

## Meet the Hoffman Harvesting team

### Thursday, June 23

Harvesters in Dighton are getting ready to cut. This morning the Dighton fairgrounds look like a used machinery lot, but soon everything will be gone. They will be in the field's cutting—or so they hope.

Unfortunately, we do not have a job here so we are quiet observers of the bustling activities.

Since our next job is not ready, we sent the crew off to the mountains. While Leon thought I was taking mug shots of them in case they got lost, I was actually interviewing some of them and will be sharing information about the crew these next couple of days.

### Friday, June 24

Hailing from Pretoria, South Africa, Johann is a 25-year-old who is on his third harvest run with us. While you can typically see him behind the wheel of the tractor, Johann is more than just a grain cart operator. He is a jack-of-all trades—meaning he knows how to run all our equipment and remembers where fields are located from previous years of working with us. His knowledge of how we do things is a really big help, especially when we have new members on the crew. We call him Chef Johann as he is the man behind the grill on rainy days and when we aren't in the field.

He says South African agriculture is basically the same as here but they don't have the big equipment. Farmers still plow the soil and do things the old-fashioned way.

Fun Fact: Our Chihuahua, Malibu,

was a baby the first year Johan went on harvest with us. He and the other guys on the crew would put her in their cup holder when she rode in the equipment with them.

### Saturday, June 25

On his second harvest tour with Hoffman Harvesting, 22 year-old Callum from Aberdeen, Scotland, has quickly become an asset to our operation. While he sometimes runs the truck, his main duties are running combine and pulling the crew trailer when we move. The crew trailer is arguably the hardest thing in our operation to move. We are very particular about how we park our campers. They have to be parked straight and put together neatly—it's all about presentation and Callum understands this.

He first decided to go on harvest because he wanted to operate the large machinery and drive trucks. He says harvest is a good way to see the States and be able to fund your travels.

Fun Fact: Callum makes his living as a carpenter back home. Last year, he helped reside the house the crew lives in while working close to home.

### Sunday, June 26

James is a 22-year-old Englishman who has joined us on his first harvest and spends most of his days as the #3 combine driver. In his hometown of Lancaster, James helps on his family's farm when he isn't busy working at his job where does custom work such as baling, hauling hay, manure spreading. He is a hard worker and is known as Mr. Fix-it

to us when he's not in the combine.

He saw his journey to America as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience new things and to meet new people. James enjoys working with the crew and all the little laughs they have had along the way while driving "top class" equipment. His funniest memory so far is chasing an escaped bull down the street in Kiowa, Kan., after a fun night downtown.

Fun Fact: James wants to go to a NASCAR race and to the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas before leaving the States.

### Monday, June 27

Joining us on his first harvest tour is Andrew, a 20-year-old Scotsman who can be seen both in a truck and on a combine. Before coming to the States, Andrew was a policeman. His responsibility was to guard the Northern Oil Pipelines. Not quite happy with his profession, he saw harvest as a new opportunity to try something new and decided to go with it. Andrew is enjoying harvest because he thinks we have a great crew and boss. He has also learned some new great skills.

Fun Fact: Before coming to America, Andrew wasn't around kids much, but he's a natural with them. In fact, Kaidence has taken a liking to him—maybe too much. I think she has her first crush!

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James Hayhurst is a 22-year-old Englishman who has joined us on his first harvest and spends most of his days as the #3 combine driver.



An eagle's view of some of our machinery.

## Zeorian crew cutting in Kansas

Mom working on a field near Deerfield, Kan.



Storms were near Deerfield last weekend.



Enjoying an evening with friends.



Supper in the field with the Rathes (clockwise): Mark R., Taylor, Candi R., Brooklyn R., Jillian R., and Callie.

### Saturday, June 25

When I last posted, Zeorian Harvesting had just finished cutting in the Arnett, Okla./Canadian, Texas, area. Since then, the crew has migrated north to Deerfield, Kan. Deerfield is located on the western side of the state, about 20 miles west of Garden City.

We arrived a little ahead of schedule, as the wheat was still a little green and the moisture too high. Then, on June 17 and 18, storms came through the area, delivering rain and the dreaded "H" word—hail. One of our fields did not fare too well but we are thankful it was not worse. There were reports of corn fields that were hit so badly you couldn't even tell corn had once stood there.

On Father's Day, we were still unable to cut, meaning we had a fairly relaxing day, which is usually not the case. We had supper with two of our favorite families, the Rathes and the Krumbachs, to celebrate the day.

We were able to get in the fields early this week but are still running into some green wheat, so we're doing our best to work around that. The crop managed to survive a dry year and is faring pretty well. The test weight has been good, averaging 59 to 61 pounds. The dryland wheat we've cut has made about 40 bushels per acre, while the pivot we're working on now is making anywhere from 30 to 60 bushels per acre. We're expecting to see an average of about 35.

The forecast for the next few days shows hot and dry weather, so hopefully that will take care of the rest of the green wheat and we'll be good to go.

Thanks to my younger sister, Taylor, for taking photos.

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## Roland crew gets back into ripe wheat



The grain cart is up and running again as it unloads on one of the semis.



Deer antlers pierced into the steering tire on Dad's combine.

### Tuesday, June 21

To our luck, Mother Nature has decided to cooperate with us lately. A couple days ago we moved north to the Great Bend and Hoisington, Kan., area where we were able to pick up a little work from an old-time friend and customer, which was greatly appreciated. The wheat was ripe enough to begin cutting, to our relief. Things went well there and we were able to finish up in a timely fashion. The wheat in that area was yielding about 30 to 40 bushels per acre. The only complication we had was an accidental run-in with some old deer antlers. The antlers literally pierced through the steering tire and we had to take it to town to patch it up. Who would have guessed that something as harmless as a buck shedding his antlers in a field could cause us a whole afternoon of grief?

Yesterday we moved near Hays, Kan., and were able to begin harvesting there as well. However, we got sprinkled out in the afternoon but hope to get started up again soon.

### Saturday, June 25

The last couple days have been typical harvest for the Roland crew. We've been able to cut and haul a lot of wheat but in the process of doing so we have also had many random breakdowns—sickles breaking on the headers (due to harvesting short crops this season), a brake canister needing to be replaced on one of the semis, and a chain breaking on the grain cart—we sure have been keeping our mechanic, Jason, busy. Most of the breakdowns have been fairly minor, but having to stop and fix something is always time-consuming, especially when multiple things break throughout the day.



Who's worried about losing their marbles when you're losing tires off your combine?



Jason, Dad, and James work on putting the grain cart back together after we had to replace a chain on it.

Most of the fields we have been harvesting around the area have been yielding around 30 to 50 bushels per acre. The moisture had been staying low until yesterday afternoon when we ran into a field that had some green patches down in the terraces. The moisture spiked up to about 15 percent on the last load of that field. The next field we moved to also had the same issue, so we've been trying to mix in the dry wheat with some of the more wet wheat. We've also been unloading on the go with the grain cart so the extra movement and mixture of the wheat helps to lower the moisture.

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The wheat at the bottom of this picture is a double-cropped field that thick with weeds and 17 percent moisture. The wheat on top stood two to three times higher, and had a yield that was almost doubled, and its moisture was only 10 percent.



The bearing that drives the sickle went out, causing friction. With all of the chaff build-up around these moving parts it only takes an instant to catch fire. On the right by the springs, you can see the now burnt and black chaff caused by the fire.



If we were not prepared for these types of situations, it could have turned out very differently.

## Miseners finish harvesting in Andale

### Tuesday, June 21

The wheat around Andale, Kan., has been averaging 40 bushels per acre. Compared to what we had in Oklahoma, this is fantastic wheat. There has been one thing that has caught me off guard, though. Apparently in this part of Kansas is worse off than I thought when it comes to drought conditions. I've been talking with some of the local farmers and one in particular, Orin Winter, says that since November they have only had a total of 4 inches up until these past couple of weeks. I guess a girl coming up from Oklahoma where the drought is severe didn't realize how bad it was in this neck of the woods. A combination of recent rains and cooler temperatures likely saved the crop.

Yesterday we had a very windy day. The gusts were 40 to 45 mph nonstop.

With that kind of wind there was bound to be dust flying despite all the rain in the past week or so.

With the moisture situation double-cropped fields are hurting and we're seeing 15 to 20 bushels per acre on double-cropped wheat. There was no moisture in the ground when the wheat was planted after soybeans last fall. This is resulting in short, poor wheat that looks similar to what we harvested in Oklahoma. Some of the double-cropped ground has also had hail damage.

Thunderstorms are still a regular occurrence every day and we've been dodging them left and right. These storms seem to be just teasing us—only dumping a quarter inch, up to three-quarters of an inch of rain at a time. The ground is so dry that the rain hits the ground and almost immediately evaporates right back into the air.

### Monday, June 27

Another stop has been crossed off the Misener Family Harvesters list. Andale is now complete despite Mother Nature's attempts to keep us here in south central Kansas.

The average bushels per acre was 40, and that is pretty good wheat. The double-cropped fields were not as good at 15 bushels per acre. I had high expectations based on my first impression of the wheat in this area, but it turned out to be quite different. I'm not saying it was a horrible crop, because this wheat did great, but the rain must have come in the nick of time.

We had to go through some pretty tight obstacles and terrain to get to the fields we're harvesting. We had about 5-inch flames going from the outside of the header to the inside of the header burning all the chaff it could. We managed to get

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the fire out in a timely manner and thankfully it didn't spread to the field. We had no major damage and just replaced the bearing head and away we went again. This is another reason being prepared pays off.

The second to last field was great. I was thankful we could end in Andale on a good note.

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