

# The Middleman

Senior Dan Schoen is smack-dab in the middle of Viking football's best season since 1942.

As centers go, Schoen is smallish at 6-foot-1 and 267 pounds. But the Vikings have been on a roll since he earned a starting role at the beginning of the 2009 season.

"I'm undersized, but I do what I can," said Schoen. "It's a fun position and I enjoy having the responsibility of making the line calls."

Schoen could make the calls in Spanish, French, or Arabic. A history and philosophy major, he will graduate in December and is planning to pursue graduate work in Middle Eastern Studies. In preparation, he took an intense course in Arabic at the University of Minnesota in the summer of 2009.

To keep his listening and reading skills sharp, Schoen scanned the Internet for language teachers and found Suzan Muhammad in Cairo, Egypt. Since June, Schoen and Muhammad, have conducted one-on-one language sessions through Skype, a software application for voice and visual contact.

"She is an amazing teacher," Schoen said. "I hope to spend some time in Egypt after December working with her. I want to get to know more about the region and I'll need to know the language."

Schoen's interest in the Middle East intensified as the region became a focus of world attention. "I sure didn't know much about it, but the more I learned the more interested I became."

A career choice isn't solidified; options include teaching and foreign service.

His pursuit of excellence extends to the gridiron, where his battles in the trenches are key to Augustana's success. He doesn't overwhelm opponents with size, but his technique, intensity and heart are off the charts.

"Dan has been an absolute joy to coach. He is as dedicated on the field as he is in the classroom. He accepts nothing but excellence from himself and demands the same from his teammates," said offensive line coach Joe Evenson.

Schoen is a Dean's List student and was chosen to the All-Academic Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference team in 2009. He is the recipient of a Trustees Scholarship and last spring was named winner of the Augustana Covenant Award for Excellence.

## Senior Volleyball Player Digs Deep

From locker room pep talks to mission trips to Peru, middle blocker Brianna Erickson is committed to helping others — on and off the court.

Augustana middle blocker Brianna Erickson could be the poster child for what it means to be a student-athlete. She is academic, articulate, and athletic.

The senior from Gurnee, Ill., completed work on her nursing degree in May. In December she will add a Spanish major to her resume. She has twice been named to the All-Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference Academic Team. She was an Augustana Dean's List student for all but one of eight undergraduate semesters.

The double major provides a solid foundation for her career path.

"I've always loved the Spanish language ever since I started taking it in high school," she says. The language served her well on mission trips to Peru and then to Pass Christian, Miss., to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina.

It was on a medical mission to the Dominican Republic that Erickson's future was confirmed.

"We traveled to rural villages where the people had no access to medical care. We saw more than 200 patients a day. The experience fueled my passion to reach out to people who do not have access to what we have."

Before entering the work force, Erickson has another mission. As the only senior on the Augustana volleyball team, she wants to

help her younger teammates to a high finish in the most demanding volleyball conference in NCAA Division II.

"I've never been around a group so passionate about getting better," she says. "There are so many lessons to be learned in such a tough conference and this team comes to practice every day hungry to improve."

Erickson plays a key role from her middle blocker position. Her 14 kills led the team in its first encounter with then No. 1 Minnesota Duluth. The Vikings, who start as many as three freshmen, extended the Bulldogs to five games.

"We have a bunch of fighters," says Erickson, who didn't start playing competitive volleyball until her freshman year in high school. "The girls want to get better. Taking the No. 1 team to five games is not good enough."

