

Love, Marriage & Football by Jerry Thompson

On this year's team there are four married couples. The four players I talked with are unanimous in their opinion that their "better halves" have been an asset to them both on and off the field. The following is a brief look at their relationships.

Kevin Mitchell and Melanie Mitchell:

Kevin and Melanie are high school sweethearts who dated for 6 years before their marriage June 14, 2003 in Orange, California. Melanie is also an athlete and played a couple of years ago on the Oregon volleyball team. What attracted Kevin to his wife? "Not only is she attractive physically but she has a kind heart," Kevin said. Mitchell, the "old school" linebacker said that he and Melanie enjoy doing everything and anything together. "We just enjoy each other's company." Kevin proposed to Melanie at their apartment the first week of September last year before the Fresno State week. They really didn't consider waiting until Kevin finished football. "It's something we both wanted to do and I don't believe in waiting for something to be over-if you wait too long you can miss out on opportunities," Kevin explained. Kevin plans on becoming a policeman after his playing days are over and pointed out that they had a memorable wedding reception: "The cops showed up, it was a party, a little rowdy at a family friend's house with a big back yard and gazebo. We had about 200 people there, dancing and a dee jay. We went from 6:30 at night until 3 in the morning. The cops showed up at 2 or 2:30. It was a good time!"

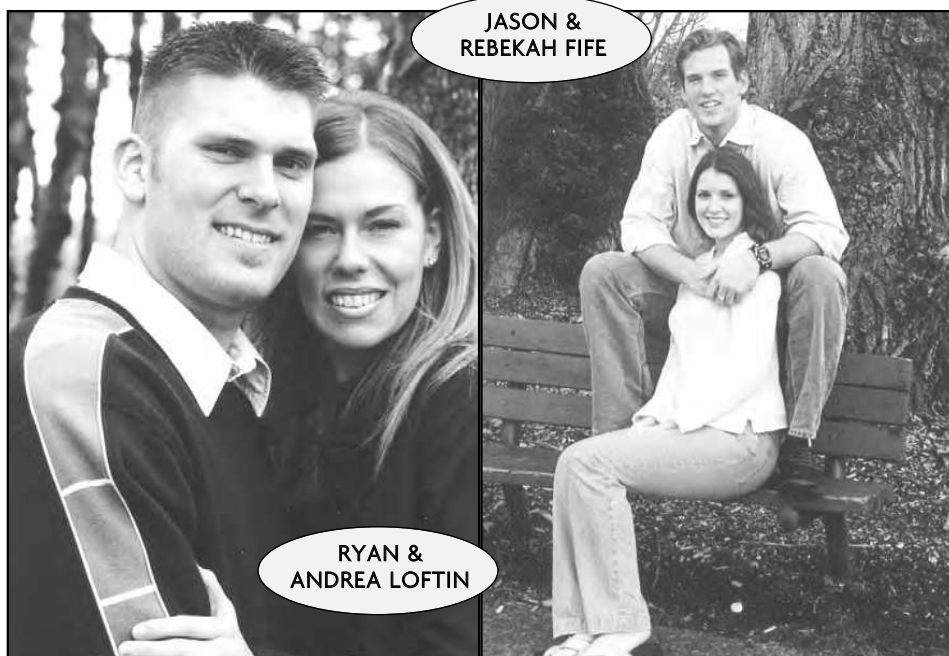
"Melanie's dad is a football coach so he knows all about what goes on in football and they (her parents) like me," Kevin said. Melanie also understands the dangers and injuries in football and has been with Kevin through 2 surgeries. On married life: "It's great, it's been real nice. It's a new chapter in my life. Not a whole lot has changed because we've been together for so long. I try to separate my personal and football life." Kevin said they do not intend to have any children for awhile until he gets a good job.

Jason and Rebekah Fife:

The Fife's dated for 2 1/2 years and Jason said they thought about waiting until his college football career was over. "I really tried to fight it in my mind and heart. She never really said anything about it but I realized this was the woman I was going to marry so why wait?" Jason cooked up a great proposal idea a couple of weeks before Christmas last year, but the timing and execution almost backfired: "I told her I had this really cool present for her. She always complained that I didn't ever have any pictures to give her. So I called my mom and she sent a bunch of pictures. I made a scrapbook of me growing up and playing football and baseball and my friends and me and my sister and family and then I had pictures of us. Then at the end I had a wedding themed page with no picture on it all. All I had was the date which would be to remember the date of the engagement. It was funny because the night before we had a conversation about it and she was kind of asking

me about marriage and I wanted to get away from the subject because I didn't want to ruin it. And so I got her in a really foul mood by saying, 'I think if we talk about marriage right now it'd ruin everything!' Bad thing to say! She was very upset. So the next day when I showed her the scrapbook she thought I was making

her so we kind of have an understanding, it's fun." Unfortunately in fall camp a couple of weeks ago Josh suffered an arm injury and he will miss this entire season. It looks like his playing days are over. How's married life for Josh? "It's going perfect! I think it's helped me in life and football."



fun of her and she got even more angry. So I said "no,no,no-no,no!" and I dropped to one knee and automatically her face was like what are you doing?" Jason had to explain the comment from the night before and she accepted his proposal.

Jason said that Rebekah does worry about him getting hurt all the time. When I got my concussion during the spring game when Haloti hit me she was fretting over me for weeks worrying about side effects.

So how are the newlyweds? "It's great. She keeps me balanced and calm. She can be as stubborn as I am at times which when I need it is great. When I don't it's frustrating, but hey we fight through it and she's great. She's my rock."

Josh and Betsy Rogers:

They met after the 2000 Holiday Bowl as she was moving to Eugene with her family because her brother, Kurtis Doerr was punting here. "So I met her at a New Year's Eve party with a bunch of other friends. I met her there and we've been together from then on." I asked Josh if it was love at first sight? "Yea definitely. I don't know if it was for her but it was for me!" Josh and Betsy dated for just under a year before he proposed. "I told her I was stressed out and wanted to get away for a weekend so I took her to Bandon and went to a little resort and kind of popped it on her there." They were married on July 6th, 2002.

Josh said that Betsy had no reservations about marrying a football player. "She's my motivation, she keeps me going. She's always pushing me to do better and I always want to do my best for

book where we'd been and what we'd been through. We were over in Alton Baker Park on the bridge that goes over the river and I gave it to her at night under the lights up there and I handed it to her on February 15th. She was expecting maybe a little something on Valentine's Day, but I kind of threw her off by not really giving her anything for Valentine's Day so she was kind of wondering what was going on. So on the 15th she wasn't really expecting anything with just kind of an O.K. Valentine's and then on the 15th I gave that to her on the bridge and got down on my knee and asked me to marry me out there. And it was terrific too because nobody was around."

They got married June 14th, 2002. Ryan credits Andrea with giving him a whole new outlook on life. "Everything was revolving around football and my career and she gave me a new perspective on life that there are more important things out there and that there's a deeper love for an individual or anything than I've ever felt before. So, when I go home I try not to bring anything from the field or practice and try to enjoy all the time I have with her. Especially at times in fall camp, that's when you really find out how much you love the person, when you don't get to go home and spend very much time together you do start to miss them. She tells me to go out there and have as much fun as possible no matter what happens or what I'm feeling like, she just wants me to have fun."

Ryan said that marriage has caused him to be a "little more focused on what I have to do out here, actually." "There's a whole lot less things to worry about when you're married." Andrea works full time, Ryan brings home the rent check and she "brings home the dough for everything else." Andrea was pregnant for about 6 weeks but she had a miscarriage. "We were disappointed because we were excited about having a baby. We're excited about having a family one day and she's going to be a great mom. It just wasn't meant to be at that time. Football is going great for me, I couldn't be happier." **O**

Ryan and Andrea Loftin:

They met April 14th of 2001 at a LDS church in Eugene. "Andrea had moved back from Los Angeles before we met and I had just got back off my mission. I had a friend from church 'smooth over the ice' or pave the way." Ryan said he made the initiative by having his friend sit with her in front of him at church and then had the both of them look back at Ryan! "I was sitting there just looking around, kind of nonchalant. It was interesting how that worked out but after that it was clicking right when we met."

They dated for a little over a year. "Once we knew we were in love with each other we didn't want to mess it up or let it slip away so we held on tight."

Ryan's proposal was quite romantic. "I made a scrapbook actually of our whole relationship, photographs that were taken over trips that we took, just different places to show her in the scrap-

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