

Once a Husker, always a Husker

Written by Deb Egenberger

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Hometown Husker joins former players at charity golf tournament.

For many years, Nebraska Cornhusker football was more than a pastime, more than a goal, even more than a passion for Gothenburg High School graduate Brandon Koch.

It was life.

Koch was still in junior high in the mid-1990s when he jotted a few words on a piece of paper and tucked it into his wallet.

“That’s when I made up my mind that I was going to play for the Huskers,” he says.

From the moment he wrote his goal down until Koch stripped off his No. 75 crimson jersey after Nebraska beat Michigan in the Alamo Bowl on Dec. 28, 2005, Husker football was his life.

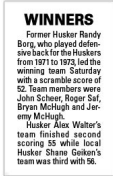
As a high school kid, Koch did something every day to work toward his goal of becoming a Husker.

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He left the Swede program a decorated lineman, earning all-state honors and the chance to play in the 2001 Nebraska Shrine Bowl.



When he was accepted as a Husker walk-on the next fall, he began five incredible years of living a dream.

“That’s all I ever wanted to do,” Koch says.

Day and night, month after month year round, Koch’s life revolved around Husker football and he spent at least part of each day with his football family.

If he wasn’t on the field playing or practicing, he was in the weight room getting stronger or watching film learning more about the game.

Koch finished his football career with more accolades. He earned All-Big 12 honorable mention and Academic All-Big 12 first team.

Yes, Koch perfected that delicate process of balancing athletics and academics.

“No doubt about it, being a student-athlete is hard work,” he says.

Koch’s football eligibility ran out before he completed his secondary education degree. He stayed at the university another three semesters to finish.

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Thankful for the opportunities he had, Koch looks back at his Husker football career with great pride.

“It was an amazing chapter of my life,” he says. “I got to do a lot of things and see a lot of places I wouldn’t have otherwise and I wouldn’t trade that for anything.”



But now, he says, it’s time to move on to the next stage working toward the latest goal he’s written in his wallet.

Koch and his wife Lyndee moved back to Gothenburg because this, he says, is where they want to raise a family.

Tristan, their nearly 2-year-old son, is their pride and joy.

Koch works at Sargent Irrigation, is taking classes at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis and helps on the family farm run by his parents Mary and Loren Koch.

“When I was in high school all I wanted was to play football,” Koch says. “When I got away from home, I realized that the farm really was a pretty good life.”

Now he’s working toward his own family farming operation.

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College football may be a few pages back in the last chapter of Koch's life but it will always be part of who he is.

Koch spent the weekend at Wild Horse Golf Club with former teammates and other members of that elite Husker football "fraternity" playing in the Adrian Fiala Husker Heritage tournament.

It's one of the few charity events Koch chooses to do.

"I'm not a golfer," he admits. "I do have my own clubs now and I get out a few times a year but I'm not very good at it."

Skill doesn't matter at this fund-raiser, though. It's more about meeting people and reminiscing.

"I enjoy listening to the older guys," Koch says. "We've all gone through it but the experiences are just so different. And you're always amazed at what you forget until you talk to everyone else. Then it all comes back to you like it was yesterday."

Living in Gothenburg, Koch said he doesn't feel much of the celebrity status this tournament puts on former Husker players.

Instead, he says he's just a hometown kid who moved back.

"I am amazed, though, how many people from other towns actually recognize me and remember me as a Husker football player," he says. "It's kind of cool."

Koch hopes to get back to Lincoln to cheer at a game, maybe this season.

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“I’m absolutely still a fan,” he says.

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