

PROFILE

With Eischen in Lancer defense it's safety first

When Chris Eischen broke into the varsity football lineup at Reynolds, you might say he had your basic auspicious debut.

Playing against Columbia, Eischen gathered in a pass from Lancer quarterback Matt Sesera and streaked 85 yards for a touchdown. It was his first varsity pass reception.

"It was called our Columbia pass but, basically, it was just a post pattern," Eischen recalls.

That was two seasons ago, and contrary to the old saying, it hasn't been all downhill from there.

All Eischen has done is win the District 3 400-meter championship for the Reynolds track team two years in a row after finishing second his freshman year.

And football? This fall, senior Eischen will be starting his third varsity campaign. He won't see much of the sidelines,



Chris Eischen

either, unless that's the pass pattern he's running or he happens to make a tackle near there from his starting safety position.

In terms of composite playing time over the last two years, Eischen is by far the most experienced Lancer player. But you probably won't hear that from him.

"I can't really say that I'm going to be the onfield wisdom guy out there," he says. "I just want to do whatever I can contribute."

That's not the story you hear from the Reynolds coaching staff. Take it away, Craig Ruecker.

"Chris is going to be one of the best football players in the state this year with his speed and experience," says the Lancer head coach. "He's always a threat to break the long bomb and he has great maturity. Defensively, he understands our coverages and being a three-year starter, he helps us out a lot."

Eischen has also been instrumental in Ruecker's renovation of the Reynolds grid program. "In our first couple of years, we were building the program," Ruecker says. "The first year Chris was on varsity we went 5-4. That was our first winning season. Last year we were 7-2. He's been part of the winning, of the turnaround of the program."

Eischen started his prep career as a freshman running back. "But I figured I could use my speed more at wide receiver," he says.

As a two-way performer, Eischen uses his speed on defense, too, and it's almost certain he'll be on the field every minute of every game, except for occasional blows on the bench.

"He'll probably be going both ways for us," Ruecker says. "He's one of the best receivers in the league and one of the top safeties."

Even though he goes both ways, you'd think Eischen would have a definite preference on whether he would rather be the hitter or the hittee.

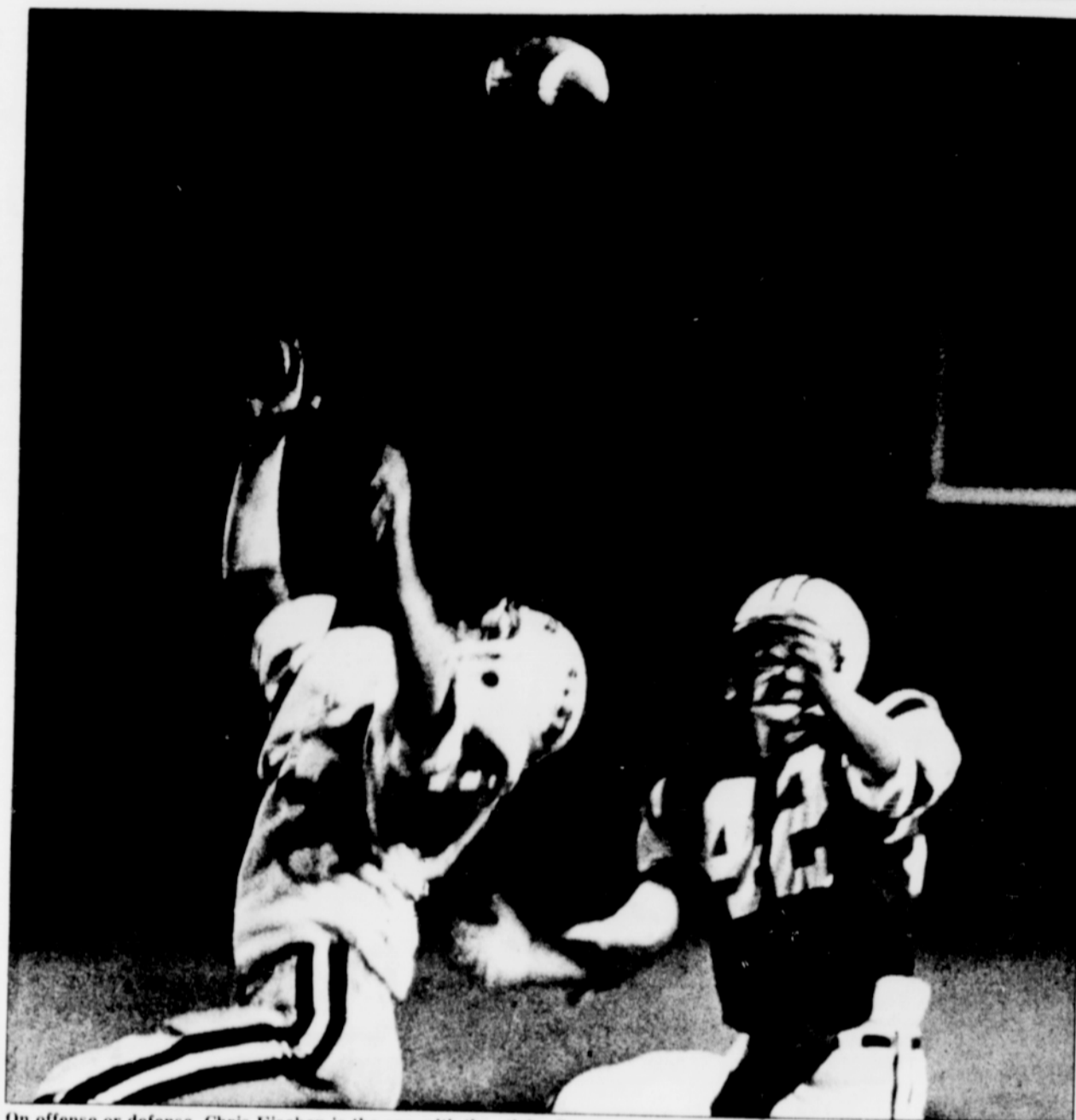
"I like both offense and defense but for different reasons," he says. "On offense, I like running patterns, catching the ball and, of course, scoring. Defense is more physical, though, and I like that aspect of it. It's more difficult to play. The offense always has the jump on you and you have to coordinate your moves to theirs. You always have to be thinking."

What Eischen is thinking about these days is helping the Lancers go back to the state playoffs. Last season was a banner one for Reynolds. The school won its first Wilco League football title in 15 years. But the end of the season, a 20-13 loss to Pendleton in the first round of the state playoffs, was disappointing.

"The worst part of it was we lost on a lot of little mistakes," Eischen says. "I think we had a few jitters from being in the playoffs for the first time."

The jitters are history now, he says. The Lancers are preparing confidently for the new season and feel they have a good chance to better last year's mark.

JIM HAYS



On offense or defense, Chris Eischen is the one with the sticky fingers.

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