

Lunsford helps Cougars dance to victory

Written by Jim Ecker

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If the Fine Arts Department at Kennedy High School ever stages a musical about a football team, Jordan Lunsford would land the leading role in a snap.

Lunsford is a member of the Show Choir at Kennedy and also performs in plays. On top of that, he's the leading tackler on the football team that's headed to the second round of the Class 4A playoffs Monday night against Davenport Assumption.

He can sing, he can dance, he can act - and he can knock you to smithereens on a football field. "He's a pretty amazing kid," Kennedy football coach Tim Lewis said Friday after practice.

Lunsford, a 6-foot, 180-pound senior, leads an extremely busy life. On some days, he practices with the football team from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., then trades his cleats for dancing shoes and heads over to practice with the show choir from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Then comes two hours of homework, with bed-time at 11. "Or maybe not do homework that night," he confessed with a smile.

Don't worry about him slacking off, however. He carries a GPA in the 3.7 to 3.8 range, works at Starbucks for 10 or 12 hours on weekends during the football season and has performed in shows at Theatre Cedar Rapids.

"It's crazy," he admitted. "I like being busy. I like doing everything."

There have been other Kennedy students who have juggled the fine arts with football, but Lewis said Lunsford is the best dual threat he's seen during his career - a talented young man who excels at just about everything he tries.

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Lunsford trotted out a new act Wednesday night when he did a back-flip to celebrate Logan Daughette's 80-yard interception return for a touchdown during Kennedy's 42-14 conquest of Prairie in the opening round of the playoffs.

Lunsford had done back-flips in practice before, but never during a game. "That was a really, really exciting game," he said. "I don't know. I had a lot of energy.

"I like to show off a little bit," he confessed.

Lunsford comes by his talents naturally. His father, Shane, played the drums in a band and also played football in high school. "It was kind of a Rock 'n Roll band," Lunsford said. "He had the long hair."

His mother, Bonnie, was a dancer. Both parents performed in the same troupe when they lived in Montana and worked as missionaries, performing around the world and taking Jordan with them.

"I've been to Thailand, I've been to Hong Kong, I've been a lot of places," he said.

The family moved to Cedar Rapids when he was 8 years old. They live near Kennedy, which helps Lunsford save a few precious minutes each day on travel.

Lunsford has been accepted to the University of Iowa and plans to study the fine arts in college, focusing on dance and theater. He'd like to be involved in the performing arts as a profession as a performer, choreographer or teacher.

That's all in the future. For now, he's trying to help Kennedy keep advancing in the playoffs from his "hybrid" position on defense, which is part linebacker and part cornerback.

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"He is one of the toughest kids I've coached and loves the game of football - practice, games, doesn't matter," said Lewis. "He takes every scout-team rep on offense and has a motor like few I've seen.

"You would never guess if you saw Jordan in street clothes," said Lewis, smiling, "because he dresses all preppy and he has his hair sticking up."

Grease paint, spiked hair, fancy clothes, helmet or pads. It doesn't matter. The kid can do it all.