

# SENIOR FEATURE: NDAMUKONG SUH



6-4 | 300 | DT  
PORTLAND, ORE.

## By Hilary Winter, Nebraska Media Relations

Where do you find motivation when you're one of the most dominant forces in the Big 12 and are being considered for numerous honors and awards while earning your way into Nebraska's record books? The answer is simple for senior Ndamukong Suh - you look to the past.

The Portland, Ore., native and anchor on the Huskers' defensive line has spent time dissecting the play of past Huskers, learning more about the history and prestige that comes with playing football at Nebraska.

"I've always known Nebraska was a winning program, and I've always wanted to be a part of a winning program," Suh said. "I wanted to look back at the history and just see how things were."

When Suh arrived in Lincoln as a freshman he knew very little about the Blackshirt tradition and Nebraska defenses of years past. The success he's seen previous players have has inspired him. If he can witness them attain goals of making it to the next level, he can envision himself doing the same.

"Almost everybody who has been a Blackshirt has had some opportunity to play at the next level," he said. "If I can live up to that, that's helped me within my goals."

Not only has Suh spent time watching past Husker greats, he has had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with many of the players he has observed and begun to look up to. When former Husker All-American Jared Tomich came back for a visit with the team, Suh took advantage of the situation and spent time with him looking at film and talking about how to play the game.

With the help of Director of Outreach Doak Ostergard, Suh was able to spend some time recently with former Husker and NFL veteran Mike Minter. Beyond his play on the football field, Suh got insight into what made Minter a great leader, from how he approached everything on and off the field, to how he dealt with the media, to his work with multiple foundations.

"I really clinged to him," Suh said. "I talked to him before the first game and got a little advice about how he went about things."

When looking at a player like Minter and the life he leads, Suh has begun to realize the scope of the impact one person can have. As Minter works with numerous foundations and multiple

companies, Suh has seen just how far a life beyond football can reach. Beyond that, he appreciates the time players like Minter take to help current Huskers. With their words of advice and guidance, young men like Suh can learn first-hand just what it means to be a part of the Nebraska football family and the realization of reaching goals outside of football.

"I never felt like I was a person who took things for granted," Suh said. "But (talking to former players) makes you humble that much more and makes you want to work that much more to get to the level they are at. I see my success as helping my family and my future family. It's not only about me."

Someday Suh will be in the place of former players like Tomich and Minter, giving advice to future Huskers about how to succeed in life and take advantage of their time in college. He has certainly learned his lessons since he arrived in Lincoln. From starting out as a defensive end and switching positions, to learning how to manage his time between school and football, Suh is already a wiser person than he was a few short years ago.

"I would say be open and willing to try anything," he said. "Many people don't know that I started as a D-End when I got here. I've learned to adjust to being a defensive tackle. As far as school goes, I'd say get involved with all of the community outreach and leadership programs that are available to us."

When he looks back at his time at Nebraska, beyond the late-night studying, tiring practices and the need to lead a balanced life between academics and athletics, one thing sticks out among all the rest.

"The experiences I've had with my teammates stand out the most," he said. "I've been able to meet so many people; it's all the different faces I've come into contact with, even the coaches."

Suh's goals have stemmed from his desire to reach the next level and play professional football. However, through his experiences in college and the guidance of important mentors in his life, he has learned so much more. From a young freshman to a mature senior ready to embark on the next phase of his life, Suh certainly has his priorities in line and his goals set for what will make him an even better person in the future.

The Big 12 Preseason Defensive Player of the Year, Ndamukong Suh is a candidate for the Lombardi and Nagurski Awards and the Outland and Lott Trophies. In 2008, Suh became the first defensive lineman to lead NU in tackles since 1973. A construction management major set to graduate in December, Suh was born on Jan. 6, 1987. In the Ngema tribe in Cameroon, where his father is from, Ndamukong means "House of Spears."

## QUICK HITTERS

**What do you know now that you wish you knew as a freshman?**

Football-wise, I wish I knew how to play with my hands better. School-wise, I wish I didn't procrastinate as much.

**Something people might now know about you?**

I'm a teddy bear.

**Favorite movie?**

Inside Man.

**Favorite class?**

Construction 305. I enjoyed that class even though it was hard. We took a project for part of the community center that is by the Beadle Center and we had to propose a renovation. We worked on the mechanical stuff and they were actually going to use one of our proposals.

**Item you can't live without?**

Juice.

## COACHES' TAKE: CARL PELINI

*"He's a quiet leader; he leads by example and practices hard every day. He's a very talented player, and the guys learn by watching him. He's not a real vocal guy, he's not going to scream and yell, but I don't expect that from him. He's important to the team as a leader and he's important to the team as a guy who is just so talented that offenses really have to take into consideration where he is."*