

It's a guard, It's a center . . . It's 'super' Danny Manning!

By Mike Reilley
Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

Kansas basketball coach Larry Brown and Nebraska coach Moe Iba cannot agree on whether Jayhawk freshman Danny Manning plays more like he's 6-1 or 6-3.

"When you watch Danny play from up in the box, you would swear he is 6-1," Brown said.

"He's an exceptional ballhandler for a player his size. He plays like he's 6-3," Iba said.

Brown and Iba do agree on one thing — the 6-11 center possesses superior ballhandling skills.

Street and Smith magazine lists Manning as one of their "15 Freshmen of Influence" and said his ballhandling "will capture the attention of the fans throughout the country."

"No one his size, with the possible exception of Magic Johnson of the Lakers, has such skills," the magazine said.

Brown felt the comparison between Manning and Johnson was unjust.

"It's unfair to compare Danny and Magic. They're both great ballhandlers, but Magic is such a great defensive rebounder and Danny needs to mature physically," Brown said.

Brown, who has coached several talented big men in his 12-year career as an NBA and college skipper, said Manning has the tools to become a dominant center.

"Danny's a special kid. He is special in the sense that he has several unique talents," Brown said. "He handles the ball and passes better than anyone I've ever seen his size."

Manning displayed his all-around talents at Page High

School in Lawrence. He averaged 22 points, 10 rebounds, five blocked shots, and five assists per game while leading Page to the state finals his senior year.

Manning said he hopes to maintain those statistics as a Jayhawk.

"Right now, I see myself as a role player. I'll do anything coach Brown wants me to do, whether it's blocking shots, rebounding, or scoring," Manning said. "If you want to be a good college player, you have to have a solid all-around game."

Greensboro, North Carolina was Manning's home until two years ago, when his father, Ed, accepted an assistant coaching post at KU.

The 6-11 blue-chipper became one of the most highly sought after recruits in the country last year.

Five schools had the inside track on Manning: North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, Louisville, and Kansas. He eventually chose Kansas because of his mother, not the fact that his father was a coach there.

"Wherever my mother was, that is where I wanted to go to school. I want to stay close to her."

The KU campus was another factor in Manning's decision.

"I like Kansas a lot. It's a nice college and the people come out and support their basketball team," Manning said.

Manning and Indiana's Delray Brooks were the only high school players invited to the Olympic Trials by U.S. Coach Bobby Knight. Although he did not make the team Manning said the experience was priceless.

"I learned a lot at the Olympic trials," Manning said. "It showed me the physical side of basketball."

Manning will have the opportunity to display his newly attained wisdom when he plays Oklahoma All-American Waymon Tisdale and Nebraska All-Big Eight center Dave Hoppen.

The thought of facing the two excites Manning.

"Playing against them is just going to make me that much better," Manning said.

Brown said Manning's initial season at the college level will be more difficult than Tisdale's or Hoppen's.

"When Tisdale and Hoppen came into the league, they had a lot of experienced people playing around them. We have quite a few new people (nine freshmen) and that will make it tough for him at first," Brown said.

Kansas opens its 1984-85 season in Anchorage, Alaska at the Great Alaskan Shootout. Ironically, the Jayhawks face Maryland, one of the five schools Manning considered attending, in the first round.

"We really don't know what to expect from Kansas or Danny Manning," Terrapin Assistant Coach Ron Bradley said. "But with his abilities to do things with the ball, I imagine Kansas will gear most of their offenses toward him."

Brown said Manning is a probable starter for the Maryland game, but "even if he doesn't start, we'll still be a good team," he said.

Before leaving Kansas, Manning said he wants to win an NCAA title. But, basketball is not the only part of his life where he has set goals.

"My main goal is to graduate from college and be successful," he said.

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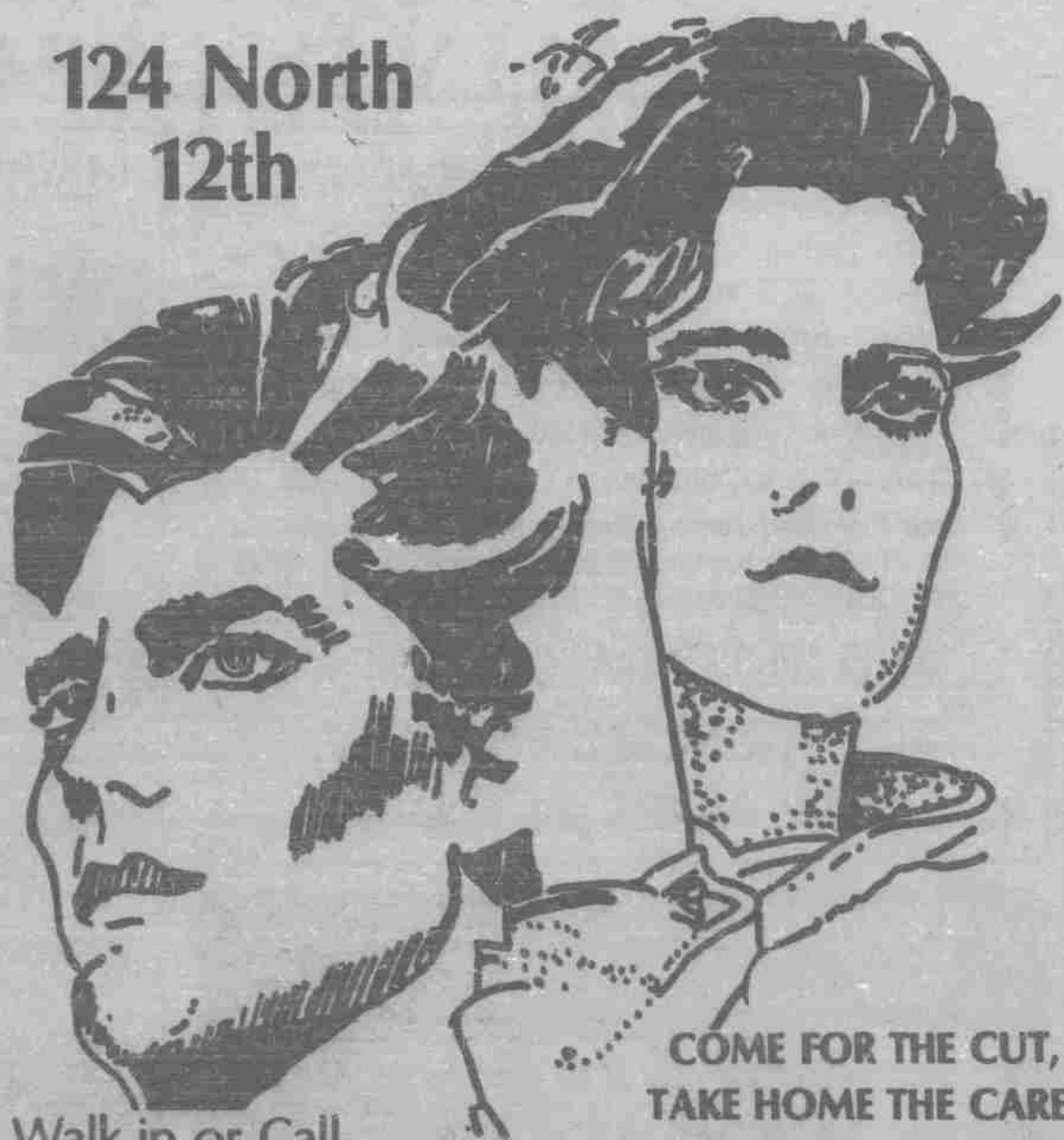
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