**Micah Herrmann: Faith, friendship and football**

​By Nathan Hiatt – in SPM3843 ~ Contemporary Sports Media at Oklahoma State University.

For Micah Herrmann, soccer and his Christian faith have influenced his life for as long as he can remember; mixing the two together, he has battled knowing his father might be gone sooner than he would have ever hoped.

Herrmann and his family have engrained themselves with the sport of soccer. Herrmann said, although he might have kicked a ball a few times before, he remembers how he started to play soccer at his local YMCA when he was only 3.

“I haven’t stopped since,” Herrmann said.

            Now, as a senior starter on the Stillwater High School varsity team, Herrmann has had to play with the consistent thought of his father in the back of his mind. Recently, he and his family learned his father developed Stage 4 Glioblastoma.

            Glioblastoma is the most aggressive cancer that begins within the brain. The cause of most cases is unclear and there is no identifiable way to completely prevent the disease. Typically, treatment involves surgery after which chemotherapy and radiation are initiated.

            Although his father has had maximum treatment and has felt increasingly better, the cancer is likely to recur. The family knows the circumstances, but their faith provided the extra boost mentality.

            “It has been really hard on my family,” Herrmann said. “… It came up so quickly; we weren’t expecting it, obviously.

            “I am just trying to take advantage of every moment with him right now because we don’t really know how long he has left.”

            Sometimes his father will just sit at home thinking and dwelling about the situation. Herrmann said a negative attitude from his father isn’t good for any of the family members. He said whenever his father can get his mind off the glioblastoma is wonderful.

            Soccer has been a major outlet for positive thinking. Herrmann said his father loves soccer.

            Throughout the ordeal, Herrmann said he honestly thinks his faith has been strengthened. He said reading the Bible with his father and praying have helped him cop with the difficult situation. Watching him read the Bible and sing worship songs, Herrmann said he realizes faith encourages his father, which indirectly encourages the entire family, as well.

            “I don’t know how I would get through his if it wasn’t for my faith,” Herrmann said.

            Living within a profoundly religious family, Herrmann said things just go a little bit differently. He said, unlike many people, he knows there is something to life beyond soccer; there are bigger things to focus on in the long run.

            Herrmann said he knows his strong faith can help him through anything.

            “I know there is a life beyond this life,” Herrmann said. “I feel there is more of a hope in that way.”

**Bonds within the pitch**

            With the soccer ball at his feet, dribbling in space with his eyes up ready to make the perfect pass, Herrmann feels at ease.

            Herrmann has made it clear soccer means a great deal to him. He has played the sport nearly his entire existence and has gained almost all of his main friends while playing something he said he truly loves.

            One his proudest moments playing the sport happened at a young age, surprisingly. Herrmann said he a couple of his closest friends had entered into a 3-on-3 tournament a couple of times when they were about 8. Despite making it to regionals, his team never could quite make it to the World Championships.

            Competing in the tournament probably during the fifth grade, something changed. Herrmann and his buddies qualified for the World Championships in Florida.

“We decided to go down to Disney World and live it up,” Herrmann said. “We actually turned out to do really well.”

His team made its way through nationals, beating a squad from Indiana to advance to the semi-finals. They didn’t win it all, but after defeating a team from Maryland, Herrmann and his buddies ended up placing third, saying two squads from Texas placed first and second. Herrmann said it ranks as one of his greatest soccer moments.

            Although he now has extraordinary experience with soccer, Herrmann still gets nervous on the pitch. Herrmann said he always wants to win because losing hurts. The competition in soccer has drawn him closer and made him increasingly invested in the sport.

            He uses his strong Christian faith while playing soccer, as well. Herrmann said his faith helps him ease any nerves, taking the pressure off.

            “I know that this isn’t completely in my hands,” Herrmann said. “It is God’s work through me.”

            During his freshman season at Stillwater, Herrmann was blessed enough to team up with his brother, Nathan, a senior forward. Being a midfielder, Herrmann said he and his brother linked up on the pitch in practices and games sometimes, making things fun.

            Herrmann said he remembers assisting his brother on a goal against Sapulpa, which was special. Things weren’t always rose, though, he said.

            “Training sometimes got heated,” Herrmann said. “I think whenever you are that close, you can get a little angry on the practice field.”

            Shortly after he started his high school life, Herrmann added another brother to his family and soccer family. A makeshift idea from his brother and father led to the family bringing in a foreign exchange student, Luis. Herrmann’s oldest brother, David, had a foreign exchange student while he played soccer for Stillwater; it worked out well, too.

            Herrmann said Luis not only is getting an education but also has helped the soccer team. He said his brother’s foreign exchange student was a stellar soccer player, as well.

“It is almost like having another brother at the house,” Herrmann said. “It is a ton of fun having a foreign exchange student there, being able to play with them built a larger bond other than just having them at your house.

 “… It was a great experience. I would definitely recommend it to future SHS soccer players.”

 **One final shot**

            With his high school soccer career dwindling, Herrmann has his eyes set on a special finish. Herrmann had interest from John Brown to continue his soccer career in college, but he knows that is out of the question.

            As of right now, Herrmann plans to go to Oklahoma State for his freshman year for studies. Herrmann said he will continue to train and plans to go to College ID Camps, seeing how much interest he can gain this summer for a possible transfer.

            “Unless there is some miracle offer, it is probably too late at this point (to start playing college soccer as a freshman),” Herrmann said.

            He has a limited amount of games remaining as a Pioneer to make an impact.

            Herrmann said despite not having much game action, playing on varsity as a freshman was fun. He moved in a starting role as a sophomore, but the team still wasn’t winning. He said he hates losing.

            The team started its winning ways during his junior season, continuing it into this season. Herrmann said the team always had potential, but now the team is at full strength and depth. The team has flipped the script.

            “We have really turned the program around,” Herrmann said.

            Before losing its first game of the season 3-0 against Broken Arrow, Stillwater was ranked No. 8 in the national poll. Herrmann said the team has done improved exponentially. Stillwater defeated Bixby for the first time since Herrmann has played, which was a major feat. Herrmann said for his team to jump over the Bixby hurdle, winning in dramatic fashion, was special.

            The Pioneers’ goal is to make it to the State Championship. Herrmann said Stillwater has played Edmond North and Union, who look to be the best teams along with Broken Arrow, in the preseason, so it knows what to expect.

“I think we say, ‘Make it to the State Championship,’ because if you make it there, anything can happen,” Herrmann said. “I think we all agree that we can achieve it.

“We know on any given day, we can beat anyone.”