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McNary Assistant Coach Scott Gragg, a former Silverton player and coach who played 11 seasons in the NFL, talks with his son, Brian, during practice on Wednesday in Keizer.

Longtime NFL linesman Gragg back in Mid-Valley

PETE MARTINI
STATESMAN JOURNAL

KEIZER - Scott Gragg is back coaching high school football in the Mid-Valley, and life is good.

The former Silverton head football coach, who left in 2010 to coach at the University of Montana, is now on McNary's staff as a volunteer assistant lineman coach.

And there is an added bonus for the former NFL offensive lineman — he gets to coach his son, Brian.

"It was kind of a perfect fit," Scott Gragg said. "I love the community of Keizer, the staff at McNary. Everything has been a great adjustment for Brian and for our family."

In addition to his football coaching, Gragg works at McNary as an instructional coach.

"You teach teachers, or you help teachers," Gragg said about his role at the school.

A life in football

After playing high school football at Silverton and college football at Montana, Gragg was selected by the New York Giants in the second round of the 1995 NFL Draft.

Gragg played 11 seasons in the NFL for the Giants, San Francisco 49ers and New York Jets. During that time, he played in 172 games, including 149 starts, according to NFL.com.

As his playing career was winding down in 2005, Gragg began searching for options for life after the NFL.

"My last year with the Jets, I knew that was going to be my last year just because of a similar family dynamics I was in," Gragg said. "It was a chance to continue playing, but it was going to be one-year contracts and bounce around and being mobile. And we had kids that were young, and we didn't need to do that any-

more.

"At that time, Tony Smith had resigned at Silverton around Christmas-time," Gragg added. "And I just thought then maybe that's something I would be interested in pursuing. I had a degree in math, and had some introductory stuff into education. The further I looked into it, the more I got interested and found that it's something I love."

Coaching career begins

After coaching at Silverton, Gragg left in 2010 to join Montana's coaching staff as a tight ends coach and recruiting coordinator. He worked his way up to co-offensive coordinator and assistant head coach during his five seasons on the staff.

"I really enjoyed my time at Montana. When (head coach) Mick Delaney retired, they brought in Bob Stitt, and he brought in his staff, and that didn't include me," Gragg said. "That's a part of collegiate football."

Gragg said that they thought about moving back to Oregon at that time, but decided to stay in Montana so his daughter, Anna, could finish high school before playing volleyball at Liberty University in Virginia.

"At that time, our daughter was a senior in high school, and thought about making the move back to Oregon, but decided in the best interest of her aspirations to play collegiate volleyball, that we would stay put," Gragg said. "So I took a job as a middle school/high school principal in Fort Benton, Montana."

Gragg said he considered getting back into college coaching, but he had higher priorities.

"Collegiate athletics are a lot of fun. It's a lot of work too," said Gragg, whose wife is named Toni. "And we're in a season of life where we want to be able to enjoy Anna play athletics, enjoy Brian's last two years of high school and get back to Oregon. So we made the decision in June

to move back to Oregon."

Back home in Oregon

At McNary, Gragg is coaching alongside some familiar faces, including head coach Jeff Auvinen and assistant coach Brad Emmert.

"Brad Emmert was on my staff at Silverton," Gragg said. "And I'm related to Jeff, he's a cousin by marriage. And so, it's an opportunity to work with them, people I know and am familiar with."

As an instructional coach in the school, Gragg has some administrative duties, but the job still allows him to spend more time with family.

"Serve teachers as they need and see fit, or if I see an area where I can help out, I'll do that as well," Gragg said. "It's got an administrative component to it, so I'm still filling that niche. But a big part of being an administrator is afterschool supervision, and meetings and things that take you away from your family. They're all great things, but this allows me to go to Virginia three times this fall, it'll allow me to watch Brian. I don't feel like I'm missing it because of other commitments."

Brian Gragg, a 6-foot-11 junior lineman for McNary, said it has been fun being a part of the same team as his father.

"He's my coach on the field, and he's my dad at home," Brian Gragg said. "I don't want to get that confused, I don't want to get that mixed up. I don't want players to see me as a coach's son. I want them to see me as another player."

Brian Gragg said he has enjoyed being back in Oregon after six years away.

"It's a lot of nostalgia," he said. "Just recently, I was down at Oktoberfest, and it was a lot of fun. I saw a bunch of people from my grade school. It took me back, and it was a lot of fun."

Brian Gragg said the biggest difference between going to school at McNary and in Montana is the size of school.

"It was K through 12, and it was 180 students. That's it, K through 12. Not a lot of people," he said. "I feel a lot more shy than I have before."

Brian Gragg said he is proud that his father was able to reach the NFL as a football player.

"Looking back, I think it's a really cool achievement that he was able to get to that," Brian Gragg said.

What does the future hold?

Scott Gragg has a passion for leadership, which is why he loves working in an education environment.

"I love opportunities to lead and guide others," Gragg said. "Whether that be other teachers, students, players, that opportunity to lead in a transformational way and a positive way is something I really enjoy."

Could he return to college coaching?

"I've learned to never say never because the second you say never is when those opportunities come up," Gragg said. "I know what the next level looks like now, and I've seen coaches that do it really well, and I've seen coaches that don't do it well. And I can probably count on one or two fingers the guys I would consider going back and working with, just because I know the environment would be right and they would be doing it for the right reasons. And my phone's not ringing off the hook for those, and they're happy in their positions. So I would highly doubt that."

What about a role in the NFL?

"I've looked at other leadership opportunities, some in the NFL, and some collegiately, and politically, all different areas," Gragg said. "And it seems like I'm always coming back to education and education leadership. And so if that's where I'll be five years from now, it's tough to say. I hope so. I know after countless moves after every four or five years, we're ready to be settled."