



KU photo by George Millener

Norm Cromwell (9) made the switch from cornerback to quarterback and has already rushed for 290 yards in one game for the Jayhawks.

## 'Super athlete' Cromwell improves KU's rushing



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Even the KU Sports Information Office is correctly spelling Dennis Kerbel's name after four field goals against Oregon State.

By Yael Abouhalkah, sports editor  
Daily Kansan, Kansas University

Nobody knows just when the idea of switching Nolan Cromwell from free safety to quarterback for the Kansas University football team hit head coach Bud Moore. Not even Moore knows for sure.

"Like most coaches, I've always believed in putting your best athletes at the skilled positions," Moore explained. "Obviously, Cromwell is a super athlete and quarterback calls for a skilled, talented person. Nolan is all of those."

A quick look at the honors the 6-2, 190-pound junior from Ransom, Kan., has received supports that statement.

### All-state honors

Back in high school at tiny (pop. 416) Ransom, Nolan garnered all-state honors in football and basketball his senior year. He also set an AAU Junior Olympics decathlon record in track his senior year.

Those honors brought him a lot of collegiate scholarship offers. Cromwell finally settled on Kansas.

Cromwell moved his way up the safety depth chart his freshman year, finally starting in the sixth game of the season. He started all last year, finishing as KU's leading tackler in the secondary.

Then came the shift to quarterback this year. It didn't look like such a good move when Cromwell alternated with junior teammate Scott McMichael the first two KU games this year. Cromwell's passing is, well, extremely unimpressive. McMichael's is much better, but his running leaves a lot to be desired.

Then it happened.

On Sept. 27, before 47,200 fans in KU's Memorial Stadium—and a dazed and bewildered Oregon State defense—Cromwell rushed for a staggering 294 yards to lead the Jayhawks to a 20-0 win.

"Actually there had been nothing in practice to get you to thinking he'd do

something like that," Moore said. "But if you're ever going to bet your money on a horse before a race, he's the one to bet it on."

"I decided for the offense to go, Nolan would have to be the quarterback. If he didn't do it, we'd have to go to another formation. But I knew he had everything in the world you need to be a wishbone quarterback."

Moore, of course, realizes that future Jayhawk foes will be watching Cromwell closely.

"No, he's not going to gain 294 yards every week," Moore conceded. "But he's capable of it."

### Kicking improvement

There are other parts of KU's football team, naturally, that are improving as the season progresses.

One significant area is the kicking game.

"I've always said that your kicking game is probably the most important part of playing winning football," Moore said. "Now, I think we're getting some strong performances there."

Those "performances" are coming from walk-on kicker Dennis Kerbel. He was such an unknown at the beginning of the year that no one—including the KU Sports Information Office—spelled his last name right. It always came out "Kerbal."

That error was finally corrected. And Kerbel has shown steady improvement as Kansas's placekicker. His cool performance on the field has earned him various nicknames, most prominently, "The Iceman."

"I was quite obviously wondering about our team before the season began," Moore said. "But I think now, with a couple of games under our belt, we're on the road to being a respectable team. Building a winner here is going to take time. We're not going to be an Oklahoma or a Nebraska overnight. But maybe in time. . . ."



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Scott McMichael, now KU back-up quarterback, led the Big 8 in total offense before last year's Nebraska game.