

Sammons crew returns to the field after a break



Sage Sammons

Wednesday, July 7

First off, sorry to everyone about not posting a blog in a while. We have literally done nothing here in Dumas since I last blogged, in the sense of cutting wheat. But we have had a to-do list a mile long to finish up, and we are almost done with it.

The timing actually could not have been better for the break. We are shorthanded right now because one of our truck drivers went to Missouri for a wedding and has been gone since July 1. Another couple of employees had great opportunities at home, and they gave their two-weeks' notices a couple weeks ago and now just took off. Tonight we are adding a couple more truck drivers, so that should even out the staff.

As for me, I have been sick since July 3. I'm still not too sure what it was, but I know for a fact it wasn't strep (what Sierra had about two weeks ago). It was some kind of flu that settled in my head, and now I have a really bad head cold to go along with a little bit of cabin fever.

My mom, Lisa, was done here helping, but she just left today. She came down for a little bit to help with the cooking efforts after our cook left. Sierra has been taking over that job now that we are sitting still but will have to relinquish it once we get back in the field. I've learned about my little sister this summer, but mainly, she is one heckuva hard worker.

Around the yard here we have been working on some not-so-little projects. We are fixing a header that was dinged up when I was gone (wow, we have had some header

issues this summer) and that project is almost done. The cook camper bathroom also flooded, so we had to fix the piping on that. Along with that came replacing the carpet that was in there. That has turned into a couple-of-days project as everything still has to dry—story of our time here in Dumas.

Our future time-scale, once we finish up our to-do list is this. We have one more day of cutting, whenever it is dry enough to cut. Hopefully, we will be moving from Dumas here by Saturday to Limon, Colo. Once there we will have all four combines for only three or four days, as half the crew will split over to Grant, Neb., to do a very small job there. That crew will then continue on to South Dakota.

The other two combines will finish up in Colorado, then move to Wyoming where we have a tiny, one- or two-day job before we will split again and move our last combine to Montana, while the other will go to South Dakota. Everyone will meet back up in Montana after the wheat harvest is completely under way there.

But remember it has to dry out before any of the future plans can happen. So as of now, we still wait.

Tuesday, July 13

A whirlwind of events has happened the last couple of days, starting before we even finished in Dumas three days ago.

It turned out that we only had 300 acres of wheat left to cut in Dumas during our 10-day hiatus. With four machines, that is nothing, but because of high humidity it took us two half (six-hour) days to finish it.

During the last day of cutting in Dumas, we were down to three machines because we started the haul to Colorado early. We knew we were going to have to double back, and since there was not a lot of work left, the crew was able to finish it up with three machines. So Dad, Sierra, Matt (our new truck driver), and I loaded up one machine and took off, along with the motor home and two headers.

The next day the crew loaded the second combine and grain cart up and they hauled it to the farm north of Last



Fixing a header that got dinged up.

Photos by Sage Sammons.

Chance, Colo., where we are cutting. A few guys had to go back because the crew is now splitting up. Half of us are here in Colorado and the other half are heading to South Dakota. Right now we are a little shorthanded during their move, but we should be back to efficient staff when Craig (grain cart) and John (combine) get here either tomorrow night or the next morning.

We got everything prepared and ready to cut this morning but didn't see the field until 4 p.m. It rained enough last night to slow our progress, but we were able to do some minor fixes to the combines and were ready to roll.

Tomorrow we will be right back in the thick of it, starting bright and early. If everything works out, it will be our first full day of cutting in over two weeks; it's really crazy when you think about it.

There are a lot of harvesters in this part of Colorado. Combines are moving up and down every road you go down, proving that harvest is in full swing. A couple of Dad's harvest friends are in the area, and it is good to catch up with them. We even got a chance to see the Zeorian crew, who are actually camping two doors down from us.

Well the breakfast bell rings early, so I am hitting the hay. I will have a crop update and a bunch of pictures up very soon!

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Relaxing in the cook camper.

Finally in Limon



Jenna Zeorian

Saturday, July 10

The Z crew is finally on the move again after almost a week of downtime. We finished here in Deerfield on July 3 but stuck around for a few days because of the wet conditions and green wheat at our next stop in Limon, Colo.

Yesterday, Dad and I made the first trip to Limon. We didn't see one single combine cutting on the entire 220-mile trip through western Kansas and eastern Colorado. It was crazy. The weather has definitely had harvest slowed down.

Once in Limon, we had a chance to look at some of the fields we'll be cutting and see how far along the wheat is. Surprisingly, a couple of the fields look like they'll be ready

within the next couple of days—if the weather is right. Other fields are still noticeably green, though.

We had to stay in Limon last night because on Tuesday my younger sister, Taylor, was lucky enough to meet up with her high school church youth group from home on their way to Denver for a fun trip. They headed back home today so dropped Taylor off with us when they passed through Limon.

We returned to Deerfield this afternoon and will head back to Colorado with the rest of the equipment, trailer house, and family tomorrow.

On a little side note, when we passed through Tribune, Kan., today, we noticed somebody in a pickup giving us a big wave. I realized it was Scott Clark—one of All Aboard's guest correspondents—so that was kind of fun!

On our way back to Deerfield, I talked Dad into driving through the campground in Cheyenne Wells, Colo., where we cut one summer. Cheyenne Wells is one of the biggest harvest stops in the area. I tried to capture the "trailerhood" (Ha, get it? Like "neighborhood"). Also notice the number of trucks sitting because of the wet conditions that have kept harvesters out of the field. (By the way, I seriously think a film crew should visit a harvest stop like this and make a documentary or something. Think of the people they could talk to, stories they could hear, etc. It'd be awesome.)



Loaded and ready to make the first trip from Deerfield, Kan., to Limon, Colo.

Tuesday, July 13

We're back in Colorado for another harvest season and finally back to work.

After making the second and final trip from Deerfield, Kan., to Limon, Colo., on Saturday and letting the wheat have another day to dry and ripen on Sunday, we hit the field today. The wheat moisture was literally right on the line but luckily leaned a little more toward dry than wet, which meant we could cut.

The field we worked on today did well with an average of about 30 bushels per acre and a test weight of around 62 pounds. I haven't heard a report on protein but will pass it along as soon as I do. Once harvest starts to pick up, we should have a better idea of how the area's crop is faring, too.

It's good to be back in Limon. With our route changing as much as it has over the past couple of years, this stop is starting to feel like one of our "regulars" since it's our fourth summer working here (I'm pretty sure). And, like I saw Sage just posted, there are several other crews in the area, including his, which is fun. Maybe we should have a blogging party or something?

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Dad checking the wheat in one of our fields outside of Limon, Colo., as a storm brews to our east.

Photos by Jenna Zeorian.

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Meet Carsten, Dan and Gabriel of Hoffman Harvesting



Jada Bulgin

Wednesday, July 7

Carsten is the 22-year-old son of Erik and Karen from Aulum, Denmark, which is close to Herning. He has two sisters and a brother—Dorthe, 25, Susanne, 18, and Marten, 16. Prior to coming to work with us, Carsten worked in dairy production while taking agriculture education classes entitled “skilled farmer.”

He had a dream to travel in America and work in the agricultural field at the same time. That is when he heard about Hoffman Harvesting. He currently serves the team as a combine operator. So far his favorite thing about working with us is meeting new people, learning the culture and seeing how ag business is done here.

His favorite memory is what he labels “aqua fencing” on the farm before leaving for harvest. He explains it as being fun and annoying but a subject that everyone talked about to the point where it was funny. He also enjoys our family/group gathering, as we always have fun at them.

What Carsten misses most about Denmark are the people—his family and friends. He also pointed out with a grin that he can't miss the food now. That is because the other day he relieved me from my duty as chef for the evening—or at least I think it was just for the evening. The verdict is still out!

Carsten was hungry for Danish food and being the nice guy that he is treated us to a meal he would normally make at home. He said when his mother worked late he would cook because his father was usually still working in the field. Since there was no one else to cook, he would. The recipes for the delicious and surprisingly easy-to-cook meal he prepared for us are posted on the blog.

Thursday, July 8

Joining our team this year is fellow South Dakotan, Dan Stevens. Prior to joining Hoffman Harvesting, Dan worked as a welder and for a farmer. In March, Dan joined our team because he wanted to do something different. Harvesting was his choice because he has done it before and enjoys driving truck.

Dan really enjoys harvesting because it's fun and he gets to meet new people every day. He says his favorite stop so far has been Scott City because he enjoyed touring the Ehmke Seed building and thought the wheat was amazing. Dan is a truck driver for the team and likes to be kept busy running to and from the elevator. With the good yields we have had this year our whole team has kept busy.

Johan, Dan and Callum enjoy Carsten's food.



Cutting while the storm looms above us.

Photos by Jada Bulgin.

Dan missed the Fourth of July weekend in his hometown most because there is usually a large celebration. He also misses his family but loves being here. He's a family guy but doesn't need to live nearby to be close to his family.

Dan Stevens is the 28-year-old son of Kim and Barb from Lake Norden, S.D. He has a sister named Tracee (Erick) who has a daughter named Mesa, who is 3 1/2, and a newborn son named Jackson, 1 week, 3 days old. Being the avid hunter that Dan is, he was excited to hear about the birth of his nephew. He already has plans to hunt with him and even bought him a gun for when he's old enough to use it.

Dan also enjoys cooking and decided to join Carsten's generosity by cooking for the crew. He made us a spin on hamburgers—stuffed burgers. He also served jalapeño poppers and onion bread. Hopefully we can cut again soon or I'll have to go up a jean size with all this good food! Dan's recipes are also on the All Aboard blog.

Saturday, July 10

Hoffman Harvesting is in Goodland, Kan., and is unable to harvest because moisture is at 14 percent. Normally that would be acceptable; however, since the wheat is going into a dry bin, it needs to be at 13.5-percent moisture or lower. As a result, we have been testing today but not harvesting. Rain showers are also in the forecast, making us antsy and ready to cut. So in the meantime I have been introducing you to members of our crew. Let's meet Gabriel today.

Gabriel is the son of Jorge Alberto and Maria Cristina. He has a sister named Maria Florencia, 25. They call home a city named Rosario, which has a population of 1 million people. Rosario is located on the east central side of Argentina.

Gabriel joins Hoffman Harvesting as an experienced combine operator who had a season of harvesting in both New Zealand and America under his belt prior to joining us. He also helps his father, who is a farmer, harvest his own land each harvest season. In fact, Gabriel was one of the last members of our crew to arrive because he was helping finish his father's harvest. Being that Argentina is



Chef Carsten.



Pieter, George and Gabriel enjoy the meal prepared by Carsten.

the third largest producer of soybeans, following America (No. 1) and Brazil (No. 2); Gabriel's father raises mostly soybeans. His father also grows corn wheat and lentils.

Gabriel decided to return to America for his second harvest tour for several reasons. He knew he had a good experience the first time he was here. He likes the country, its culture, and feels that Americans are friendly. He also explained that he enjoys doing the job and is happy it isn't your typical 9-to-5 job.

Gabriel said, “I don't like to work a 9-to-5 job. I'd rather work a lot of hours then take a month of vacation and travel to another country.”

In addition to this, Gabriel likes working with state-of-the-art machinery, which is not something everyone can do.

When asked what the difference is harvesting in the three places he's been (Argentina, New Zealand, and the United States), he explained that during the New Zealand harvest you are on the go and there are no plans—people are laid back. The yields are better. In fact, they are the highest in the world—around 200 bushels per acre. However the harvest seasons are short. Harvest is similar to here in that they start in the south and work their way north to harvest wheat. Then they head back south for what we could call fall harvest to harvest soybeans and corn. There is as much technology used in the agricultural industry in Argentina as there is America; however, it is harder to gain access to, as it's imported from America. People usually run the same machine for at least three to four years to make enough money to pay for it. The highest temp in Argentina is 125 degrees Fahrenheit, which allows harvesters to be able to cut corn basically 24/7 as it's really dry there during harvest. In addition to using elevators, they use silage bag storage for their corn, which allows them to continue to work instead of working around the schedule of an elevator. The phenomenon was founded in Argentina and just made its way to America in 2007.

The thing Gabriel misses most about home is sharing moments with family and friends. However, he is accustomed to being away from home since he doesn't have a girlfriend or kids. Gabriel's favorite memory this harvest season thus far was our Fourth of July celebration in Colby, Kan. He enjoyed relaxing and hanging out with the crew after finishing a big job. He felt it was rewarding. When Gabriel is done wrapping up this harvest season, he plans to take a month vacation. He will go to a place near Sao Paulo, Brazil, to sit on the tropical beach and visit his friends before heading back to his family to help with the Argentinean harvest once again.

Sunday, July 11

After sitting waiting on wheat that was just not quite dry enough and spending days testing without being able to cut, Hoffman Harvesting was back in the field yesterday in the late afternoon. Unfortunately, weather reports made our return to the field look like it wouldn't last too long. We are split two ways when we are harvesting in Goodland. Three of our combines harvest in Kanorado and the fourth combine cuts in Goodland with the farmer. Malin and Hans are working with the farmer and were able to cut but soon were rained out. Luckily we narrowly missed rain in Kanorado. What essentially happened was one storm went north of us while another went south of us. Storm clouds loomed above us but we never received rain.

Since we had high yields and a long trip to the farmer's bins, two combines were keeping six of our trucks running to and from the field. Malin and Hans rejoined our team and were put to work driving trucks to help make sure the combines didn't have to park and wait for an empty truck. We were able to put in a pretty decent day and today will be able to finally get a full day of cutting in.

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