

# FINISHING HIS GAME

A look back on senior Jack Reeves' last high school football season as a valuable player, and highlights of the teammates' bond

story by GRACE PEI

## SENIOR JACK REEVES

was listening to a lecture in his fifth-hour U.S. government class when he glanced out the window leading into the hallway, surprised to see 20 of his teammates' faces.

Then they burst into the classroom shouting. The group jumped up and down as they surrounded Reeves, congratulating him.

His teammates had just heard the news – Reeves got the call in third hour. He was getting an offer from the University of Kansas to play Division 1 football as a running back.

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commitment two weeks ago were four seasons worth of moments leading up to that call – in between team dinners after three-hour practices, sitting on the bench his last senior games due to a knee injury and bus rides to Topeka, Kansas with no air conditioning.

## Oct. 3: Lawrence 28-20

**“AIN’T NO MOUNTAIN** high!” a football player shouts in the darkness of the bus.

Between the players' excited chatter, the rest of the football team joined in to sing “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough,” featured in “Remember the Titans” – the team's favorite movie night watch.

Reeves and his team felt like champions. After a satisfying win against Lawrence, they were talking, laughing and making jokes in the charter bus on the way back to SM East.

Five minutes away, Johnny's Tavern employees began pushing tables together and preparing for the 11 p.m. arrival of 20 hungry high school football

players, exhilarated from their win just an hour ago.

When the team arrived at Johnny's, they reflected on ways they needed to improve and replayed successful plays as they devoured 10 pizzas, hundreds of fries and 200 wings.

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## Oct. 10: Shawnee Mission North 49-21

**THE NIGHT BEFORE** game day, Reeves and his teammates spent hours gathered in senior Davis Eakes' basement, watching “Remember the Titans,” knowing they wouldn't have school the day after.

Beating one another up with dodgeballs that night would soon be practice for the game the next day against SM North.

On game day, as they lined up to run the 19-stretch – where the player runs the ball to the left – Reeves looked at the opponent's defense, which was oddly condensed towards the left.

*This can't be right.*

He took a step back, calling “18! 18! 18!”

It was hard to see what his lips said amidst the noise of the crowd and his mouth guard, but his teammates understood as they surveyed the field, trusting the change.

They ran right instead of left. Reeves's split-second decision led them to a touchdown and their eventual win in the game, 49-21.

After the game, Reeves took another risk. This time, off the field.

He and his girlfriend, senior Ruby Wasserman, were nominated for homecoming king and queen. Reeves had already prepared the blue and gold sign earlier that day. His sign read: “It would be mean to not ask the queen.” He was counting on her to win.

Though Reeves didn't end up winning homecoming king, his girlfriend won queen.

“I knew she was gonna win,” Reeves said. “So I was kind of relieved knowing that [the sign] was gonna work for sure. But I was just super happy for her and happy that it all worked out.”

## Oct. 17: Olathe West 28-37

**AS REEVES' CLEAT** got stuck in the stiff turf during the middle of the game, he heard his knee pop and assumed the worst.

“I was panicking, I didn't know what was going on,” Reeves said. “I thought I tore my knee fully. I thought I was gonna be out for several months, maybe a year, and so I was freaking out a little bit.”

When Reeves later found out that he had a partially torn medial collateral ligament, his first thought was, “How can I heal faster?”

Before the next game, he did physical therapy, took ice baths and did stretches and strength training to see if there was any possibility of playing the rest of his senior year. He quickly realized it wasn't possible without further and more

serious injury, which would prevent him from playing in college.

“[My teammates] all said that as a teammate, they wanted me to play, but as a friend, they knew it wasn't good for me to play,” Reeves said.

Since Reeves was out for the rest of the season, his friend and teammate, senior Brock Rider, talked with him about understanding his situation – Rider had a knee injury in July. Reeves was always there to encourage and remind Rider that there were only two weeks, one week until they could play together again.

And so Rider told Reeves, “Hey, I'm gonna have your back the way you had my back.”