As a sophomore in 1998 he was redshirted, but then started the first three games of the 1999 season at right guard. In all, he played in eight games that year as a reserve lineman and special teams performer.

One year later, Hessel began to establish himself as a leader, appearing in all 11 games as a starter at left tackle. He returned to the team for his senior year ready to anchor the offensive line after having been given the ultimate compliment by his teammates. Prior to the 2001 season, Hessel was voted one of five captains for the year and again started all 11 games.

The 2002 Husky senior class also had a pair of walk-ons who became prominent players.

After his high school career at Lyman Hall in Wallingford, Conn., Cliff Hill joined the team as a walk-on in the preseason right before his freshman year in 1999. Hill caught the eye of the coaching staff quickly and after an impressive camp he earned a scholarship. Hill appeared in that year’s season opener against Hofstra and caught two passes in the game. On the second reception, he suffered a broken right collarbone and missed the remainder of the season.

UCConn stayed committed to Hill and he went on to play all 11 games as a redshirt freshman in 2000, finishing the year as UConn’s third-leading receiver. As his Husky career closed last fall, Hill went into the record books as the fourth-leading punt returner in school history with 63.

In addition, kicker Marc Hickok joined the team as a walk-on prior to the 1998 season and earned a scholarship for the 2002 season. Hickok made headlines as a junior when he booted a 47-yard field goal in the closing minutes of a 20-19 win at Rutgers — UConn’s first victory over a BIG EAST Conference opponent. He left UConn ranked seventh in career scoring with 151 points after hitting a school-record 47 consecutive PATs to end his career.