

Broncos guard Dalton Risner's commitment extends beyond the football field

By Kristian Lopez

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There is excitement surrounding the Denver Broncos' first preseason game against the Dallas Cowboys Saturday.

One player's commitment is extending far beyond the field. Broncos guard Dalton Risner teamed up with the nonprofit A Precious Child's GiveSPORTS Program last month to host a free football camp for kids. It featured around 100 participants.

A Precious Child gives children in need opportunities and resources to empower them to reach their full potential.

"He has a really nice personality. I think that's a great thing to have in the community--how he's helping us with camps and making us chase our dreams. And I think that's really cool," said camper, Mario Sanders. The nonprofit's GiveSPORTS Program helps kids and families who are in need to get involved in youth sports. It also gives them a little inspiration along the way.

"My goal is to go to college, go to LSU, because I would be the first person in my family to go to college. And I want to make it to the NFL and play for my favorite team," said camper, Jahsiah Jackson.

"That's the highlight of my year, every year, just being around these kids," said Risner. "Every kid is going through something here. Every kid has a battle, whether that's at home with their parents, grandparents, siblings, they all got something going on and you show up here, and you're able to make impacts on those children, and you hear their stories."

One child, Jayden, who participated in the event said it was inspiring to meet Risner.

"Just to hear him speak and like what he's come from. It's just, it's inspiring. I feel like Dalton is more vocal, and he actually comes around and talks to you and it makes it seem like he's not a celebrity. He's just a normal person," said Jayden. "It was awesome. He's inspiring. Just to hear him speak and where he comes from. It's inspiring."

"We're so thankful for A Precious Child for putting this on. I'm so thankful to be a part of it. Thankful to have these kids out here. Every year you have special kids out here and every year you make an impact," said Risner.

This was the second year Risner helped put on the event. Last year's event also featured Broncos player Justin Simmons.

Dalton Risner ready to ‘prove’ himself, show he fits new offensive scheme

By Troy Renck

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Dalton Risner knows what is at stake. The numbers don't lie. The Broncos have not reached the playoffs in six seasons, have not produced a winning record in five years.

The time is now. Who will be part of the rebound? Will Risner?

“When you have a lot of new, you have to prove yourself in a lot of areas. I have been focusing on proving who Dalton Risner is as a leader, with my energy, my work ethic, on what I bring to the team, what I bring as a left guard,” Risner told Denver7 last month. “I earned a lot of that the last three years, but with a new staff — there is barely anyone left in the building from when I got here. I have to prove who I am. There's a lot of urgency. You've got Russell Wilson. We have got to win some games this year.”

Risner enters his fourth season with a strong resume. He has started 47 of 49 games, earned All-Rookie honors and shown toughness. However, he is working with his third offensive coordinator — coach Nathaniel Hackett — in four seasons. And this spring, the Broncos featured a new line coach in Butch Barry and a different plan — the outside zone run scheme.

Can Risner find his place?

“I think I fit into perfectly. There's a lot of talk about whether I could fit in this system or not. I could rarely care less about all the talk. You know what I am about. I am going to outwork you and prove that I can fit any scheme,” Risner said. “I believe I have done that. I think if you talk to any of the coaches, I think they would say I fit this scheme. If you have work ethic and you are willing to be coachable, you can fit in any scheme.”

In the final days of mandatory minicamp, Hackett praised Risner. Risner, who turns 27 next week, took most of the snaps at left guard, though Netane Muti rotated in at both guards spots throughout the offseason.

“He's been another one who's been an absolute unbelievable surprise. We brought this whole system into this organization, this outside zone world, and it hasn't been that way (before),” Hackett said. “He has really bought in and he's doing a fine job running off the ball and (he's) great in pass protection. He's done a really good job and I'm really excited about where he's at.”

Risner remains one of the Broncos' most active players in the community. He is a regular at Special Olympics events, and last month ran a free football camp at Westminster High School through A Precious Child. Risner was in his element, creating an interactive experience. Not only did he run the campers through drills and race them for prizes, but he offered them a microphone to shout out family and friends, while telling their stories.

“Man, I get to meet kids, build relationships and hopefully have a big impact on them. The Denver community always needs help. I just give them motivation and talk to them about how I got to where I was,” said Risner, who was married last month. “The kids, I know a lot of them are going through some tough things, get to come out here, get active, get healthy and leave with a smile.”

Following his camp, Risner stayed for more than an hour, signing autographs and taking pictures. He was that kid not long ago. Told he would never play Division I football or make it in the NFL. To play for the Broncos is personal. Growing up in Wiggins, Colo., he boarded the school bus to attend training camp. To be part of the team that turns the Broncos around would be special.

And the pieces are in place, many believe, with the arrival of Hackett and nine-time Pro Bowl quarterback Russell Wilson. Hackett has spearheaded a seismic cultural change. He has embraced technology, focused on relationships, while setting a standard that is not to be compromised.

“I love the energy coach Hackett has. I love the type of players’ coach he is. He is so knowledgeable about the game,” Risner said. “You might see the part of him having fun and the energy. But the players have gotten to see the schematic part, the playbook part. That dude’s a genius, man. And he’s not afraid to make guys uncomfortable and hold them accountable. He constantly does it. He’s going to let you know when you do something wrong. He’s going to push you out of your comfort zone. He wants to win games, man.”

That’s where Wilson’s presence cannot be overstated. He has experienced one losing season in 10 years. He boasts a championship ring — he triumphed in Super Bowl 48 against the Broncos — and a burning desire to restore the Broncos’ glory.

“It’s a whole new level of accountability. You have a guy who has won a Super Bowl. He’s leading the team. He’s the quarterback. He’s been there, done that. You know you have to listen to that dude because he knows what he’s doing,” Risner said.

“The way he works — it’s not just to you guys in the media — he’s there early, he’s there late. He has a stinking office (in the building). He’s a great person to be around, not only as a great man of God, a great father, a husband, and a great person to look up to aside from the football stuff.”