

Uaea Masina:

Injuries forced him and the Bengals to adjust their game to find success

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

If it hadn't been for injuries, Uaea Masina might have been one of the most prolific players in Brighton football history.

Growing up, he played football, soccer and basketball and was always among the best players. Now, at 6-foot-4 and 205 pounds, he focused solely on football. The University of Utah recognized this and offered him a scholarship after his junior year.

Playing behind Brighton's talented line, everything was set for a great senior season.

"It was a fun year, but there were some letdowns," he said. "Getting hurt and losing some games we shouldn't have lost."

It started with a rush. He had 129 yards in the opener at Davis, including a 28-yard touchdown run that was the deciding score. After the season, he said it was his favorite game, but for another reason.

"I got to play with my brother (Osa)," he admitted. "I don't know how many times we ran that quarterback draw where he would take the ball and just ran free. I was blocking for him on those plays."

For the season, Uaea rushed for 622 yards. He averaged just over six yards per carry and his blocks probably accounted for a lot more. A knee injury in Brighton's win at Sky View the third week of the season, however, ended up being a big deal. He reinjured it against Jordan six weeks later.

In all, he played maybe half of the Bengals' games. However, it was the confidence he gave others that was missed the most.

"When Uaea was on, everybody else raised their game," said coach Ryan Bullett.

Like most players, Uaea often relived the injury as he stood on the sidelines.

"I was playing defense. It was right after



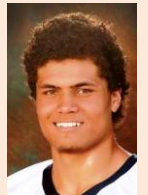
Uaea Masina was the focus point of Brighton's offense and was a threat to score at any time on the field.

Masina's highlights

* - **THREE-YEAR** varsity letterman. He finished with 1,543 rushing yards. His high game was 158 yards vs. American Fork as a sophomore.

* - **GRADUATED** early and enrolled at the University of Utah in January, where he had earned a football scholarship.

* - **FAVORITE GAME** was at Davis. He appreciated the moments he was able to play with his brother, Osa. Combined, they gave Brighton an impressive 1-2 running combination.



half," he recalled. "A guy came across and tripped against my knee and just took it out. I couldn't even practice. I had to go visit a physical therapist."

Brighton adjusted by giving more playing time to Osa. Just a sophomore, Osa had showed

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BRIGHTON FOOTBALL: Senior profile



TOP LEFT: Uaea Masina returns a kickoff for a touchdown at Sky View.

TOP MIDDLE: Uaea was also the team's punter.

LOWER MIDDLE: Uaea poses with his father on "Senior Night."

TOP RIGHT: Uaea prepares for an upcoming play.

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potential in the Bengals' earlier games and he ended up leading the team in rushing. When Uaea returned, their combined experience made the Bengals even better.

"We knew what each other was thinking," Uaea said. "We could just look at each other and know. We had great chemistry."

When the Masina brothers were both in the game, Brighton had one of the best 1-2 running tandems in the state. When Uaea returned against Alta, Osa had become such a force that Uaea could focus his talents more elsewhere. Even though he was still hobbled at Alta, he provided a momentum boost by returning a kickoff for a touchdown.

Two weeks later, Uaea made the play of the game on defense, wrestling the ball from a West Jordan ball carrier in the fourth quarter that helped seal a 20-14 victory.

"I tried to do as much as I could," Uaea said. "I didn't want to miss (playing) Alta. The Thursday before the game, I was finally able to run. I tried to

get back in shape and get my lungs back, but that was about it."

In retrospect, Brighton had become two teams – one with both Masina brothers and one without.

"When Uaea was out, we realized we couldn't rely on him," said Bullett. "But we built a lot of team chemistry. Even when we weren't winning all of our games, we still believed in ourselves."

Part of that was because Brighton felt it could run the ball on anybody. The Bengals often controlled time of possession, giving their defense some rest and relieving the pressure on freshman quarterback Drew Jensen. For the season, the Bengals averaged 5.8 yards per carry and Uaea and Osa combined for 1,328 yards and 15 touchdowns.

It also gave them valuable memories, even if they weren't able to reach their potential.

"I was just getting a feel for the game," Uaea said. "But I'm going to U. to play some more. I can't wait."