Former Wildcats enjoy all-star experience



Kansas defensive lineman Dustyn Rizzo tries to shed a Missouri blocker Thursday during the GKCFCA Kansas vs. Missouri All-Star Game at Blue Springs South High School.

BLUE SPRINGS, Mo. – For 10 days, Louisburg High School graduates Korbin Hankinson and Dustyn Rizzo played alongside some of the best football players the Kansas City area had to offer.

The two former Wildcats suited up for Kansas during the Kansas vs. Missouri All-Star Game put on by the Greater Kansas City Football Coaches Association on Thursday at Blue Springs South High School. Although Kansas ended up falling to Missouri 17-7, for the Sunflower State's seventh consecutive loss, both players took several positives away from their time on the gridiron.

"The last couple weeks have been a great experience, just getting a chance to play with guys who are just as good as me or better," Rizzo said. "It makes me a lot better player and I am honored to play in this game. I had a chance to meet a lot of new people and maybe I will see them in college. Even though we lost, it was a good experience."

Hankinson and Rizzo both started practicing with their Kansas teammates 10 days prior to the contest and that allowed them

to get to know their future teammates.

“These last two weeks have been a once in a lifetime opportunity for me,” Hankinson said. “I have always wanted to do this and I am so glad that I am out here with all these kids. It is a neat experience to play against guys who are from all these different schools. It has been a lot of fun.”



Kansas receiver Korbin Hankinson makes a catch and tries to get some extra yardage Thursday during the GKCFCA all-star game at Blue Springs South High School.

In the game itself, Kansas and Missouri were scoreless first half, but Kansas had three potential touchdowns that were called back due to a holding penalty.

Missouri opened the second half with a big play when Kearney quarterback Anthony Pretzel hit Center’s Cristian Cox for a 68-yard touchdown pass.

Then on Kansas' first possession of the third quarter, Blue Valley quarterback Matt Dercher rolled out and his pass was tipped by the Missouri defense and Center linebacker John Taylor intercepted it for a touchdown and all of a sudden Kansas found themselves down two scores just a couple minutes into the second half.

Kansas' lone touchdown came in the fourth quarter when Shawnee Mission West's Isreal Watson scored on a 15-yard pass.

Rizzo played more than half of the game at defensive end for Kansas and recorded three tackles on the evening.

"I didn't think that was going to happen at all," Rizzo said of Missouri's quick start to the second half. "I thought we were going to come out and kick some butt. That didn't happen and those two scores were hard to come back from.

"Missouri's line was pretty big, but I thought our line was a little bigger honestly. Going through practice, the Missouri line knew how to hold a lot better than our line did. I practiced against the Kansas line for a week so I was able to get past them as the week went on, but the Missouri line was a whole new experience and a different kind of game."



Dustyn Rizzo tries to get around the edge to get to the quarterback Thursday.

Hankinson lined up as a slot receiver and played on every-other possession for the Kansas offense. Kansas ran a lot of four or five wide-receiver sets and Hankinson ran several different routes, including a bubble screen that gave him his lone catch of the game. He also returned a kickoff for 20 yards in the second half.

“The offense we ran is like (Bishop) Miege’s offense, which is a fast-paced, no-huddle offense,” Hankinson said. “You have wristbands that have all the plays on it and it is completely different than Louisburg’s, but I loved it. I figured this is what it will be like for me in college next year, so it gave me a little taste on what to expect.”



Korbin Hankinson jokes around with Kansas assistant coaches Jon Holmes (left) and Tim Grunhard during pre-game introductions.

Now both players will prepare for their life as a college football player. Hankinson will report to Missouri Southern in early August, while Rizzo will make the journey to Garden City Community College in July.

“I am not too excited for school in August, but I am excited to get back into pads and play for Garden City and make a name for myself,” Rizzo said.

Hankinson added, “I am just going to lift some weights, get into shape and just keep working until I report in August. I am very excited to get to college and see what happens.”