

'03 Graduate Chris Swain Defending America Overseas

PFC Swain Leaves for Iraq September 1st

Published August 2006

A Hero Then, A Hero Now

scroll down to see news articles about Swain, which demonstrate the qualities of which most are very fortunate to even possess one, but that Chris Swain has possessed collectively since his youth.

Sacrifice

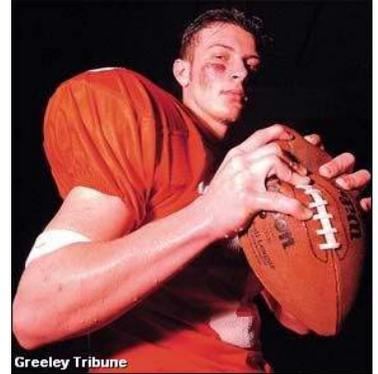
Greatness Under Pressure

Heroism

Humility

Dedication to Others

Glory



PFC Swain of 7th Group, 6th Battalion, 169th Transportation Company out of Fort Eustis, Virginia has already earned the distinguished Army Achievement Medal (AAM) for exceptional performance in a two-week joint logistics over-the-shore mission on Virginia Beach, and now heads to the main battlefield in the War on Terror. While Eaton Baseball is proud of its role in developing a number of young men into leaders and champions in life, and with all due respect to all of our graduates that have served in the armed forces, we can unequivocally state that no one has come through the Program that is better suited for defending America; we are sending our very best.

Our concern for your safe return home—following yet another great victory in your life—is tempered by the greatness that we know you will demonstrate in leading your troops to be the very best within the top fighting force in the world. Godspeed to you, Chris.

The following U.S. Army Soldier's Creed has been footnoted with Greeley Tribune newspaper quotes about Chris during his baseball and football playing days where he won a literal handful of State Championship Rings and was unanimously voted the Weld County Football Player of the Year and the Weld County Baseball Player of the Year.

SOLDIER'S CREED — www.army.mil/SoldiersCreed/flash_version/

I am an American Soldier. *On dedication to becoming the best of the best, Chris: "That's why people play in Eaton is to win state."*

I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values. *Teammate on Chris and fellow senior Trujillo: "They're such great leaders and such great friends to everybody," Walker said. "They just help you out and give you support if you're struggling with something." "They're just really fine young men," Coach Danley said. "They're just winners in life."*

I will always place the mission first. *"With the Reds fighting inexperience behind the plate, Swain went to Danley and quietly volunteered his services as the team's catcher for the remainder of the season. "He said, 'Hey coach, you know I don't really like to catch, but if that's what it'll take to win this thing I'll do it.' How many seniors, who are the best players at their position, will go back and do something like that just for the ballclub?" Danley asked. "It was a very unselfish thing to do. It was a great example for the whole club."*

I will never accept defeat. *“Swain and his teammates got a little revenge from last year's 22-21 last-minute loss to the Cougars in the 2A state title game.” “Swain continues to outdo himself in big games for the Reds (9-0). This time the 6-foot-1, 185-pounder passed for four touchdowns to four different receivers...He wasn't finished, though. Swain also ran for a 46-yard touchdown and put the game out of reach with a little more than two minutes left on an 8-yard score.”*

I will never quit. *Coach Danley on Chris's ability to battle when the odds were against him: “Swain had the highest batting average with two strikes of anybody on the Reds. He hit .455 with two strikes, you just don't see that at any level...the NCAA Division I two-strike hitting average is under .150; .455 is just unheard of.”*

I will never leave a fallen comrade. *Upon learning that Coach Hernandez had requested to be buried in his Eaton uniform, Chris: “Right there our jaws dropped. It was like, ‘Wow.’ We realized that we've got to win for coach. Our team has dedicated the season to him.” Note: The Reds went on to win the State Championship for Coach H.*

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself. *“Swain's lifting weights for football and not playing summer baseball for the first time since the age of 5.” “Not many all-state quarterbacks with a scholarship in hand to play in college would risk their football future to be a catcher. He was willing to go back there and get beat up with curveballs in the dirt in order to help the ballclub,” Danley said.*

I am an expert and I am a professional. *“You know a player is a star when the opposing team makes up a nickname for his exploits on the football field. Whenever the Reds were in a third-down situation and needed a big play, shouts of “Swain Time” filtered out from the Burlington Cougars' sideline. Eaton senior Chris Swain proved once again why he's considered one of the state's best quarterbacks in any classification by accounting for every point the No. 2 Reds scored in a 39-29 shootout victory over the defending state champion Burlington Cougars.” “Steve Meyer was our quarterback at New Mexico, and he was the backup quarterback to Steve Zorn with the Seattle Seahawks for several years,” Coach Bill Mondt said. “He wasn't as good a quarterback as Chris. It's a lot different competition, but it doesn't matter. He can see the field, is accurate and he throws on the run. We've never done any audibles since I've been here, but Chris did. I let him call plays at the line. He's a real quarterback.”*

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat. *On his ability to single-handedly destroy an opponent, Valley football coach: “He can hurt you so many different ways. When you've got to deal with Chris Swain, you've got to cover the sprint pass. Then you've got to be conscious of the fact that he's going to hand off to Trujillo. Off that handoff he's going to run a bootleg and he creates problems there,” Priestley said. “Along with that you've got to deal with the option. And then he turns around and punts, and he'll kill you with the punt. There are a variety of things you have to deal with that create a lot of problems for you...I'm going to his graduation. I want that guy out of here for good, man...I don't want to sit up at night thinking about him anymore. I've had enough of him. It's just a nightmare. I'm glad it's over.” Note: the terrorists are expected to share this sentiment about Chris as well.*

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life. *The American Flag, apple pie, and baseball... few things are more American than Chris defending back-to-back-to-back Baseball State Championships: “Swain's and Trujillo's state title cups runneth over...The two won from Day One. They continued to win, and they won on their final day on the big stage.”*

I am an American Soldier. *Amongst countless opportunities that lay before him, Chris has chosen to serve in the most elite combat force in the world; the last time Chris chose an elite organization he became one of its greatest alumni, and even at the time realized what a remarkable opportunity he had been able to seize: “I know we're really lucky, but I don't know if I realize how fortunate we are now,” Swain said. “Like I said before, in 20 years I'll look back and just say, ‘That's amazing. I can't believe that happened in my high school career.’ Note: We expect to be no less amazed by Chris's performance on the battlefield.*

EATON SOLDIER HEADS TO WAR IN IRAQ

GREELEY TRIBUNE – SEPTEMBER 9, 2006

Sending a son to war is not something a parent looks forward to, not like the day he rides a bicycle for the first time or graduates from high school.

Just a little more than a week ago, Tim and Char Swain, the parents of Chris Swain, visited their son for the last time before he left for Iraq.

Char shed tears -- not just tears of sorrow but also tears inspired by how proud she and Tim are that their son is defending his country.

The former Eaton High School athletic standout left for Iraq on Friday to fight in the war as a soldier in the U.S. Army.

"Obviously, we're concerned, but we're proud of what he's doing and what everyone else is doing there," Tim Swain said. "As far as the safety, it's in God's hands."

"We're proud of him, and we're proud of all the troops that are over there," his wife added.

The Swains will naturally have an unsettling feeling today knowing that on the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks their son is in Kuwait for two weeks of training to enter the war zone. But they know their son will be fighting for something he and millions of other Americans believe in when he leaves for the battlefields. "He's there for a great cause, and that's to help eliminate terrorism and fight for freedom," Tim Swain said.

FORMER STANDOUT ATHLETE KNOWS HE'S READY FOR BATTLE

GREELEY TRIBUNE – SEPTEMBER 10, 2006

Chris Swain has faced many challenges in recent years.

He helped the Eaton Reds win state titles in both baseball and football, earning the Tribune's athlete of the year as a senior in 2003 for baseball and football.

On Friday, Swain boarded a plane for a different kind of challenge.

He left to fight in the war in Iraq.

After joining the army last year, Swain is now in Kuwait, where he'll train for the next two weeks before leaving for the battlefields of Baghdad.

"I'm ready," Swain said a few days before departing. "Now that I know I'm going, I just want to get out there as soon as possible."

Swain's baseball coach at Eaton, Jim Danley, said Swain had the athletic ability to play collegiate sports after graduating high school, but Swain opted for a bigger challenge.

"A lot of his colleagues, players that graduated with him have said 'Chris, why are you doing this? You're a college-level athlete. You could be doing so many things.' And Chris's attitude is 'Hey, this is a tough job, and it takes tough people to do it,'" Danley said. "I think he thinks it'll be another challenge for him. I think he'll be a leader on the battlefield."

Swain said his athletic career at Eaton gave him a winning attitude and confidence in his ability to overcome obstacles. He said he plans to take the same attitude and confidence onto the battlefield with him later this month.

"At Eaton, we didn't really lose much," Swain said.

"Every game we went into, we thought we were going to win. And when I go there, it's going to be the same thing. ... I think it's going to be a great experience."

Swain also said he's gained confidence for his campaign from his cousin, Chris Novak, who also fought for his country in Iraq.

"He's been out there twice," Swain said. "He was there when everything was crazy."

Swain and his company were originally scheduled to depart from Virginia on Sept. 11 -- the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Swain said he was never given a reason why his departure was rescheduled but he's happy to have left sooner than expected.

Swain also said he was a little more comfortable flying a few days before the five-year anniversary.

"It takes away the karma of Sept. 11," Swain said. "Realistically, it probably doesn't make a difference, but in your head it's kind of more of a reassuring day to fly."

Swain said he's trained hard for the day he would go overseas to defend his country, and although he knows his safety is not guaranteed, he said he'll know how to handle situations when things get hectic on the battlefield.

"I'm confident. I'm real confident," Swain said. "... Not overconfident that nothing could happen, but confident enough that if something does happen, we'll know what to do."

Swain's former football coach at Eaton, Bill Mondt, said Swain -- while playing for the Reds -- showed many attributes that should translate well onto a battlefield: Heart, determination and an ability to perform well in high-pressure situations.

"He plays hard. He practices hard," Mondt said. "He was the kind of player when it got critical, he wanted to be part of it. ... If Chris makes up his mind to do something, he'll do it. And I think he'll be fine out there."

Danley said he's proud to have Swain representing his country in Iraq.

"I have the highest regard for him," Danley said. "It's young men like Chris that make America a safer place for us to be. ... We certainly pray for him and wish him the best. He will do well. ... He won't accept being second best."

SACRIFICE

Third Baseman Turns Catcher for Team's Sake Greeley Tribune – June 9, 2003

EATON - In the last month of his illustrious sports career at Eaton High School, Chris Swain decided to lay his body on the line for another shot at a Class 3A baseball state championship.

Swain, 18, had already been a starter on two previous state championship baseball teams at Eaton in 2001-02, and he wanted to do everything he could to make sure his senior baseball season ended on a winning note.

Swain was a star at third base. Reds coach Jim Danley said Swain is good enough at the hot corner to be a college prospect. Swain, who will play quarterback on a football scholarship at Mesa State, showed midway through the season that he doesn't have an unselfish bone in his body.

With the Reds fighting inexperience behind the plate, Swain went to Danley and quietly volunteered his services as the team's catcher for the remainder of the season.

"He said, 'Hey coach, you know I don't really like to catch, but if that's what it'll take to win this thing I'll do it.' How many seniors, who are the best players at their position, will go back and do something like that just for the ballclub?" Danley asked. "It was a very unselfish thing to do. It was a great example for the whole club."

The 6-foot, 180-pound Swain, who had not caught since his freshman year, not only shined behind the plate for the last 14 games, but he was instrumental in leading the Reds (25-2) to a third consecutive state championship.

"That's why people play in Eaton is to win state," said Swain, who ended up with a 3.6 GPA. "I'm sure anybody else on that team would have volunteered the same. I don't regret catching at all, especially since we won state."

Swain hit .438 with four home runs, 10 doubles and 44 RBI from the cleanup spot with an on-base percentage of .607. The RBI total led Weld County, and he was among the state leaders in all classifications in that department.

"That was my job to knock in guys who got on base," Swain said.

Swain pulled off the rare double of being unanimously named the 2002 Tribune's Athlete of the Year in football last fall as a top-flight quarterback, and topping it off with another unanimous selection as the 2003 Tribune's Athlete of the Year in baseball.

Swain didn't let the constant pounding of catching, which is even more difficult at Eaton because of staying in front of the knuckle curveballs, affect his hitting, especially in the all-important postseason.

"I liked being involved in every play. You get beat up pretty bad," Swain said.

Swain said he didn't worry about getting hurt for college football, but others did. He said Eaton's football coach, Bill Mondt, told him not to hurt his throwing hand. Swain's parents, Tim and Charlene Swain, were concerned about the balls off the body and a possible collision at home plate.

"We were kind of apprehensive about it. He said he'll do whatever it takes to win another championship," Tim Swain said. "He wanted to play, and he plays all out. After he made the decision we didn't second-guess it, and we supported him."

Swain only allowed three passed balls at catcher in his first varsity experience behind the plate.

"He's so good at knocking down knuckle curves, and it made a lot of difference," Danley said. "Swain's a gifted athlete. He knocked down everything."

Swain admitted that it was difficult at first catching the knuckle curveball, the pitch mastered by Eaton pitchers.

"When you first start out, you say, 'Gee, this is an amazing pitch. It just dives.' The secret is to let the ball hit you softly," Swain said. "Good things happen when the ball doesn't get past you."

Not many all-state quarterbacks with a scholarship in hand to play in college would risk their football future to be a catcher. Swain said it's a toss up when asked to choose between baseball or football. Although Swain's lifting weights for football and not playing summer baseball for the first time since the age of 5, he said he might play baseball at Mesa State in the future.

"He was willing to go back there and get beat up with curveballs in the dirt in order to help the ballclub," Danley said. "There are a lot of players who don't like to get their hands dirty."

Swain produced at the plate when it counted.

In eight postseason games, Swain hit .462 with a team-leading five doubles and 14 RBI. His 20 total bases during the postseason tied with All-Weld shortstop Branden Trujillo and All-Weld outfielder Tyler Garretson of the Reds.

"I like to have the pressure on me. I feel like I perform best under pressure," said Swain, who started in three state title baseball games and two state championship football games since his sophomore season.

Danley said even more striking than all his offensive statistics was Swain's ability to produce with two strikes. Swain had the highest batting average with two strikes of anybody on the Reds.

"He hit .455 with two strikes. The next highest was .283," Danley said.

Danley said you just don't see that at any level.

"I think the NCAA Division I two-strike hitting average is under .150," Danley said. "I'm tickled pink with a .283, but a .455 is just unheard of."

Swain said he had no clue when asked if he was aware of what his batting average was with two strikes.

But that's Swain. Humble as ever.

"(Eaton assistant) coach (Dale) Hughes teaches two-strike hitting where you shorten up, don't take a stride and try to poke the ball out there," Swain said. "Somebody's got to make a play out there. If not, then you've got a base hit."

Swain said he's excited to see what's ahead of him in college.

"It's time to move on. It doesn't bother me that my time's up, and it's time for somebody else to come in," Swain said.

Winning the state title game 17-10 against La Junta last month made the decision to move behind the plate even sweeter.

"That capped it all off," Swain said. "It's an indescribable feeling."

GREATNESS UNDER PRESSURE

Swain Song

Greeley Tribune – October 26, 2002

EATON -- Swain Time.

You know a player is a star when the opposing team makes up a nickname for his exploits on the football field.

Whenever the Reds were in a third-down situation and needed a big play, shouts of, “Swain Time” filtered out from the Burlington Cougars' sideline. Eaton senior Chris Swain proved once again why he's considered one of the state's best quarterbacks in any classification by accounting for every point the No. 2 Reds scored in a 39-29 shootout victory over the defending state champion Burlington Cougars (7-2) at Leslie R. Leake Field on Friday night in the Class 2A Patriot League championship football game.

Swain (11-for-22 for 200 yards) continues to outdo himself in big games for the Reds (9-0). This time the 6-foot-1, 185-pounder passed for four touchdowns to four different receivers -- Kyle Lobato (34 yards), Eric Kelly (44 yards), Garrett Walker (15 yards) and Sean Wright (6 yards). He wasn't finished, though. Swain also ran for a 46-yard touchdown and put the game out of reach with a little more than two minutes left on an 8-yard score.

Swain and his teammates got a little revenge from last year's 22-21 last-minute loss to the Cougars in the 2A state title game.

Reds linebacker Mark Unrein, who came up with a big fourth-quarter interception to thwart the Cougars' final drive, said no one has been able to stop Swain.

“You think maybe if a defense keys on him and blitzes him every game they could contain him, but they just can't,” Unrein said.

“No one has yet. If he keeps it going, we should be able to make a run at the championship.”

Swain went over the 1,000-yard mark in rushing (115 carries for 1,016 yards, 8.8 yards per carry) this season, and has also passed for 1,343 yards and 11 touchdowns.

Swain deflects compliments sprayed on him like he eludes tacklers. He'd rather talk about everybody but himself. Swain can't talk about how he played without praising another part of the team.

“Our defense won this game for us. In the fourth quarter, our defensive line came up big” Swain said.

“Now c'mon, Chris, let's talk about your human-highlight performance.”

“It feels good when you know you contribute to the team, but we have a young offensive line and they performed well tonight,” Swain said.

“You can see how much better they are today than at the beginning of the year.”

And about those four touchdown passes and two touchdown runs, Chris?

“In football, you've got to make plays. As a quarterback that's my job,” Swain said. “It's a big tribute to the offensive line up front.

“We've got a lot of great players on our team like (Branden) Trujillo and our wide receivers who catch the ball kick.”

HEROISM

Every Which Way Greeley Tribune – November 4, 2001

EATON -- Chris Swain's Day at the Improv played to mixed reviews.

Eaton fans thought Swain was a smashing success. On the other hand, Faith Christian followers cried all the way home. Swain's standup routine at Leslie R. Leake Stadium in the first round of the Class 2A football playoffs Saturday helped the Reds (9-1) to a 20-14 victory over the Eagles (8-2). It was the second straight year the Reds knocked out the Eagles in the state playoffs. The Reds will travel to play the winner of Pagosa Springs or Colorado Springs Christian at 1 p.m. Saturday in the state quarterfinals.

Swain is known for the way he throws the football from his quarterback position -- overhand. But when the junior starts improvising, it's lights out for the defense. His two shovel passes on the Reds' only fourth-quarter scoring drive were the key plays.

"He's a great kid. He's a real competitor, and every week he gets more confident," Reds coach Bill Mondt said. "Chris looks around and finds somebody open."

Swain proved some years back in middle school that he could throw the heck out of the ball when he ended up at Mile High Stadium in Denver in the regional Punt, Pass and Kick competition.

He also has proved that he won't take a back seat to anyone when it comes to passing the ball in his first year as a starter.

Swain turned in a 9-for-13, 124-yard, two-touchdown day against the Eagles. For the season, Swain's completed an impressive 75 of-120 passes (63 percent) for 1,196 yards. Even more impressive is that he's thrown 16 touchdown passes and just three interceptions.

But Swain's heroics on fourth-and-one from the Eagles' 29 with the Reds holding onto a 12-7 fourth quarter lead were classic. Swain looked as though he was about to be sacked when he spotted running back Mario Rosas downfield. The easiest way for Swain to get rid of the ball was via the shovel pass, and that's what he did. The pass went for 15 yards and a first down.

"Swain's a great kid. He's a great quarterback," Rosas said. "Our whole line was blocking, and everybody was doing their job." Rosas later scored the deciding touchdown from two yards out, but Swain wasn't finished.

On the two-point conversion, Swain rolled left again and shoveled a pass to Jason Hungenberg to put the Reds ahead 20-7 with 4:49 left.

"That's like the fourth time I've done that. If they all come at me, it's a lot easier to get rid of it quicker that way," said Swain, whose two touchdown passes were 13 yards to Sean Wright and four yards to Hungenberg.

Hungenberg said anything can happen when Swain's scrambling around.

"He fools the defenses. He fools us," Hungenberg said. "You don't know whether he's going to run the ball or whether he's going to throw it up. You never can give up on a play. He doesn't go down after getting hit."

Reds running back Branden Trujillo said the shovel pass is a weapon for Swain.

"You can shovel anything if you're behind that line of scrimmage," Trujillo said. "That's just another threat to the defense. When you think you've got him cornered, and you've got him down to the sideline, he's going to get rid of the ball any way he can."

Eagles coach Blair Hubbard shook his head when talking about Swain's ability to improvise. "We had him contained, and it was just a heady play by him. My hat has to go off to him," Hubbard said. "He's a playmaker. He did a great job."

HUMILITY

Swain Song

Greeley Tribune – June 9, 2003

EATON - Valley High School football coach Jeff Priestley summed it up best when describing Eaton star quarterback Chris Swain.

"I'm going to his graduation. I want that guy out of here for good, man," said Priestley, whose Vikings lost to Swain's Reds, 39-6, during the season. "I don't want to sit up at night thinking about him anymore. I've had enough of him. It's just a nightmare. I'm glad it's over."

Swain, the king of letting compliments roll off his back, is the ultimate Mr. Humility. He would rather let his actions on the football field do the talking.

Swain's older brother, Clint, said his younger brother doesn't beat his chest and brag about his accomplishments.

"He's a very good athlete, and he's a natural at everything he does," Clint Swain said. "He doesn't let it get to his head, and that's really cool."

Whether he's throwing four touchdown passes

and running for two more against the Burlington Cougars to help the Reds win the Class 2A Patriot League championship or leading the Reds to back-to-back 2A state title runner-up finishes, Swain refuses to take any of the credit.

"I think it comes from my parents (Tim and Charlene) and my coaches. I've always been taught that it's a team game, and it really is," said Swain, a senior who turned 18 today. "You've got 10 other guys who are doing their job, too. Just because I'm the one who runs it in or throws it in doesn't mean I should get all the credit for it.

Unless you're Michael Vick, you can't score a touchdown just by yourself."

Swain's performance in 2002 spoke volumes, though, about Eaton's offense that returned just him and halfback Branden Trujillo.

"I felt a lot of pressure. A lot of people were doubting us, but that's how I like it," Swain said. "There we were again in the finals."

The 6-foot, 185-pound Swain rushed for 1,340 yards (8.5 average) and seven touchdowns while passing for 1,515 yards and 13 touchdowns for the 12-1 Reds, who lost, 14-7, to Holy Family in the last 43 seconds of the 2A championship game. Swain was a unanimous choice as the 2002 Greeley Tribune Football Player of the Year selected by the Greeley Tribune sports staff.

Swain, who threw for 32 touchdowns and 3,013 yards and rushed for 1,974 yards the past two years, has the unique ability to throw the ball on the run against his body for perfect strikes.

"I don't really practice that. That's a hard pass to throw, but it's a harder pass to defend. It's one of those things where God gave me a good arm for football. I like to play quarterback, and I like to make those kind of plays," Swain said. "Most people think you can't throw the ball across your body that far down the field. It's something that worked out for me."

Swain also kept defenses honest because of his ability to churn out big yards in the Reds' veer attack.

"He can hurt you so many different ways. When you've got to deal with Chris Swain, you've got to cover the sprint pass. Then you've got to be conscious of the fact that he's going to hand off to Trujillo. Off that handoff he's going to run a bootleg and he creates problems there," Priestley said. "Along with that you've got to deal with the option. And then he turns around and punts, and he'll kill you with the punt. There are a variety of things you have to deal with that create a lot of problems for you."

Being the quarterback, Swain's danger to defense came with every offensive play. Because he handles the snaps, and he punts on fourth down, Swain could kill a defense on every play. Swain always had the green light to fake the punt and run for a first down.

"You know he's going to have the ball, and he's going to do something special with it," Priestley said. "He makes plays, and you can't stop him. He could throw across the field going the wrong way and complete the dang thing. You just shake your head. It's crazy."

Platte Valley coach Michael DeWall had to worry about coming up with a defense to stop Swain this season. Swain passed for two touchdowns, ran for two scores and rushed for 168 yards in the Reds' 25-14 win over the Broncos.

"The thing that was amazing was that he was the kind of kid who could take the game on his shoulders. When they needed a big third-down play, it didn't matter what the play the coach called," DeWall said. "He was going to do what was necessary to get the yardage. He has great physical tools. I was racking my brains trying to figure out how to stop him."

How good was Swain at Eaton?

Reds veteran coach Bill Mondt, who was the head coach for Division I-A New Mexico and an assistant at Colorado, has been coaching since the early 1960s. He said Swain tops his list as the best quarterback he has ever coached.

"Steve Meyer was our quarterback at New Mexico, and he was the backup quarterback to Steve Zorn with the Seattle Seahawks for several years," Mondt said. "He wasn't as good a quarterback as Chris. It's a lot different competition, but it doesn't matter. He can see the field, is accurate and he throws on the run. We've never done any audibles since I've been here, but Chris did. I let him call plays at the line. He's a real quarterback."

Swain is getting looks from several Division II colleges, and he's also been contacted by Division I-AA University of Northern Colorado and Division I-A Wyoming. He would like to play college football, but baseball is not out of the question, either.

Swain's father, Tim, watched with pride the past two years as he wondered how his son made some of the remarkable plays.

"Some of the tackles he got out of and some of the plays he made, you wonder how he did it," Tim Swain said. "I'm extremely proud of him and the way he carries himself. He sets an example. There are a lot of little kids here in town who look up to him, and he knows that. He tries to do the right thing."

Over the last two seasons, Swain rarely did the wrong thing. But don't ask him about it, because he'll just credit his success to everyone else.

DEDICATION TO OTHERS

SO LONG COACH H.

Eaton bids adieu to well-known volunteer

Greeley Tribune – April 25, 2003

EATON - Martin Hernandez wore his love and passion for Eaton High School baseball to his grave.

Hernandez, who died last Friday, was buried in his Eaton Reds baseball uniform Wednesday as the entire team and coaching staff attended the funeral. When the Reds travel to Burlington for a Class 3A Patriot League doubleheader Saturday against the Cougars, Hernandez's No. 9 pinstriped jersey will hang in the dugout. Reds head coach Jim Danley said the jersey will hang in the dugout for home and away games the remainder of the season as a tribute to Hernandez, who served as a Reds volunteer pitching coach for 12 years.

"That was one thing he was very adamant about. He wanted to be buried in his uniform," said Todd Hernandez, Martin's only son who coaches and teaches at Highland High School. "He loved Eaton baseball."

Todd, a 1991 Eaton graduate, was an outstanding first baseman for the Reds. He understood exactly what his father was talking about when Martin asked to be buried in the red-and-white pinstripes.

"Coach Danley always talked about that when you put on a jersey with Eaton on the front it should mean something, and it always did for my dad," Todd said.

Reds third baseman Chris Swain said Danley told the team last Saturday that Hernandez wanted to be buried in his Eaton uniform.

"Right there our jaws dropped. It was like, 'Wow.' We realized that we've got to win for coach," Swain said. "He would always be smiling, and he'd always lighten up the mood. Our team has dedicated the season to him."

The two-time defending 3A state champion Reds also will honor Hernandez, who died of a heart attack at the age of 64 after complications from diabetes, in another way. The Eaton players will wear a white patch with black lettering spelling out Hernandez's initials (JMH for J. Martin Hernandez) on their right shoulder of their uniform.

"Growing up in the program, playing there since I was 5, having a chance to coach some of those kids who are on that team and seeing what a difference he made to all of those lives, I couldn't be prouder of my father and the man that he was and always will be," Todd said.

Danley said after the Reds won the state championship last year, the team went to Hernandez's house because he couldn't make it to Denver.

"We pulled a 60-passenger school bus up in front of his house, and we presented the trophy to him," Danley said.

Reds senior rightfielder Junior Barrios was especially close to Hernandez. He said Hernandez helped him fit in when he was a freshman and sophomore.

"He'll be with us wherever we go now. He's in a better place, and he'll be watching over us," said Barrios, the younger brother of former Reds standout Mike Carrasco. "He was always there to make us smile."

Carrasco, a 1999 Eaton graduate and starting third baseman for the University of Northern Colorado, said Hernandez was the guy the players could go to if they had to talk about something.

"Coach Hernandez was an outlet for us who we could go to and converse about life and girls," Carrasco said. "He was always there to lean on. He was a mentor for us all. He's one of the big reasons why Eaton baseball's on the map."

Reds senior left-handed pitcher Eric Kelly said Hernandez was one of the biggest influences in baseball that he's had.

"There was a good vibe around him. No matter what happened, he was always happy," Kelly said. "The only way I could

ever picture him was with the biggest smile, especially when we were out on the baseball field."

Danley said the loss of Hernandez, who also assisted Danley with Eaton's Legion B summer program, will be hard to take because Hernandez was so much a part of Eaton's success.

"He was 100 percent all day, everyday Eaton baseball. He'd call me up in the middle of November and say, 'Hey, I just got to thinking about that lineup we talked about last week. If they throw a left-handed pitcher, do we want to change hitters four and five?' We were our own Hot Stove League," Danley said. "He knew how to break in kids gloves by tying them, putting them in water and putting on all the ingredients in exactly the right order and right day."

Hernandez suffered from diabetes for the last 26 years and had his right leg amputated in January 2002. Todd said his father's kidneys were failing him, his eyesight was going and he had congestive heart failure the last two years.

Hernandez was a standout pitcher for Greeley High School when the program won the state title in 1957 under head coach Pete D'Amato, and he also pitched for the semi-pro Greeley Grays.

The last time Hernandez sat in the Eaton dugout for a game was at the regional championship game against University at Butch Butler Field last May. Having the No. 9 jersey hanging in the Eaton dugout will be special for Todd.

"Not being able to go out there and be with the kids and experience the game bothered him," Todd said. "Now I'd like to think he has a front-row seat being able to watch them play."

Danley knows his former coaching friend will have the best seat in the house.

"I spent thousands and thousands of hours with him the last few years. He was the greatest supporter Eaton baseball ever had. He was a gentle, kind and warm-hearted fellow who I can't imagine had an enemy in the world," Danley said. "He's irreplaceable. I won't know who to call up in the middle of winter in the middle of the night to talk baseball."

GLORY

EATON DUO PLAYED IN 7 TITLE GAMES

Greeley Tribune – May 18, 2003

LAKEWOOD - Two of the most successful athletes in Eaton High School sports history found different ways to celebrate their final time in the red and white.

Reds senior catcher Chris Swain posed for photos and had a grin from ear to ear as he celebrated the Reds' 17-10 pasting of the La Junta Tigers in the Class 3A Baseball State Championship game on Saturday at Coca-Cola All-Star Park.

Swain's teammate, senior shortstop Branden Trujillo, sat alone in the Reds' dugout with tears in his eyes and joy in his heart.

You couldn't wipe the smile off Swain's face.

You'd probably need an army to peel the red pinstripes off Trujillo's body one last time.

"I wish we had another 20-inning game so I can be out there playing," said Trujillo as he held back the tears, trying to soak up his last moments of high school sports. "Years from now I'll finally look back.

I'll pull those ring boxes out, dust them off and reflect on how successful I've been and how lucky I've been to be with these people the last four years."

Trujillo and Swain will go down as two of the most accomplished athletes in the history of the state. The two have played in four state baseball championships and three state football title games - a total of seven state championship contests - during their four years at Eaton.

"I know we're really lucky, but I don't know if I realize how fortunate we are now," Swain said. "Like I said before, in 20 years I'll look back and just say, 'That's amazing. I can't believe that happened in my high school career.'"

Lucky Seven for the Eaton dynamic duo.

"I guess I picked the right school," Swain laughed. "I got lucky, and I went to Eaton. (Baseball) coach (Jim) Danley knows how to win, and (football) coach (Bill) Mondt knows how to win."

Trujillo was a starting halfback in all three state title football games, while Swain was the starting quarterback in the last two.

Both were reserves as freshmen on Eaton's baseball team in 2000 that lost to La Junta 7-6, but both started the last three years on the Reds' state championship teams.

With the 2A state football championship win against Roosevelt in 2000 and a three-peat in baseball, Trujillo and Swain ended up 4-for-7 in the state-title department.

Most high school athletes are thrilled to qualify for state in any sport. Having the chance to play in a state title athletic event is usually a once-in-a-lifetime gig.

Swain's and Trujillo's state title cups runneth over.

"It's hard to explain how good a feeling it is to play in one state championship, but being able to play in seven state championships is unheard of," Swain said.

It's not as though the two were role players in baseball and football.

Trujillo rushed for 49 touchdowns and 3,842 yards in his football career. During his two years as the Reds' starting quarterback, Swain threw for 3,013 yards and 32 touchdowns and rushed for 1,974 yards. He was selected the Tribune's

player of the year in football last fall.

In baseball, Trujillo, 18, hit in the No. 3 hole and knocked in four runs in the state title game to finish the season hitting .516 with 36 RBI. Swain, 18, hit cleanup and led the team with four home runs and 44 RBI while batting .443.

Swain will take his football talents to Mesa State where he also might play baseball. Trujillo will play baseball at Linfield (Ore.) College in the fall.

Reds head baseball coach Jim Danley said what Swain and Trujillo have accomplished is almost impossible.

"You would think that couldn't happen statistically," Danley said.

"They're great leaders. What I'll miss most about them is the way they handled themselves and set an example in front of all the young players."

Reds junior left fielder Garrett Walker said it was amazing being able to play with Swain and Trujillo.

"They're such great leaders and such great friends to everybody," Walker said. "They just help you out and give you support if you're struggling with something."

Trujillo and Swain will go down as winners for sure.

"They're just really fine young men," Danley said. "They're just winners in life."

The two won from Day One. They continued to win, and they won on their final day on the big stage with two different ways of celebrating.