.

"I love competition. We'll all work hard and push each other," said Schmidt. "Competition is always good."

Schmidt accounted for 2,199 yards and 35 touchdowns last fall for Linn-Mar, leading the Lions to a 9-2 record and the Valley Division title in the Mississippi Valley Conference. He passed for 1,541 yards and 14 touchdowns and he ran for 658 yards and 21 TDs.

Schmidt has the 6-foot-6 frame and athletic ability to play other positions, but he's not interested in switching. "I've always been a quarterback, so that's what I'm going to work hard to do," he said.

He'd love to take the field at Kinnick as Iowa's starting quarterback some day, with 70,000 fans and lots of young kids cheering for him.

"That's the goal," he said. "When you join a team, you want to work as hard as you can to achieve your goals. That is a goal for me. With hard work, maybe some day I'll accomplish that."

Schmidt attended Iowa's elite football camp last summer. He had a good season with the Lions and was named the Player of the Year on the All-Metro team, as well as first team all-conference, and helped Linn-Mar reach the second round of the Class 4A playoffs.

Iowa assistant coach Reese Morgan called him about two months ago and offered him a spot

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as a preferred walk-on. Schmidt visited Iowa last week and told Ferentz on Thursday that he was ready to become a Hawkeye.

"He was excited," Schmidt said. "He said they were excited for me to join the team. And I was excited, too. It will be a great experience."

Schmidt is an outstanding student with a 4.1 GPA on a 4.0 scale. He said he's leaning toward a business degree.