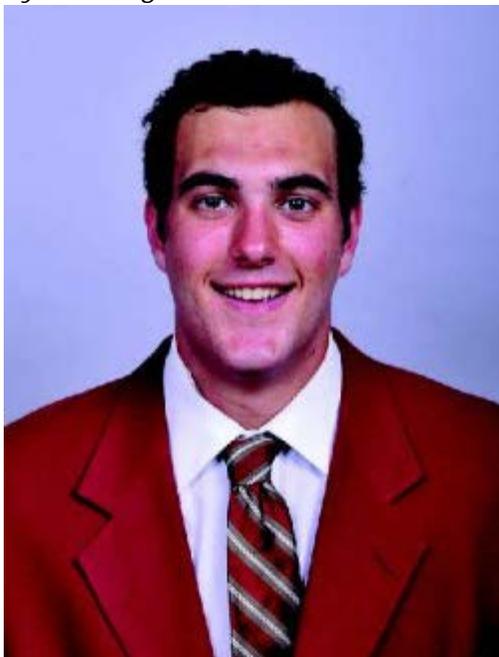


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Tyler Petite - from Campolindo to the University of Southern California

By Jon Kingdon



Tyler Petite Photo provided

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association, in 2015-16 there were 1,083,308 high school football players. Of this number, 73,660 went on to play at an NCAA school, either Division I, II or III.

This works out to be 6.8 percent of the high school players. Only 28,000 - about 2.5 percent - go on to play Division I football, the highest collegiate level.

Tyler Petite, a 2015 graduate of Campolindo High School, is one of the few to make it in Division I, entering his junior year at the University of Southern California after playing as a freshman and sophomore.

As a rule, most freshmen are "redshirted" where they do not play as freshmen so as to further mature without losing a year of eligibility. With an unexpected shortage at the USC tight end position, Petite, a freshman, went on to play all 14 games, catching 10 passes, including two touchdowns. As a sophomore, Petite played in all 13 games, starting twice and catching 15 passes with one touchdown.

There were major adjustments for Petite when he first arrived at USC. "It's a real grind. We work out seven days a week. The players were bigger, stronger and faster than most of the players I had gone up against in high school. However with USC's strength program and

dining table, I was able to get bigger and stronger as well. Fall camp started in August and when I made it through camp and saw that there was an opportunity for me to play as a freshman and that I was able to compete for a spot on the roster, my confidence grew."

Petite found some similarities as well as differences in comparing Campolindo to USC: "The team at Campolindo was so tight-knit and close, it was something that you could not replicate. Though there is a much wider diversity at USC, we did find a way to come together as a team. The weight room program at Campolindo and the strength coaches really prepared me for the grind in the workouts in college."

The talent at USC ranks with any school in the nation. The attitudes of some of the players did not match what Petite saw in his Campo teammates: "Some of the players were so talented, they did not feel the necessity to work that hard."

Tyler's parents, Joe and Toni, still live in Lafayette and Joe coaches the freshman team at Campolindo. The athletic talent in the family is not restricted to Tyler as his older sister Lauren is on the soccer team at the University of Pennsylvania.

Petite's father, who played football at Dartmouth College, saw the potential of a great athlete early in Tyler's life: "Tyler had great size and was bigger and more athletic than the players he competed against. It was not until he was a junior in high school when I saw that he was able to still stand out against players that were of equal size. He was a multi-sport player but ended up focusing entirely on football."

Kevin Macy, Tyler's high school coach, saw Petite's potential early on at his summer camps. "As a freshman, he began as a quarterback but he fit much better as a tight end and defensive end where he dominated. He was so athletic that we could use him in various formations on offense."

With the size of a tight end and the skills of a wide receiver, Petite went on to be selected to numerous All-America teams. Being heavily recruited, his choices came down to Duke and USC.

Joe Petite asked his son, "When you're lying in bed at night, where do you visualize yourself going to school and playing football?"

His answer: "USC."

The number of college players that go on to play professional football drops precipitously. In the Lamorinda

area, three players have gone on to play professional football. Drew Bennett was a quarterback at Campolindo and went on to play sparingly as a wide receiver at UCLA. After an outstanding workout at UCLA's pro timing day, he signed as a free agent with the Tennessee Titans, beating the odds by going on to play nine years in the National Football League.

Ken Dorsey, who played quarterback at Miramonte High School, went on to a very successful college career at the University of Miami, eventually being drafted in the seventh round by the San Francisco 49ers and ended up playing six seasons in the NFL.

You would have to go back to Norm Van Brocklin, who played quarterback at Acalanes High School, to find another Lamorinda athlete who played in the NFL. Van Brocklin was drafted by the Los Angeles Rams in 1949 and went on to have a very successful 12-year career. He also coached the Minnesota Vikings and the Atlanta Falcons, eventually being voted into the NFL Hall of Fame in 1971.

Petite, who anticipates graduating after his junior year, has similar aspirations: "As I continue to develop these next two years, my goal is to play in the NFL."



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