

## Thorson Relishes His Time at Kansas

By Kyle West, Kansas Media Relations

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Play offensive line at the University of Wisconsin for four years and become a star for the program he grew up rooting for. That was the plan.

What actually happened was a last-minute scholarship offer, a transfer, a last-minute arrival in Lawrence, a coaching change prior to his senior year and much more in between. Along the way, Brad Thorson learned to embrace new adventures, seek new experiences and not to make as many plans.

Thorson's five-year adventure began before he even graduated from Homestead High School in Mequon, Wisc. Without an offer to play for his in-state school, Thorson verbally committed to Minnesota. However, just three days before the official signing period, Thorson received an offer from Wisconsin and switched his commitment. Unfortunately, though, Thorson was part of a large offensive line recruiting class for Wisconsin and quickly realized that his dream scenario may not play out as planned.



Senior Brad Thorson started his career at Wisconsin, before transferring to KU for his final three seasons.

"Getting the offer from Wisconsin was a dream come true," said Thorson. "I dreamed that everything was going to be perfect. I would be a poster boy for that program and everybody would love me. It just didn't work out. When I had to cut those ties, it was hard."

After bringing 50 college credit hours with him from high school and taking 15 credit hours in each of his first three semesters at Wisconsin, Thorson had 95 credits following his redshirt freshman season. In order to graduate and be able to transfer, Thorson needed to take 31 more credits – 18 in the spring and 13 in the summer.

"The 13 (credits) over the summer was the hardest course load I've ever had," said Thorson. "It was class from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day. Then I'd work out, come home, do my homework and have class all (of the next) day. That was the most strenuous academic period I've had."

Thorson pushed through it, knowing that he would finish his graduation requirements in time to play football at North Carolina in the upcoming 2008 season. At least, that was the plan. However, two weeks before fall camp, North Carolina informed Thorson they had messed up his admissions paperwork and he did not get into the school. Suddenly, Thorson was left scrambling to find another university with an available scholarship that also had a graduate program he could enroll in.

"I called about 40 schools and told them my story," Thorson said. "I told them to get me into school and I would be there. (Former Kansas offensive line) Coach Reagan called me the next day and said, 'Your student ID number is ...' It worked out incredibly. It was just luck of the draw. If my life has ever gone fast, it was that part of my life. I showed up the

day before camp started. I didn't know a soul here except the offensive line coach. I couldn't drive around the city without getting lost, and it's a city of 70,000."

Thorson finally settled down in Lawrence with the help of a teammate.

"I was taking night classes because I was in graduate school," said Thorson. "I'd lift at 6 a.m. and then have nothing to do until practice. I would go to the Burge Union, eat breakfast and do crosswords all morning. (Former KU linebacker and current NFL player) [Mike Rivera](#) was doing an internship with Mike Harrity in the student-athlete development office. He would always see me and told me to come up to the office. From there, I went to schools, read to kids and did things to help out the university. It really made Lawrence feel like home. After about 10 events in a month, I was hooked."

In fact, Thorson was so hooked that he expanded his community service efforts to include Habitat for Humanity, Special Olympics and many others. Last spring, Thorson donated his hair to make wigs for cancer patients. This October, Thorson was named a Big 12 Conference Fall Chick-Fil-A Community of Champions honoree.

Thorson also learned from his early time in Lawrence that sometimes things don't go according to plan.

"Coming here really taught me that you can't force opportunities. The most influential people in my life during this period have all been at Kansas. I'd say I was a pretty square guy before. I remember two summers ago I was at home in Milwaukee. [Kerry Meier](#) called and asked if I wanted to go to a music festival that weekend in south Arkansas. I told my mom and dad I was packing up the car and leaving the next day. That willingness to embrace new adventures, if you will, I don't know if I would have done it (at Wisconsin)."

With the continual change surrounding his college experience, Thorson says stability in his life has come from the constant support he has received from his family.

"My parents have been rocks in my life to lean on through everything. Until this year they had been to every single game I've been a part of. My dad switched jobs this year and they missed Georgia Tech and Colorado, of all games. I have a brother (Andrew, 24) and sister (Kaley, 19). I know it isn't easy when my mom has all of the newspaper clippings at home, but they are so supportive and so excited to see me succeed. I call them every Sunday. Those routines keep things stable while everything seems a little bit like madness around here."

As for what the future holds, Thorson has learned not to plan too far ahead.

"I think I've given up on making plans at this point in my life. Every time I try to make a plan, there's a wrench thrown into it. I'm going to give as many things an opportunity as I can. My goal is to see the world. I've learned that you don't know what's going to come out of any experience. Take advantage of them all because you're going to get something out of it."