

MYSTROM BECOMES A MASTER OF ALL TRADE

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Nick Mystrom began last football season as the kicker and punter for West High. He was destined to swing his foot maybe 10 times a game and otherwise hang out on the sidelines. But injuries hit the West defensive secondary in the second game of the year against Chugiak. Mystrom found himself on the field five minutes before the second half began, watching assistant coach Todd Arndt run pass patterns so the newlydrafted cornerback knew what they looked like.

"I got an interception in the overtime and we won, and I ended up staying," said Mystrom.

Mystrom's responsibilities have continued to grow in West's 31 seasons so far this year. He now plays offense, too, and the senior cornerback wide receiver had his best all-around game last Saturday in a 21-17 last-minute win against Service.

Mystrom caught touchdown passes of 22 and 13 yards, intercepted a pass at his own 1-yard line and went 2-for-2 in passing for 26 yards. One completion was on a fake punt that led to his first score, and the other was on an improvised flea-flicker during the winning drive.

"I've had better days with defense, catching and passing, but not all at once like that," said Mystrom.

Mystrom topped it off with three extra points, doing the kicking job that originally landed him on the varsity.

He leads the league in scoring (34 points), is third in pass receiving (nine catches) and is second in interceptions (four).

Mystrom has gotten a little quicker this year. "Last year I was known as the slowest guy in the secondary," said the 6-foot-2, 170-pounder. But he said his climb up the statistics charts is more intuition than flash.

"I think it mostly comes from playing a lot of sports that emphasize hand-eye coordination, jumping and being at the ball at the right time," said Mystrom.

Mystrom was an all-conference soccer player for West's championship team last season and also played on the Eagles' state championship basketball squad.

Playing on offense has helped his kicking, said Mystrom, who has converted eight of nine extra-point attempts.

"It takes some of the pressure off because this year I'm a little tired and still thinking about the last play when I kick," said Mystrom.

One important fan missing during Mystrom's outstanding game Saturday was his dad, Rick.

"That's the first one in high school he's missed," said Nick.

Rick had a good excuse. As chairman of the Anchorage Organizing Committee, he was in Seoul, Korea, for the final push to try and bring the 1994 Olympic Winter Games to Anchorage.

The elder Mystrom's effort to get the Olympics has been part of Nick's life since the seventh grade.

"People with different accents are calling all the time," said Nick of the international officials who regularly deal with his dad.

The announcement of the 1994 winter site was to be made early this morning Anchorage time.

"I wear a '94 Olympics sweatband during games, so if we don't get it I guess it'll be outdated," said Nick.