Game Day Feature: Northern brought them together

MSU-Northern defensive backs Josh and Trevor Baum didn't get the chance to play football together until college
By George Ferguson
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Sometimes the words fate or destiny might be overused or even overly dramatic. But sometimes, that same description might be the only way to describe a positive situation that just comes together at the right place and at the right time.

But even if it wasn't fate that finally brought two brothers to the same football team, getting a chance to play together in college turned out to be the perfect situation.

Montana State University-Northern senior safety Josh Baum has played the last two seasons of collegiate football with younger brother Trevor Baum, currently a junior corner for the Lights. Last season was the first time the two brothers took the field for the same team and at the same time. Being four years apart in age, and spending some of their childhood apart, the opportunity was close at times, but just never happened.

The majority of Josh's youth football was played in Nevada, while Trevor's was played in California. And when Josh returned to California, his senior season in high school was Trevor's freshman season, keeping the two on different squads. Josh did take a couple of years off from football after high school, but returned to the gridiron for the College of the Siskiyous where he played one season before signing with the Lights. Trevor also signed with the College of Siskiyous after his senior season of prep football, but played his first year of junior college during Josh's first year with the Lights.

The two were always close off the field, but something always seemed to keep them just behind the curve when it came to suiting up for the same squad. That changed when Josh convinced Trevor to sign with the Lights, finally giving the two that elusive opportunity many brothers dream of.

"We just didn't know if things would pan out, especially taking the junior college route," Josh said. "But I honestly think it was something we always thought about or talked about, but it just didn't happen early on. Even when I was a senior on varsity in high school, and Trevor was a freshman, I wanted him to be on varsity so bad, that would have been a dream come true back then. But we were one year off.

"Watching each other play," Trevor added, "It was tough because we never got that chance because I lived with my mom in California and Josh lived with our dad in Nevada until high school. That was when I got to see Josh play, and we knew it would be great to play on the same team, we just needed the right opportunity."

Wrestling, baseball, and basketball were also in the Baum brothers' past, but football was where both Josh and Trevor wanted to excel. And they have gone step by step in the process.

Both were running backs in high school, and both were talented. But as they progressed through junior college and into the Lights' program, Josh and Trevor both got converted into defensive backs. Now the brothers take the field every weekend as starters and crucial defensive players for the Lights. The coaching
staff has done well to give both of the Baum's successful collegiate careers, and just as important, having a brother on the team helped the transition into a foreign college program much more manageable for each.

"Coach (Jake) Eldridge (MSU-N defensive coordinator) has helped us a lot," Trevor said. "He put us in great positions to be successful. And he is such a competitive coach. He knows what he is talking about, and we know we are being coached by somebody who has experienced all of this, and was playing not too long ago.

"And it has been nice for both of us to have each other," Josh added about the transition at Northern. "I know my first year up here by myself, I knew my family wouldn't be making very many games. But luckily I talked Trevor into coming up here, and after games it is great having family around. This community has been great, so it wasn't like we just stood around with nobody to talk to after the home games, we were hugging people and shaking hands, but it has been nice having family around."

The transition was smooth, and the experience has been nothing but a positive one for both. But even happily having family around, the competition between two brothers is always present.

There were several issues Josh and Trevor could find neutral ground on, but as brothers, some things will never change. If asked who is stronger, Trevor graciously gave that to Josh since he is older, while Josh returned the credit, stating Trevor is more athletically strong. And when asked who is more football smart, both stepped up and took some credit, but settled on both because they have played the sport so long. And on the subject of who hits harder, that too ended in a tie as both had strong arguments for themselves and one another.

"I think it is equal on that one," Trevor said.

But Josh quickly added.

"I used to think it was me, but after seeing some of Trevor's hits, I don't know. But I will just assume whoever is watching game film on us doesn't want to take a hit from either of us."

But with the brotherly competition clearly seen in each of them, the subject of who is more competitive, and who is faster seemed to go unsettled.

"It doesn't matter if it is on the field, playing video games, or taking a shower first, it is a competition," Trevor said. "We have been competitive ever since we were little."

And on being faster, Josh took full credit for that one, but as younger brothers do, Trevor wanted to prove him wrong as soon as possible.

"We will just have to put the cleats on and find out I guess," Trevor said.

Competition has driven both of the Baum brothers, and they have had healthy careers because of it.

In 27 career games with Northern, Josh has 186 tackles, 10 for a loss, and three sacks. He also has one interception and 11 pass breakups. And in 17 career games with Northern, Trevor has recorded 70 tackles, three-and-a-half for a loss, 10 breakups, and one interception. Trevor has also been Northern's punter the last two seasons, while Josh earned All-Conference honors at safety last season. Both have played very well for the Lights the last couple of
years, and they have played well together as defensive backs, especially since they know each other very well, and have been able to use that knowledge to feed off of each other and grow their game.

"Knowing each other and growing up together really helps us on the field," Josh said. "We can make checks and calls, and know who is going to take an in route and who is going to take the out route, so as far as communication, a lot of time we don't even need to be vocal that much. We just really feed off of each other I think."

Josh will be leaving the Northern program after only two more games this season, while Trevor has one season left. But for the past two seasons, the two brothers who started their football careers so close, but so far apart, have made lasting memories, together, in Northern's secondary and beyond.

"I don't think I can break a most memorable moment down into one play," Trevor said. "We have so many memories from different plays and games, it would be hard to pick just one instance or pick just one play. But I know there are no bad memories. We came up here to play together, so win or lose, no moment really tops another."