

Husker Safety Bullocks Has a Nose for the Ball

By Andy Anderson, NU Media Relations

Strong safety Daniel Bullocks, like his twin brother and former partner in the secondary, Josh Bullocks, has always had a nose for the football.

One season after brother Josh broke Nebraska's single-season record with 10 interceptions in 2003, Daniel picked off five passes for the seventh-best total in school history last year.



Daniel Bullocks
Strong Safety

Currently a senior co-captain, Daniel recently became the first Husker defender with two career fumble returns for touchdowns after his first-quarter strip and score against Wake Forest. He also leads the Blackshirt defense in pass breakups this season.

Bullocks has always felt comfortable with the football in his hands, even before his career as a Husker defensive leader. Midway through his sophomore season at Hixson High School in Chattanooga, Tenn., he took over the reins as the Wildcats' starting quarterback despite lacking any previous experience as a signal-caller. Bullocks went on to total more than 50 career touchdowns and helped his team make three playoff appearances during that time, while earning first-team all-state honors as a senior.

While he has built an impressive resume on the gridiron over the years, football was never Bullocks' main focus before his life as a Husker. As it turns out, those record-setting hands served him well in a number of sports while growing up in Chattanooga.

"It started when Josh and I were kids," Bullocks said. "My mom had us in every sport. I got my hands from playing baseball. You need to have hands in a sport like baseball. It was my favorite sport growing up, then I played basketball and eventually got into football."

Of course, hands may help out on the football field, but it doesn't hurt when you have blazing speed in your bloodlines. Bullocks, who has been clocked as fast as 4.37 in the 40-yard dash, is a first cousin to four-time U.S. Olympic gold medalist Evelyn Ashford, who at one time owned the world record in the women's 100-meter dash at 10.76 seconds.

You would think a player who earned a Mr. Football title for his class in Tennessee would be destined for greatness with either his home-state Volunteers or another regional SEC team, such as Auburn. But Daniel, as well as Josh, had his own ideas when it came time to choose a college destination.

"I knew Nebraska had beaten up on Tennessee pretty bad two (bowl) games in a row," Bullocks said, referring to NU's 42-17 win in the 1998 Orange Bowl and a 31-21 victory in the 2000 Fiesta Bowl over the Vols.

"Nebraska's program had always been successful. A lot of great players came through this program and it showed that hard work paid off. I wanted to be a part of the Blackshirt defense, and really, we wanted to have a chance at the national championship. We went to the Rose Bowl my first year, and that's what we came here for."

Leaving home to join the Huskers may have been a change for Daniel, but nothing compared to the changes he would see once he arrived at Nebraska. No longer with the football in his hands, Daniel made the transformation from all-state quarterback to All-Big 12 safety.

The change was difficult at first, but his experience at quarterback paid dividends in his new role.

"When I first got here, (the experience) was helpful," Bullocks said. "I could tell where a quarterback was going to throw the ball once in a while. To have my brother next to me (at free safety) helped, as well."

The biggest change in Daniel's life occurred after the 2004 season, when Josh decided to forgo his remaining eligibility as a Husker and declare for the NFL Draft. For the first time in his life, Daniel would not be playing football next to Josh, nor would he be living with him.

"I tried to talk him out of it, but it didn't work," Daniel said. "So then I just tried to support the decision he made, and I came back here and focused on having a big senior year."

Bullocks also decided he needed to become more of a leader as a senior and would need to be the anchor for a secondary short on experience. He stepped up his efforts and was named a team co-captain during fall camp.

Coach Bill Callahan said the leadership shown by Bullocks has been one of biggest reasons behind the Blackshirts' defensive turnaround this season.

"Daniel's been an enforcer for our team in a sense that he's demanding," Callahan said. "He's a guy who's been asking a lot out of his teammates. He's been supportive, but he's also been the guy looking them in the eye, getting them jacked up and ready to go. He's a player who takes on a lot of accountability, who has great respect among his teammates and he can back it up, not only physically, but mentally."

To this point of his senior campaign, Bullocks' emergence as a leader has been an overwhelming success.

"I wanted to do whatever I could to help this team win," Bullocks said. "As long as I could do those things, everything else was pretty much going to take care of itself."

