

Dunford is Skyline's jokester – and star QB

By Jon Gilbert
Special to the Tribune

There are two sides to **Chase Dunford**, Skyline quarterback.

There is the intense Dunford, who runs like there is a foot-high stack of \$100 bills waiting for him at the first-down marker. And there is the jokester Dunford. When practice reaches a breaking point with the sun scorching the field and a coach laying into the team about poor performance, Dunford cracks some sarcasm that brings everyone back and lightens the mood.

Both versions of Dunford are important to his team and there is no wonder he is a captain. So far this season he has run the Skyline wishbone option attack near flawlessly and sparked the Eagles to a 2-1 start heading into region play.

"In the first game he played adequate," athletic director and assistant coach **Steve Marlowe** said. "Last week he played OK and this week we challenged him to step up."

That's all Dunford has done for his team thus far. His "adequate" performance against Hurricane accounted



Chase Dunford was the one of the Eagles' team captains and the player the team looked to make a big play during the season.

for two-thirds of the team's offense. His "OK" play against Olympus was 14-for-18 passing for 219 yards and two rushing touchdowns.

But step it up he did against Highland. Dunford completed 73 percent of his passes, including three touchdowns, and ran 15 times for 97 yards and another score. Marlowe surely doesn't intend to discount Dunford's performance with his comments. But it does show the expectations the Skyline

coaching staff has for its senior.

"I have a lot of athletes around me that make things look a lot better," Dunford said.

That is true. All-state running back and Brigham Young commitment **Algernon Brown** calls the Eagle backfield home. **Jared Hultquist** and **Brian Orr** have proven to be impressive threats at wide receiver. But it's Dunford making the right decisions and getting to ball to all of those

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weapons, and when his athletes don't free up, Dunford can do just fine keeping the ball himself.

"We've told him if there's room to run, run," head coach **Roger Dupaix** said. "And I think he's surprised [opponents] with his ability to run."

Dupaix expected Dunford to be successful. He watched him lead the junior varsity team last season and saw his skill set flourish in practices. Dunford may only be 5-foot-5 and 145 pounds, but there is no lack of size to his game.

Skyline, with its wishbone offense, traditionally relies heavily on the running game. But Dupaix pushed Dunford to pass the ball more this season when he saw what kind of arm he has. No matter how many passes Dunford zips into his receivers' awaiting hands, his leadership skills are what really impress Dupaix.

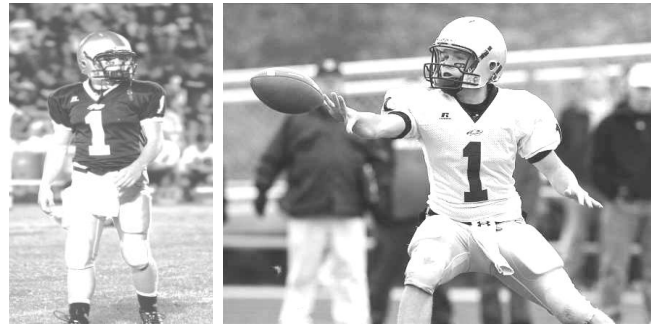
"As long as I've been coaching it's been hard to understand," Dupaix said. "But when the right kid makes a play it just gets the team fired up."

Dunford's teammates have adjusted to having him as a captain, which has been an easy transition. He plays with a fire burning inside and has developed into a go-to guy on a team with high hopes.

"He's not a real big kid, but he's feisty," Marlowe said. "The kids really look to him as a leader."

"You could tell that he was pretty nervous the first game but with each game he gets more experienced and it shows in his play," said Orr.

Sure, Dunford is feisty when opponents are trying to yank him to the ground. Skyline has stout tradition and the stakes seem high every game. That type of pressure can drive someone with insatiable motivation. But that pressure can also get to players and coaches and that's when Dunford's other side is most helpful.



"Coaches get a little bit nervous and tense," Marlowe said. "We start raising our voice and he breaks it up and gives us a chuckle but he's very respectful."

Dunford uses the same strategy with his teammates after an unsuccessful play. The huddle forms and if he sees that his team is down, he said, it just takes one line of witty sarcasm to loosen the team up and get them think about the next play instead of the last. Dunford loves the team aspect of football and enjoys being a captain.

"I love how there are 11 people wanting the same thing you want and have the same goals," he said.

There may be 10 other players on the field with Dunford at all times, but there is no doubt they are looking to him to lead them every play.