

SPORTS

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SPORTS OPINION



Tim Pearson

Friendly rivals make Kansas match special

The NU Coliseum will have a different look tonight—a look that comes around once a year.

For the past four years, whenever Kansas came to Lincoln to play Nebraska, the signs would go up at the Coliseum.

Kansas vs. Nebraska. The Jayhawks' Jenny Larson vs. the Cornhuskers' Christy Johnson. The two high school teammates will go up against each other, and a carload of Millard North players and fans will pack up their signs and make the trip from west Omaha to Lincoln for the 7:30 match tonight.

Sure, Kansas against Nebraska isn't exactly a marquee match, considering that the Jayhawks haven't ever defeated the Huskers—55 matches, 55 Jayhawk losses.

But for both Larson, the Jayhawks' starting middle blocker, and Johnson, the Huskers' starting setter, the match brings back memories of high school—memories of getting to the state tournament, but never quite winning the title.

"I imagine there'll be banners," Johnson said. "Every time Nebraska and Kansas play, there have been signs for me and Jen."

But after this year, the signs will stay at home because both Larson and Johnson are seniors. The similarities between the two don't end there. Both are captains of their respective teams. Both have become major players after a tough first two years in college.

Larson was overshadowed by Johnson in high school. Johnson was the one who received the national honors and along with those, the big-time college offers.

Once Johnson accepted a scholarship to Nebraska, Larson became the star at Millard North for her senior season, while her former teammate adjusted to college volleyball.

"It is weird because of how things change," Johnson said. "I was the star player in high school, and I come here and I'm nobody."

"There was a change where she's a great player, and I'm in the back row playing defense."

But now the tide has shifted to where both have become star players for their teams. Johnson is the All-American, while Larson is the captain and leader of a young 5-10 Jayhawk team.

Larson ranks fifth on Kansas' career block assists chart and ninth in career solo blocks.

Johnson was always one up on her, though. Husker coach Terry Pettit offered a scholarship to Johnson and only a chance to walk on to Larson.

"She could've walked on here. I kind of hoped she would have," Johnson said. "It would have been good to play with her again."

But instead Johnson will have to settle for playing against Larson ... again.

Pearson is a senior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.

Wichita star commits to Nebraska

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Editor

DeAngelo Evans, one of the most prolific runners in national high school football history, verbally committed on Tuesday to play football at Nebraska.

Evans, from Wichita, (Kan.) Collegiate High School, is widely regarded as one of the top five running backs in the country. He chose the Cornhuskers after a long battle with Notre Dame, Penn State, Michigan and Kansas, his coach, Mike Gehrler, said Tuesday night.

"There have been a lot of demands on DeAngelo daily," Gehrler said. "He has handled all the attention pretty well. He knew that if he didn't do this early, there would be constant pressure. He wanted to enjoy his senior season without the constant hassle of all the recruiters."

The 5-foot-9, 210-pound senior has run for 7,555 yards and 114 touchdowns in his three-year career, leading Collegiate to the Class 3A (fourth-largest class in the state) state title a year ago. As a junior he ran for 2,687 yards and 38 scores.

With a season of 2,220 yards this year, Evans, who is asthmatic and wanted to attend a cold-weather school, would pass former Oklahoma Heisman Trophy winner Billy Sims and move into second place on the all-time national rushing charts.

The all-time record, set by Ken Hall of Sugarland, Tex., more than 40 years ago, is out of Evans' reach. He also needs only 30 touchdowns this season to break the national scoring record.

"He has been a treat to coach," Gehrler said. "He is probably the hardest working player on the practice field every day. He's a great team player, and he's got a team personality and attitude. I guess he could have turned into a media mogul, but he hasn't let any of this get to his head."

The two-time Kansas player of the year, who ran a 4.35-second 40-yard dash at Penn State football camp, was offered a scholarship by the Husker coaches at Nebraska football camp this summer.

Over the past month, the rumor among nearly all recruiting circles was that Evans, who bench presses 335

"He has been talking about Nebraska since he was in the seventh grade."

MIKE GEHRER

Wichita Collegiate coach

pounds, squats 500 pounds and has a 40-inch vertical jump, was leaning heavily toward attending Notre Dame next fall. Gehrler said that simply was not true.

"He has been talking about Nebraska since he was in the seventh grade," Gehrler said. "He always thought Nebraska was the place for him to be. It was a family decision. His mom and dad wanted him to go to Nebraska all along. And with the Big 12 coming up next year, that was a big factor in his decision."

Gehrler said Evans visited Lincoln on Sept. 16 and watched from the stands as the Huskers defeated Arizona State 77-28.

A four-year starter in football, Evans is also a basketball star. Playing point guard on the Collegiate team, he led his school to the state title as a freshman, scoring 37 points in the state title game. As a sophomore, he won the 100-meter dash state championship with a time of 10.7 seconds.

At one time, Gehrler said, Evans had hoped to play both basketball and football in college. But now he has decided to concentrate on football.

"To do what is expected of him on the football field, I think he has come to the understanding that playing basketball would be too difficult."

Gehrler said Evans had reminded many people in Southern Kansas of another great Wichita running back, Barry Sanders, who went on to win a Heisman Trophy at Oklahoma State and achieve NFL stardom with the Detroit Lions. Evans topped Sanders' high school rushing marks early in his junior season.

"We can't be certain what the future holds for him," Gehrler said, "but DeAngelo has all the tools to be a great college player. And he has aspirations to someday play in the NFL."



Jay Calderon/DN

Sophomore defensive tackle Jason Peter, on right, has played a major role on Nebraska's defensive line this year, along with Grant Wistrom and Jared Tomich.

Brother's shadow challenges performance

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

Jason Peter plays in a shadow, and right next to the person who casts it upon him.

The sophomore defensive tackle lines up beside his brother, Christian, a senior defensive tackle, and said he had a lot to live up to—and he loves it.

Peter, whose younger brother is a sophomore at Notre Dame, said pressure was greeted with open arms in his family.

"I don't like to put a lot of pressure on myself, but playing next to Christian, there is always the pressure of living up to what he's accomplished," Peter said. "I don't want to be known as the slacker

of the family."

Peter said playing next to his brother, who is one of the team captains, had plenty of benefits.

"We talk to each other on the sidelines. We tell each other how the other guy is blocking us," he said. "We talk about what kind of technique the guy uses. He tells me what the best thing is to do to beat that guy. It really helps having him out there."

But both Peter brothers cast a pretty large shadow—literally.

Jason stands 6-foot-4 and weighs 275 pounds, while Christian is 6-foot-2, 290 pounds.

"I hope we're somewhat intimidating," Jason Peter said. "But once the ball is snapped, it doesn't matter what the other guy looks like. Then it's all up

"I don't want to be known as the slacker of the family."

JASON PETER

Nebraska defensive tackle

to technique, and who wants it more."

Even if the younger Peter doesn't feel like he has lived up to his brother, he has lived up to his own expectations, he said.

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