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Christian Brothers remembers Spencer Webb in on-field service

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This was a reunion no one expected and no one wanted to attend.

They arrived Saturday morning at Christian Brothers High School — family, friends, football teammates, community members — to say goodbye to a guy they all figured would outlive them all.

“Spencer Webb loved life, and he lived it to the fullest, and that’s why it’s so hard that we’re all here,” said Dale Milton, the athletic director at Christian Brothers, who greeted a sea of faces for the memorial

of the one-time CB star who played tight end at the University of Oregon.

Webb died July 13 from a cliff diving accident in Oregon. His loss was felt all over — in Dixon, where he was raised, in West Sacramento, where he lived, in Sacramento, where he rose from adversity and obscurity to stardom, and in Oregon, a state that embraces its college football heroes. Webb was 22, preparing for his junior season with the Ducks, the program he dreamed of playing for as he navigated life challenges as a boy. Webb was a fan favorite in Eugene. He was once passed across a horde of delirious Ducks fans after a big win, like



ANDY NELSON AP

Oregon tight end Spencer Webb celebrates his touchdown during the fourth quarter of a game Sept. 25, in Eugene, Ore.

a beach ball.

The memorial Saturday on the Christian Brothers football field was fitting, said brother Cody Webb. In helping raise Spencer, Cody Webb used football and academics as tools to keep his brother on the straight and narrow. It was on this field where Webb discovered himself, a 6-foot-5 lanky lad who amused everyone with his per-

sonality.

It was on this field where Webb legged out wind sprints in practice, where he vowed to make a difference in games, in his life and in the lives of those he touched. He vowed to be the best teammate, the best student, the best example of overcoming odds. Webb regularly

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returned to Christian Brothers, sometimes to crash the faculty Christmas party by simply barging into the cafeteria, or to speak to students who dreamed big like he did. He visited the Oak Park campus just weeks before his death to inspire football players about how precious life is and how fortunate they were to be able to play this great game of football.

"This is such a sad event, and I wish we didn't have to be here, saying goodbye to a shooting star," said Tyler Almond, one of Webb's high school coaches, to the crowd.

Almond and others who spoke mentioned how Webb wowed them with his football ability; how he touched them with his desire to have youth football camps; how he moved them with how he cared for everyone, including talking to the homeless and listening to their stories.

And Webb amused everyone. Almond recalled before a big game at Christian Brothers how Webb smuggled in a big,

mysterious bag.

"He had a fog machine," Almond said. "He wanted to have fog for when the players ran onto the field. That was Spence."

Almond added, "Spence was a lot of things. He was a handful. He was goofy. He had genuine curiosity. His was a life well lived, a life that reached many souls."

Current Christian Brothers football players attended the memorial in their blue home jerseys, an hour after their morning practice and a quick shower. Later Saturday, there was an interment at Silveyville Cemetery in Dixon, followed by a reception at the Olde Vets Hall in Dixon. The pallbearers were those closest to Webb, including Christian Brothers teammates Gunnor Faulk, now a quarterback at UC Davis, and Tyler Vander Waal, a quarterback star at Idaho State.

Faulk gave a moving talk at the memorial, dressed in a Webb No. 18 Oregon Ducks jersey, matching that of others in attendance. Faulk recalled



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Gunnor Faulk, a UC Davis quarterback and former teammate of Spencer Webb at Christian Brothers High School, speaks about his friendship with Webb during a memorial service for the Oregon Ducks tight end on Saturday at Christian Brothers High School.

how Webb, in CB school clothes, once did a slide across the grass to greet him.

"I knew then that our friendship would be greenlighted forever," Faulk told the crowd. "Spence had such a great attitude. He was so funny. He was so accomplished. He was living his dream. I'm 22 years old and speaking at my best friend's memorial, and it's a nightmare. There are no words. He would have wanted us to celebrate him here. He was the best kid, a smart kid, a funny kid, and the most loving kid."

Faulk read a poem that included a line of, "A rose growing from concrete."

That was Webb. He grew from hard-boiled roots. The old saying that it takes a village to raise a child rings true with Webb. Everyone joined in — aunts, uncles, grandparents, teachers, coaches, friends — to help raise him when his mother and father were often not around to do so.

No one had more impact that Cody Webb, who took Webb in when he was a young teenager trying to figure out his place in life. Cody Webb mandated that his kid brother become a

better student, that he apply himself, be accountable and responsible, and that no grades means no games. Spencer Webb was plenty inspired, telling The Bee once, "Cody was my father figure. He saved me, showed me what I could be."

What he became was a dominant tight end at Christian Brothers, a Bee All-Metro player, a member of The Bee's All-Decade team and a national recruit with good grades, meaning he had all sorts of college scholarship options.

On a video board at CB, the Oregon coach that recruited him, Mario Crisobal, spoke of "How hard this is for all of us" and that "Spence will be honored."

Crisobal is now preparing for his first season as head coach at Miami. His replacement, Dan Lanning, said in a tribute aired at Christian Brothers, "My first day at Oregon, he was the first guy I met. That should be part of the orientation at Oregon: You get to meet Spencer Webb. Everyone loved him."

Bobby Fresques, assistant coach at Sacramento State and a one-time coach and athletic director at Christian Brothers, said

Webb would call for advice: Recruiting, academics, life.

"He always wanted to give back because it meant so much to him," Fresques said. "He had so much more to give, to do. He had such a bright future."

Cody Webb spoke at the memorial service for his brother in Eugene and he spoke here, moved by the outpouring of support

"It's really hard to do this two times," he said. "This is a special, unique setting for a special, unique person. His silly humor was second to none. His good heart was second to none. He was my best friend. It's really hard to process."

Cody Webb said Christian Brothers will create a scholarship in his brother's honor for an incoming freshman student. He has spoken to Oregon coaches about a similar pledge, including creating a special backpack for that Christian Brothers student who earns that Webb scholarship.

"That way," Cody Webb said, "you'll be able to know who that special kid is on campus."

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