THE ASSEMBLING OF
ERIC BEISEL

TIGER KICKOFF

Missouri vs. Auburn. 6:30 p.m. // September 23, 2016 // Columbia Missourian
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Missouri ends its season-opening four-game homestand against No. 15 Auburn at 6:30 p.m. Saturday at Memorial Stadium. The visiting Tigers are making their first trip to Columbia since MU joined the SEC in 2012, and our Impossible Quiz is back to test your knowledge of all things Auburn. From the fake name Alabama fan Harvey Updyke used to call into Paul Finebaum’s radio show in 2011 to admit he poisoned the trees at Auburn’s Toomer’s Corner to the play former AU coach John Heisman put on to get the football team out of debt in 1897, our quiz will hopefully teach you a thing or two you didn’t know about the visiting Tigers.

So, how well do you know Auburn?

**IMPOSSIBLE QUIZ**

**10 THINGS YOU DON’T KNOW ABOUT AUBURN**

1. **HOW MANY SEC FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS HAS AUBURN WON SINCE JOINING THE LEAGUE IN 1933?**
   - A 4
   - B 6
   - C 8
   - D 11

2. **WHAT IS THE STATE FOSSIL OF ALABAMA?**
   - A Brachiopod
   - B Basilosaurus whale
   - C Knightia
   - D Belemnite

3. **A TRIBE CALLED QUEST RAPPER PHIFE DAWG REFERENCES AU STANDOUT BO JACKSON IN THE OPENING LINES OF WHICH OF THE GROUP’S SONGS?**
   - A “Award Tour”
   - B “Check The Rhime”
   - C “Scenario”
   - D “Can I Kick It?”

4. **WHAT WAS THE FAKE NAME ALABAMA FAN HARVEY UPDYKE USED WHEN HE CALLED INTO PAUL FINEBAUM’S SHOW TO ADMIT HE POISONED THE TREES AT TOOMER’S CORNER IN AUBURN?**
   - A Danny from Dothan
   - B Bear from Montgomery
   - C Frank from Birmingham
   - D Al from Dadeville

5. **APPLE CEO TIM COOK GRADUATED FROM AU IN 1982. IN WHAT YEAR DID HE GIVE A COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS AT THE UNIVERSITY’S SPRING GRADUATION?**
   - A 2005
   - B 2007
   - C 2010
   - D 2013

6. **TO HELP THE AUBURN FOOTBALL TEAM OUT OF DEBT AFTER THE 1897 SEASON, COACH JOHN HEISMAN DIRECTED, PRODUCED AND ACTED IN WHAT PLAY AS A FUNDRAISER?**
   - A “Titus Andronicus”
   - B “The Scarlet Letter”
   - C “David Garrick”
   - D “The Beggar’s Opera”

7. **JIMMY BUFFETT SPENT A YEAR AT AUBURN BEFORE TRANSFERRING TO PEARL RIVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE. HOW MANY OF HIS SONGS HAVE MADE BILLBOARD’S TOP 100?**
   - A 7
   - B 10
   - C 13
   - D 16

8. **WITH WHAT PICK IN THE FIRST ROUND OF THE 1984 NBA DRAFT DID THE PHILADELPHIA 76ERS SELECT AUBURN’S CHARLES BARKLEY?**
   - A Third
   - B Fifth
   - C 14th
   - D 19th

9. **ACCORDING TO ALABAMA STATE LAW, IT’S ILLEGAL TO PLAY WHAT GAME ON SUNDAYS?**
   - A Dominoes
   - B Checkers
   - C Tiddlywinks
   - D Backgammon

10. **THE WORLD’S LARGEST MOON PIE WAS MADE IN MOBILE, ALABAMA, IN 2014. HOW MUCH DID IT WEIGH?**
    - A 74 pounds
    - B 126 pounds
    - C 143 pounds
    - D 154 pounds

Answer key: 1 (C); 2 (B); 3 (C); 4 (D); 5 (C); 6 (C); 7 (B); 8 (B); 9 (A); 10 (D)
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Numbers can lie.

In its 24-10 homecoming win against Mercer this past Saturday, No. 15 Auburn (2-1) finished with a satisfying stat sheet.

Sophomore quarterback Jarrett Stidham completed 32 of 37 passes for 364 yards. His 32 completions are the second-most in a single game in Auburn history. Junior running back Kamryn Pettway rushed for 128 yards on the ground, caught three passes for 32 yards and had three touchdowns on the day. The defense held Mercer to 3.7 yards per play.

But, if you were at Jordan-Hare Stadium, the numbers were deceiving. “(The offense) just looked disjointed at times despite the big numbers at the end,” Auburn beat writer Josh Vitale said. “You look at the stat sheet, and there are things that you say, ‘Oh, that was a good performance, and that was a good performance,’ but at the end of the day, they only led an FCS team by one score in the fourth quarter. They had to really survive to win.”

Vitale, who works for the Opelika-Auburn News, noted Auburn’s troubling turnover margin. The Tigers had four fumbles and an interception, which allowed Mercer to stay in the game. Three of those fumbles were inside the Mercer 30-yard line.

“If Auburn turns those three drives into two field goals and a touchdown even, you’re talking about a blowout instead of a 14-point win,” Vitale said. “Auburn seemed in command the whole game. It just wasn’t as in command as someone might think a team ranked 15th nationally would be in command.”

This Saturday, Auburn has the opportunity to solidify what kind of team it can be this season when it travels to Columbia for the first time since Missouri (1-2, 0-1) entered the SEC. Missouri, meanwhile, is limping into Week 4 after its 35-3 smacking by Purdue this past Saturday. Auburn is favored by 18½ points.

A team that hasn’t scored a touchdown in 103 minutes will face a defense that limited defending national champion and No. 2 Clemson to only 14 points in a 14-6 Week 2 loss.

Auburn coach Gus Malzahn said he thinks his defense is the No. 2 defense in the country in his Tuesday news conference, and Vitale said Auburn’s defense won’t be a problem this year.

Still, though, Malzahn is preparing for
anything, especially with Mis-
souri's Barry Odom taking over
full defensive responsibilities
after firing coordinator DeMon-
tie Cross.

“When you look at Missouri,
 they’ve got playmakers on the
offensive side of the football,”
Malzahn said. “They’ve got a
lot of speed at wide receiver.
They’ve got a quarterback that
can throw it, and they’re very
explosive on the offensive side
of the football. Their defensive
front is disruptive. I think the
biggest thing is trying to predict
how they’re going to play.”

With Auburn's defense locked
up, all eyes will be on the
offensive side of the ball. Even
if Missouri is struggling, it
should provide a tougher test for
Auburn’s offense than an aver-
age FCS team in Mercer. For
Auburn to win, the offense must
find the flow it lacked on the
field this past Saturday.

“There were a lot of plays that
(Stidham) would take the snap,
drop back, and it would look
like a throw should come out in
rhythm, and it just wouldn’t,”
Vitale said. “He would hold it
and move around a little bit
before finding someone. It
wasn’t all on him. The receivers
haven’t really done a great job
of getting open, so they’ll need
to step up. But (Stidham) showed
that he can make the throws
when he has time to throw and
when he has a receiver open.”

Missouri had three sacks in
the Purdue loss and one in the
31-13 loss to South Carolina a
week before. The defensive line
vastly improved from Week 1.
Auburn has shown that it can
be affected by the pass rush
— Clemson had 11 sacks and
dominated Auburn’s offense
— so if Missouri can get to
the quarterback and mobilize
enough strength to stop the run,
it might not get blown out.

“(The pass rush) could slow
Auburn’s offense down enough
where (the) Missouri (offense)
could have a chance to get past
Auburn’s defense,” Vitale said.
“But I think Missouri would
have to keep the game pretty
low-scoring to have a real
chance to get past Auburn’s
defense.”

Auburn needs a confidence
booster after a shaky start to
the season. Missouri needs one
after a horrible start to the sea-
son.

Saturday’s game could give
one of the Tigers some encour-
agement.

“It seems like, on paper, Mis-
souri could absolutely offer
that game,” Vitale said. “It’s the
SEC opener, and it’s against a
defense that’s really struggled
to stop anything.”

Supervising editors are
FAST FIVE
WITH ALBERT OKWUEGBUNAM

1 WHAT IS THE BEST VACATION YOU’VE EVER BEEN ON AND WHY?
“The best vacation I’ve ever been to was summer going into seventh grade; I went to Destin, Florida, and it was just the best vacation. I really enjoyed the beach, and I went deep-sea fishing for the first time. Now, I really love deep-sea fishing.”

2 WHAT’S YOUR BEST MISSOURI FOOTBALL MEMORY?
“Best Missouri football memory. ... Probably my first fall camp and just adjusting to all the work and stress it was on my body and just the whole experience.”

3 WHAT’S YOUR DREAM TOUCHDOWN?
“My dream touchdown is breaking a long one and outrunning all the DBs. That would — will — be the best.”

4 WHAT’S THE MOST EMBARRASSING THING YOU’VE DONE ON A FOOTBALL FIELD?
“Most embarrassing thing was when I sprained my own knee when I was going for a block (during 2017 spring practice) and I completely missed the dude, overextended and completely hyperextended my own knee.”

5 WHAT’S THE CRAZIEST WAY SOMEONE HAS EVER SAID YOUR LAST NAME?
“They pronounced every single letter individually. I also hate it when people pronounce the ‘G,’ because it’s silent, and people always do it. It can be pronounced two ways: ‘Ohk-way-ben-nam’ and ‘Ohk-oo-ay-ben-am.’”

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Missouri tight end Albert Okwuegbunam rushes up the field after catching a pass during the second half of the Tigers’ Sept. 2 game against Missouri State on Faurot Field. JESSI DODGE/Missourian
WELCOME TO
COLUMBIA

BLACK AND GOLD IS JUST THE BEGINNING

When the tailgating is over and the game clock expires, don’t let the fun stop! Time and time again, visitors are delightfully surprised by what Columbia has to offer. From picturesque parks and clever cuisine to amazing art and superb shopping, visitors find that Columbia is ‘surprisingly sophisticated.’

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Missouri linebacker Eric Beisel leaves the field at halftime of Missouri's game against Purdue on Saturday at Memorial Stadium. Purdue defeated Missouri 35-3. JESSI DODGE/Missourian

BEHIND THE RED BEARD, MISSOURI’S SENIOR LINEBACKER IS MORE THAN A TRASH-TALKING JOCK

As Black Sabbath’s “War Pigs” rattled Rockwood Summit High School’s lockers, the one his teammates called Zeus sat upon a fold-up throne.

Zeus sat as a king, not of gods but of boys, each wearing the Falcons’ black and burgundy over their shoulder pads. He prepared to lead his subjects into battle with a bowed head. If there was fear behind Zeus’ red mane, it was suffocated by the confidence that came from his multitude of victories in the past.

Zeus never uttered a word as Ozzy Osbourne screamed lyrics of death and destruction, for he didn’t need to. He exuded energy with each breath, infecting the other 87 players in the room with the same intensity that crackled in his pale blue eyes.

This ritual happened every Friday night before Rockwood Summit’s games. There was no need for a rousing speech from its coach or the wild dancing that takes place in many high school locker rooms. Every player in the room mimicked their leader, sitting in quiet contemplation, trying to figure out the best way to make sure the opponent bowed before them as many others had before.

Hours later, when the Falcons would come back with their uniforms soiled and scratches
covering their helmets, the locker room was a different scene. The screams and guitar riffs from “War Pigs” were replaced by the “HEY ... HEY! HEY! HEY! HEY! HEY! of “Macho Man” by the Village People.

Zeus, leading his comrades off the field as well as on it, would parade around the room. The Falcons would take a brief moment to celebrate before their captain refocused the team on the next foe that stood in their way.

Zeus’ real name is Eric Beisel, and in the years since his reign at Rockwood Summit, the redheaded linebacker has gone from special teams player to an outspoken senior leader for Missouri.

Missouri and Arkansas fans alike discovered Beisel after he purposely mispronounced Arkansas (emphasis on the Kansas) before registering eight total tackles in the Tigers’ 28-24 victory in the 2016 season finale. Beisel later doubled down on his trash talk at SEC Media Days, warning that any team that came to Faurot Field and took Missouri’s snacks and water would be punished to the fullest extent of his power.

This is the character of Zeus, pushing the envelope and attempting to spark his team. His tactics can be brash, infuriating both opposing fans and teams alike.

But, for all of the boisterous claims and lofty expectations of himself laid out in his master plan, Beisel is much more than a loudmouthed jock. The person Beisel truly is lies underneath the calls for retribution that echo around his world.

ERIC THE WORKER

It was impossible not to hear it while near Rockwood Summit’s football practices in the early 2010s.

Every few minutes, the screech of an air horn would sound, signaling to both coaches and players that it was time to change stations. The horn would sound throughout the Falcons’ practices, with players finding themselves more tired after every blast until one final call would ring out to give the players a respite until the next day.

However, the air horns would still have enough life in them for another half hour to sing out their loud notes after most players went home. That didn’t sit well with Beisel, who doesn’t like being outlasted by anything when it comes to perfecting his craft.

“After practice every day, Eric’s like, ‘Hey, coach, can I use that until it dies?’” said Jon Bunyard, Rockwood Summit’s defensive coordinator. “Every day after practice, he would be the only one.”

Beisel would stay, pushing a one-man sled back and forth, until the horn could only let out a whimpers, and he would lie flat on his back, breathing heavily while knowing his work was done.

The same drive that killed many a Rockwood Summit air horn has continued at the Missouri practice fields and facilities. It is not uncommon to find Beisel fitting in an early-morning lift.
Missouri linebacker Eric Beisel hugs cheerleading coach Suzy Thompson during Tiger Walk on Saturday outside of Memorial Stadium before the Tigers’ game against Purdue. JESSI DODGE/Missourian

“HE PUTS IN SO MUCH WORK THAT GOES UNNOTICED. THAT’S SOMETHING THAT I FOUND REALLY ATTRACTION ABOUT HIM, HOW DRIVEN HE WAS AND HOW PASSIONATE HE WAS.”

JENNA HERR
ERIC BEISEL’S GIRLFRIEND

in the Mizzou Athletics Training Complex or running extra sprints while his teammates head for the ice baths after practice.

Beisel's constant training is something his girlfriend, Jenna Herr, was forced to get used to as she started her relationship with the sparkplug from Fenton. Beisel’s rigorous schedule meant the couple wasn’t always able to do things common in relationships.

“During the week, I rarely got to see him until 10 p.m.,” Herr said. “We didn’t ever really get to spend a lot of time together during the week, but you can’t really be upset about it because he is so passionate about it.”

Despite the limits Beisel’s commitments put on their time together, Herr can’t help but admire his drive. It is

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Missouri linebacker Eric Beisel celebrates after the Tigers’ Nov. 25, 2016, win over Arkansas in Columbia. Missouri defeated the Razorbacks 28-24.

LIV PAGGIARINO/Missourian

one of the reasons she has stuck with him for three years. “He puts in so much work that goes unnoticed,” Herr said. “That’s something that I found really attractive about him, how driven he was and how passionate he was.”

Beisel’s incessant need to improve has rubbed off on some of his teammates during his time at Missouri. Offensive lineman Adam Ploudre has been roommates with Beisel since his redshirt sophomore year and often joins Beisel in the weight room.

“We don’t take any days off,” Ploudre said. “When we’re not playing football, we’re either working out or watching film.”

It was Beisel’s work ethic that allowed his persona of Zeus to continue to thrive when he arrived at Missouri. Despite his teammates poking fun at him when he initially referred to himself as the god of the sky, he backed up his name by using the same drive that fueled afternoons spent dragging sleds across fields 118 miles east of Columbia.

“Through all of us putting him down — like, ‘Shut up. You’re not Zeus’ — he would stick to it,” Ploudre said. “It’s funny how he never let it down.”
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ERIC THE ARTIST

In Missouri’s Acting for Non-Majors course, students participate in a project in which each crafts a creative speech about whom he or she really is.

One student in the class stuck out from the others in the fall of 2016, towering over the rest, looking as though he had missed the bus to try out for the role of Tormund Giantsbane in “Game of Thrones.” But Eric Beisel was in his element as he walked toward the front of the class.

After a brief proclamation that he was not just a football player but actually an artist at heart, Beisel sat down at the piano. For the next few minutes, his fingers glided across the keys as he performed a flawless rendition of Five for Fighting’s “100 Years.” His peers got goosebumps, as someone known for brutality that comes from being a middle linebacker stunned them with the delicate touch he placed on each note.

WE WERE SITTING AROUND ONE DAY AND WERE LIKE, ‘WHAT WOULD BE AN AWESOME WAY TO BE REMEMBERED?’ WE SAID, ‘WHAT IF WE FOUND A BIG ROCK AND WE PUSH IT UP A HILL? SOMETHING SYMBOLIC.’

ALEX ARMSTRONG, ERIC BEISEL’S HIGH SCHOOL FRIEND

Eric Beisel’s artistic side led the family to take a cartoon drawing class together when they visited Disney World. The Beisels knew that their son would enjoy learning how to sketch Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck just as much as he would going out into the park and riding the attractions that usually catch the eye of most children.

As he has grown older, Beisel’s interest in the arts has been apparent from the time he was a child. His mother, Cathy Beisel, can remember times where she did a double take after something that came out of her son’s mouth.

“He’s always been a visionary person with his ideas,” Cathy Beisel said. “He was always thinking about what could be.”

Eric Beisel’s artistic side led the family to take a cartoon drawing class together when they visited Disney World. The Beisels knew that their son would enjoy learning how to sketch Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck just as much as he would going out into the park and riding the attractions that usually catch the eye of most children.
repertoire has expanded beyond his ability to draw Walt Disney's creations. He has tried his hand at acting, compositions comic book art and plays the piano, which is usually accompanied by his dog, Tucker, singing along.

The arts allow Beisel to escape for brief moments from his constant football crusade.

"I think when it's just me and him or when it's him or his family, that's an opportunity to be himself and do those sorts of things," Herr said.

Because his life grew more consumed by football as he grew older, Beisel had to find ways to exercise his creativity when he was unable to get himself over the keys or a sketchpad. Now, he designs drafts of a different type for different characters.

"He designs workout programs," Cathy Beisel said. "He's done that for years."

It doesn't matter if the person is looking to bulk up for a sport or trying to lose weight, Eric Beisel takes on all cases of all kinds. He draws on his own experiences (he hasn't consumed soda since he was 9 years old and sticks to a strict diet of rice, chicken and broccoli) to craft specific plans for each person, releasing the creativity that used to come out while drawing characters in the form of calorie monitoring and deadlifts.

Beisel is able to use workout plans as an outlet for his creativity, but his ideas do not come to fruition because he needs to let his mind loose. Rather, friends approach him for help because they know of the trait that can't be hidden from the word by the linebacker's words.

ERIC THE CHARACTER

Before every Rockwood Summit home game, the Falcons walk past a rock.

The rock is the size of a person, weighs several tons and symbolizes the legacy of past players who have made that same walk onto the field. It is not a natural feature of the landscape, seemingly dropped from space and landing in the stadium entranceway like some sort of asteroid.

The rock was not a gift from the heavens. Rather, it was a gift from Zeus and some of his friends.

During their senior year, Beisel and some of his teammates were trying to think of a way to leave their mark on the school and the program. They knew they wanted to do something big but didn't know if one gift could encompass all that they had sacrificed.

"He's not one to leave anybody out. He always wants to be inclusive. From the time he was a little kid, he's been a difference-maker."

CATHY BEISEL, ERIC BEISEL'S MOM

Rockwood Summit's locker room to the stadium. It is something that symbolizes more than just the team's hard work throughout the season. It also symbolizes how much Beisel cares about the community from which he hails and how loyal he is to those who have helped him along the way.

Before he became Zeus, Beisel was Ericter the Character. The name was bestowed upon him by his late grandmother, Marthá Beisel, for how active he was in trying to make sure everyone had a good time with him around.

Ericter the Character is the one who makes goofy faces in all of the Beisel photo books to make sure everybody is laughing and the one who drove his family van around at 5 a.m. to pick up his high school teammates for morning weightlifting.

"He's not one to leave anybody out," Cathy Beisel said. "He always wants to be inclusive. From the time he was a little kid, he's been a difference-maker."

Eric Beisel doesn't mind taking on the extra burden that comes with helping others out or making sure they are able to have the same opportunities he does. Armstrong believes that his empathy for others is the reason he unleashes Zeus on the media and opposing teams. If he can get the focus to be on himself, rather than his teammates, Beisel figures his team has a better chance of coming out on top.

"He's the ultimate team player," Armstrong said. "They aren't game-planning or worried about who's going to cover who. They're worried about kicking Eric's teeth in. To Eric, that's how his teammates can go out and have no extra pressure."

So, although Zeus takes center stage, he would not be able to perform without all of the stagehands working behind the scenes to keep the show going. For without his lightning, Zeus is nothing but a god of air.

Supervising editors are Brooks Holton and Pete Bland: bland@missourian.edu, 882-5729.
Before every Pop Warner football practice, Kaleb Prewett’s youth team ran the “wonder lap,” a quarter mile warm up race. From when Prewett was 8 years old to when he was 10, the conditioning served as a routine dose of competition.

He always finished first.

“It wasn’t so much speed,” his father, Rance Prewett, said. “It was more the will to win.”

Kaleb Prewett did a lot of winning growing up. His football team went undefeated over a multiple-year stretch, and he played in the Pop Warner Super Bowl in Orlando, Florida. Though his team lost the big game, Prewett rushed 50 yards for a touchdown on a quarterback sneak.

Prewett transferred to Missouri from Kansas State before the 2016 season. He has emerged as a starting linebacker for the Tigers, and he is second on the team with 19 tackles. His competitive nature helped him grow from a Pop Warner standout to an impact player in the SEC.

Prewett also played basketball and ran track growing up, but football was always his best sport. As a 5-year-old, he scored five touchdowns in a flag football game. His father was in awe.

“When we got home, I said, ‘You really don’t understand what just happened, but that’s pretty good,’” Rance Prewett said.

Kaleb Prewett was an outgoing youngster around the house and in social settings, his father said, and he had lots of friends. When it came...
Missouri linebacker Kaleb Prewett runs down the field during a youth football game in Orlando, Fla. As a kid, Prewett played in the Pop Warner Super Bowl in Orlando, where he rushed 50 yards for a touchdown on a quarterback sneak. Photo courtesy of RANCE PREWETT

Missouri linebacker Kaleb Prewett walks toward the sideline during this past Saturday’s game against Purdue at Memorial Stadium. JESSI DODGE/Missourian

time for athletics, though, Prewett’s fiercely competitive demeanor stood out. “He’s always been a winner,” his dad said.

Prewett grew up near Kansas City, and he led Blue Springs High School to two state titles in football, earning all-state honors his senior year. He was a top-rated recruit coming out of Blue Springs and a well-regarded member of his community.

“I don’t know that anyone disliked him at all,” Rance Prewett said. “(He was) just one of those good, happy-go-lucky kids.”

As he relaxed at a tailgate before Missouri’s game against Purdue, Rance Prewett smiled when thinking about his son’s childhood stories and success in athletics. His son is happy and healthy, and the competitive fire of his youth is still burning.

“He loves being here,” he said. “He’s in a good place.”

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