



Hancock County Journal-Pilot

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WEDNESDAY APRIL 30, 2008 Last modified: Wednesday, April 30, 2008 2:58 PM CDT

Gronewold invited to mini camp by Chicago Bears

By Doug Endres, Staff writer

Ashton Gronewold was ready to move on with his football career without the NFL when a phone call changed his immediate plans.

Gronewold, a graduate of Carthage High School, accepted an invitation by the Chicago Bears to a mini camp Thursday, May 1, through Sunday, May 5.

Gronewold received a phone call on Monday from a Bears' scout who had seen him play this season at the University of Missouri-Rolla and work out at pro days.

"I actually missed the call," said Gronewold. "I had been carrying my phone with me non-stop for three days hoping for a phone call (during the NFL draft). I went downstairs for 15 minutes for lunch and he called me then.

"It's definitely the best phone call I've had in a while."

Gronewold was a record-setting receiver and special teams player at Missouri-Rolla. He was named to the Associated Press Little All-America first team and to the Daktronics Division II second team after another record-breaking season at UMR. He is the first player in the 115-year history of the football program to earn All-America honors in three different seasons.

A regional finalist for the 2007 Harlon Hill Award, Gronewold currently ranks third in NCAA Division II in all-purpose yards, finishing with a school record 2,250 for the year, thanks in large part to his 87 receptions for 1,009 yards. He also averaged 28 yards per kickoff return for 953 total yards.

Gronewold was named as the Great Lakes Football Conference's receiver of the year for the second straight season. He broke the NCAA single-game record with 295 yards in kickoff returns and became the seventh player in Division II history to return two kickoffs for a touchdown in the same game when he brought two kickoffs back for scores against Tiffin.

Gronewold is the holder of nearly every receiving, kickoff return and all-purpose yardage records in school history. He had totals of 278 catches, 3,708 yards and 53 touchdowns. His 58 career touchdowns also included five returns for scores. He also had totals of 1,828 kickoff return yards and 5,992 all-purpose yards which were both UMR records.

The Bears and the Philadelphia Eagles were the two teams who showed interest in Gronewold at the pro day workouts. Both teams need help at receiver, and teams are always looking for special teams players.

"They (scouts) were pretty open with me about what I did well and what I needed to work on," said Gronewold. "I asked them some questions about how I did. They told me I ran good routes."

Gronewold said he wasn't told exactly what to expect at the mini camp, but there would be three days of



practices and a lot of meetings.

"They want to see what you can do both on and off the field," said Gronewold. "I kept working out since the end of the season just in case something happened."

He is still waiting for specifics on the camp, which may be held at the team's Lake Forest training facility.

Gronewold has an agent. The two were making plans to contact some arena football teams when he received the call from the Bears.

"I'm trying to stay out of an office for as long as I can," said Gronewold.