Coach

Josh Lyman:

His history of athleticism and success made him an easy choice to lead Colts

By Bruce Smith

Matchup

The Utah high school coaching community reluctantly accepted a new member into its ranks on a late spring day last year.

Josh Lyman was invited into principal Mitch Nerdin’s office and was told – if he wanted it – his “interim” status as Cottonwood’s head coach would be lifted – if he wanted it.

“I was nervous,” said Lyman, “but there wasn’t any doubt what my answer was going to be.”

So, Lyman became the Colts’ full-time leader. That was likely bad news for the rest of the state.

A lifelong Utahn, the 31 year-old Lyman became one of the state’s youngest coaches. He was already a teacher at the school with a long resume of accomplishments.

Except for a short time when he earned his Masters Degree at the University of San Francisco and interned with the San Francisco 49ers, Lyman is a lifelong Utahn. He had been a terrific athlete in high school, teaming with his twin brother, Jeremy, to lead Skyline to three state football titles. As a senior, he was a team captain and tabbed 5A’s Most Valuable Player.

He brought that type of winning attitude to Cottonwood, a school that had already gotten off to a head start and wanted to keep it going.

“I never figured I would be a coach,” said Lyman, who was also a University of Utah football standout. “I knew I wanted to be in the sports industry, but this just kind of happened.”

Lyman replaced Terry “Teko” Johnson, who had accepted the Cottonwood job the previous February, but tragically died in July. Lyman said 2010 was expected to be a difficult year as all the coaches had to combine their efforts to keep the players focused.

It all started when Lyman’s “mentor,” Cecil Thomas, resigned to accept an assistant coaching position at Weber State. That left Lyman, who was the only coach that taught at the school.

“The administration wanted somebody who was here all the time,” he said. “We had to go through a lot of adversity, but it just made everyone stronger.”

“...and helped continue the team’s winning attitude.

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- Coach Josh Lyman

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Lyman was given the position, but he said it felt like a team coaching effort in their debut. In front of a near-capacity crowd, the 28-21 win over 5A power Alta started the memorable season as the Colts rallied from a two-touchdown deficit in the final three minutes with a pair of long runs.

“I told the guys that we had someone looking down on us,” Lyman said afterward. “Teko was definitely there. We felt his presence.”

“After that game, the rest of the season was really cool,” he added. “That Alta win gave us a lot of confidence.”

Most everyone would have agreed. But was it Teko, or another example of Cottonwood’s winning attitude at its finest?

The Colts went on to finish the season with a 10-1 record. The dream season finally ended with a loss to Jordan in the state quarterfinals. In-between, they won a region championship for the fourth straight year and Lyman coached his new team to a 24-17 win over Skyline on the field where he made so many memories 15 years earlier.

“I was not looking forward to coming in there,” he said. “It’s one of the toughest places to win in the state.”

Actually, the same can be said for Cottonwood, which has a 41-8 record (.837) over the last four years, and a similar mark at its home facility, which is also recognized as one of the state’s best.

“We just have to continue it, and it won’t be easy because everyone will be gunning for us,” Lyman said.

Teko, or Cottonwood’s winning attitude led by its coach, will play a big part.

**Lyman facts**

* - **SPENT 5** years as a Colts’ assistant.
* - **PLAYED** college football at Dixie (JC) and Utah. Earned degree is Exercise and Sports Science. Signed free-agent contract and was briefly with NFL’s San Diego Chargers.
* - **1997 GRADUATE** of Skyline High School. Helped Eagles to three straight football titles. Was a dominant player on offense, defense AND special teams. Was all-state in football and baseball.
* - **AS A SENIOR**, had 309 all-purpose yards in 30-12 title game win over Brighton. Rushed for over 1,200 yards, averaging over 10 yards a carry. A record that still stands at Skyline.
* - **AS A JUNIOR**, scored both TDs in 13-6 championship game win over Orem.
* - **SON OF** Steve and Ginny Lyman.