Ethan Finlinson:

Late injury put a damper on his season, but Bengals' success kept his spirits up

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

Ethan Finlinson was introduced to football rather late – in the eighth grade. And, in retrospect, it was his senior year at Brighton High School that – by far – had the biggest impact.

Finlinson was part of Brighton's dominating line. At 6-foot-2 and 235 pounds, however, he was considered the lightweight.

"I brought down our average (size)," he said, laughing. "But we all worked together and had fun. That's what was important. We had fun the whole year."

It started in the summer. Playing in local 7-on-7 tournaments, Finlinson said it was pretty obvious that the Bengals would be pretty good in 2012. He ended up playing both ways. He broke his shoulder, however, in Brighton's game at Jordan and spent the rest of the time on the bench.

Watching the remaining games was difficult, but it didn't dampen his spirit.

"My favorite memory was beating Davis on their home turf," he said. "The last couple of seconds, taking a knee and letting the clock run down. We celebrated on the bus, going crazy. It was our best game and Davis was always a tough game for us."

All during summer workouts, Finlinson said the Bengals had been looking forward to playing Davis. The 21-14 victory allowed the team to start to live up to its preseason hype.

"We wanted to trash them. Every day in the weight room during the off season we would break in with a 'Beat Davis' cheer, and then we did it."

Finlinson was a big part. Although his statistics didn't show it, he was part of the offensive line that helped the running game average over 200 yards per contest – and 5.8 yards per carry. The defense also had its share of good games, especially early in the year when the Bengals won their first five games.

Ethan Finlinson (shown here with **Kekoa Kane**), was part of Brighton's dominant line that resulted in a great season.

Davis was the first victim. Then came Fremont, Sky View, American Fork and Pleasant Grove. Finlinson said his best game was at American Fork. However, his best individual memory was at home vs. West Jordan, when he teamed with Lowell Groberg to sack the Jaguars' quarterback.

"It was early in the game and it was just one of those key shots," he said. "I blindsided him right in the back. I was going for a kill shot."

It also ended up being one of his last memories because he was hurt the following week. He still went to practice, and dressed in full uniform

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TOP LEFT: Ethan Finlinson pressures the Pleasant Grove quarterback.
TOP RIGHT: Finlinson poses with his parents on "Senior Night."
LOWER RIGHT: Finlinson hustles on to the field.

Finlinson's highlights

*** - FAVORITE HOBBY** is backcountry skiing. Frequent visitor in Utah's mountains.

* - **FAVORITE GAME** was beating Davis. He said he played his best at American Fork. Favorite opponent was Alta, even though the Bengals lost this year.

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for the games, but was unable to play. He still remained involved, and will never forget the team's best memory – Alec McArdle's "Hail Mary" catch in the play-in game against West Jordan.

"I saw the whole thing," Finlinson said. "I couldn't stand not to watch it. When he dropped it (the ball), I almost crapped myself. I saw him dive on it and I saw the refs signal touchdown. It was crazy after that. I was yelling so loud. I was so happy."

The Bengals' season was a big change from previous years. He made a lot of friends playing football. In 2011, he got a lot of playing time on Brighton's junior varsity team, and was used sparingly on varsity.

"I remember some of the players … how they played. It was inspiring to be like them," he said. "We only had 15 or so kids on our JV team, so I had to play both ways."

Finlinson is the second oldest of four kids. After high school, he planned to go on an LDS Church mission and then attend the University of Utah. He hadn't decided on a major, but his favorite high-school classes were science, math and commercial art.