

Red of the Month



EATON → CSU →
HARVARD →
REMARKABLE
SUCCESS

Kirk Kindsfater

Some parents dream of their kid growing up to be an All-State ballplayer, maybe even a State Champion; only in one's wildest dreams can they see him becoming an All-American. Other parents hope their kid can earn a college scholarship, and maybe even play sports collegiately. Others look beyond that period of life and hope their kid might be able to get an advanced education, maybe even from a place like Harvard. And all parents hope their kid can find a good job, only a handful of them really believe though there's a shot he becomes a doctor, let alone one of the nation's most distinguished specialists. For Lloyd and Marilyn Kindsfater, it must have been hard to determine which of these dreams they should have for their son Kirk; fortunately for them, he simply chose to go out and accomplish all of them.

Kirk Kindsfater became a part of the Eaton Reds Baseball Program in 1968 as a 7-year old, becoming one of the first Reds in Eaton's new summer baseball program. Eaton wasn't especially good in those days, and that's putting it kindly. Kirk watched the older Reds playing varsity baseball string together seasons that were at or below the .500 mark; yes, Eaton was simply an average team back then that was trying to improve each year. As an eighth-grader in 1975, Kirk watched the Reds win only 6 games, compiling a record of 6-9. This would change though by the time that Kirk stepped onto the varsity field as a freshman.

Kirk took on the tough jobs, playing catcher and shortstop for the Reds in 1976, a year in which the preseason league rankings got around to mentioning Eaton seventh. Following a four-game losing streak to start the season, the Reds got hot and won 10 of their next 12 games, including an 8-game win streak, that took them to a tie at the top of the division. The Reds went into the division title match-up against then-perennial State contender Highland, and aided by 2 RBIs and a double from Kirk, the Reds went on to win their first league championship. The following weekend, Kirk had two more hits and 2 more RBI including the game-winner to defeat Weld Central and win the Reds' first postseason game in the modern era. The Reds weren't done just yet though, as they went on to upset heavily favored Lutheran the following week, winning the Reds' first game in the State Tournament. Kirk had a two-out RBI single to clinch that game in the fourth inning. His accomplishments that year led him to be selected as an All-Welco League and an honorable mention All-State player. He only improved from there.

By his sophomore year, Kirk led the team in batting average (.370), had 9 stolen bases and drew 13 walks. As a junior, he hit .378, fielded .985, and drew 18 walks. His senior year was an even further improvement, as he again hit above .370, hit a couple home runs, and stole 12 bases. More importantly, he led the Reds to a remarkable season in 1979. That year, the Reds defeated Valley for the first time in the 1970's (and would be the last team in the state to defeat them until the Reds did so again in 1981) with a 9-8 8th inning victory aided by Kirk's 2 runs scored with a hit and an RBI. The Reds won the league title for their 2nd time (and what would go on to be the first of 12 consecutive league titles) and earned another berth in the State Tournament by defeating Roosevelt 8-4 in the district tournament. Kirk played big in every big game, and was again named to the All-Welco and All-State teams.

Kirk also excelled at wrestling, where he was a state finalist in 1978 and a State Champion as a senior in 1979. Kirk was named All-American by the American High School Athlete, posting a record of 29-1 as a senior. After winning the state title, Kirk was quoted in the newspaper stating "It's hard to describe...It's something you dream of, and if you work hard enough to finally accomplish it, it's an enormously-rewarding feeling." Fortunately for the Reds, the baseball program that Kirk and his teammates formed the foundation for in the late 1970s, has grown to allow many dozens of Reds to experience that accomplishment of winning a State Title.



Above: Kirk Kindsfater and the Reds win 1976 League Title

Following high school graduation, Kirk went to Colorado State University and played football there until a hamstring injury ended his career after two seasons. He lifted weights throughout college and competed in numerous motocross races as well. Successful in so many facets of life, Kirk earned a degree in engineering in 1983, before attending the University of Colorado School of Medicine for his master's degree. Kirk completed an internship at the University of Colorado before earning the honor of a fellowship at Harvard Medical School in 1994-1995. Yes, that Harvard. Kirk indeed grew up on a family farm near Eaton and became a top graduate from arguably the most elite educational program in the world.

Kirk then became a surgeon at the Orthopaedic Center of the Rockies in Fort Collins in 1995, where he has performed over 2,500 hip, knee, and shoulder replacements. His current reconstruction practice has grown to be one of the busiest, and frankly best, in Colorado and the surrounding region. Dr. Kindsfater now performs over 600 joint replacements per year. Dr. Kindsfater is a member of the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons and is the only fellowship-trained joint specialist in the Fort Collins and Loveland area (oh yeah, and his fellowship was from Harvard).

Dr. Kindsfater is one of the doctors that helped make Poudre Valley Hospital one of the top 50 in the nation in 2003 according to U.S. News and World Report, and was the only doctor interviewed by the local newspaper when the ranking was published. He is among the very elite hip, knee, and shoulder replacement surgeons in the Rocky Mountain region and beyond. He also specializes in spine surgery and sports medicine.

Kirk's successes at so many things have been remarkable enough that his first "Where are they now" article was written nearly 25 years ago. Even by then his achievements in high school were worthy of reminiscence, and his collegiate career clearly on a path toward great success. Despite all of the success he's enjoyed in the medical profession, Kirk also drives race cars professionally, competing all over the country. Kirk wasn't the only Red in the Kindsfater family, nor the only doctor in the family, as his brother Craig was also a standout member of the Reds' squad in the mid '80s, and has also become a noted doctor.

Congratulations on all of Your Success Kirk, Your Remarkable Achievements are an Inspiration to Today's Reds.

Where are they now?



Kirk Kindsfater (top) gets a good grip on Fort Lupton's Arlon Fisher in their 1979 Welco League title match. Kindsfater went on to win 13-2 and eventually won the Class AA state title.

It was a dream come true for Eaton wrestler

By DENNIS TAYLOR
Tribune Staff Writer

Kirk Kindsfater had been here before, both in reality and in his dreams.

The lights were bright, the atmosphere was electric, and Kindsfater, this time, felt relaxed and ready as stepped onto the floor of the Denver Auditorium Arena as part of the traditional "Parade of Champions." In a few short minutes, he would wrestle Rocky Ford's Ignacio Garcia for the 138-pound state Class AA championship that had so narrowly eluded him the previous year.

In 1978, as a talented but tentative junior, he had a three-point lead over Mike Nelson of Lewis-Palmer in the 138-pound finals, but "made a dumb move," in his own words, and suffered an 8-7 loss.

Since that match, he had returned to the state finals several times — in his dreams. The result was always the same.

"So many times this season, I could see my hand being raised," he told *The Tribune* in 1979. "I just had this feeling about it. This year I knew I could do it once I got there."

Kindsfater's premonition proved accurate, as he defeated Garcia, 4-3, to win the 1979 state championship.

Now a senior engineering major with a 3.6 (on a 4.0 scale) grade point average at Colorado State University, he has good reason to remember his high school athletic career with a special fondness.

Kindsfater was a three-time district wrestling champ at Eaton High School. He placed sixth at 132 pounds at the state wrestling tournament as a sophomore, then compiled a 23-3-3 record in his junior season, after which he was named All-America by a publication called *American High School Athlete*.

As a senior, Kindsfater finished with a 29-1 record, his only loss being a referee's decision in the Greeley Invitational to John Sandohal of Fort Morgan, who went on to win the Northern League championship at 145 pounds.

"When I got to the finals my senior year, I was glad I'd had a loss earlier in the season," Kindsfater remembered. "That took some of the pressure off me, I think. It was one more thing I didn't have to worry about."

"I was also very glad that I'd been in the finals the year before. That experience helped me prepare, mentally, for my senior-year experience there," he said. "My coach (Rich Urano) also did a lot to get me ready."

Although it is something he'll never forget, Kindsfater said the feeling of winning the state crown isn't easily put into words.

"It's hard to describe," he said. "Winning a state championship is something you work four years for in high school, plus two in junior high, plus all of those years in peewee wrestling, which starts when you're in the third grade at Eaton. It's something you dream of, and if you work hard enough to finally accomplish it, it's an enormously-rewarding feeling. It makes you feel very good inside."

Kindsfater's athletic successes were hardly limited to wrestling.

As a freshman catcher-shortstop at Eaton High School, he was All-Welco League and was an honorable mention All-State selection. He was an All-Welco League catcher as a sophomore, junior and senior, and again was selected to the All-State team as an honorable mention in his senior year.

Kindsfater also was a three-time All-Welco League selection in football, a sport in which he played both running back and defensive back.

He went on to play football at Colorado State University, but a hamstring injury cut his career short after two seasons.

Kindsfater, who stays active athletically with weight lifting and motocross racing, hopes to find employment with a major corporation as an engineer after graduating from CSU next semester. He spends his summer months working on his family's farm near Eaton.

