

Fort Riley Sports

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America's Warfighting Center

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K-State teams up with Fort Riley making game exciting, successful for community

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Staff Writer

Concealed among the 45,000 plus K-State football fans decked head to toe in every shade of purple lies the camouflaged support of an Army.

Soldiers, military family members and cadets work concessions, provide entertainment and work as security guards during Wildcat home games.

K-State recognized that support Sept. 14, as it hosted K-State/Fort Riley Day. Two military police Humvees and a military ambulance were displayed with soldiers in the tailgate area to interact with fans.

Before kick-off, the Cats opened their third home game with a patriotic pre-game ceremony. Soldiers from Fort Riley's 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor marched onto the field carrying the post's brigade and battalion colors.

Then, as the National Anthem began, 16 soldiers unfurled a huge U.S. Flag that took up one-tenth of the field.

"I think these guys have great honor being that we've been chosen to represent the United States Army, Fort Riley communities and our units and our brigades in front of the civilian crowd who don't see too many Army personnel," said Sgt. Frankie Lopez, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor.

Following pre-game, the soldiers were invited to watch the game against Eastern Illinois, and within two-and-a-half minutes, K-State demonstrated why they are undefeated. Rashad Washington blocked Eastern Illinois' punt return, and Danny Morris recov-

ered it for a three-yard touchdown.

Eastern Illinois rebutted within five minutes, scoring their first touchdown of the game. For the first time this season, the scoreboard read "Visitor's 6." The Wildcats, however, didn't give the Panthers any time to celebrate. Terence Newman caught Eastern Illinois' kick off and returned it for a 95-yard touchdown.

With just over two minutes left on the first quarter clock, the Panthers fought back with their final touchdown of the afternoon, bringing the score to 15-13.

The Wildcats took control of the game during the second quarter as they added 28 uncontested points. As most fans watched with excitement, the north end zone was brimming with nervousness, as local high school band members anxiously awaited their half-time performance.

Junction City High School was among the bands asked to perform with the KSU band during Band Day. Amanda Bomia, a junior at JCHS, is a member of the Color Guard. Bomia, the daughter of 1st Sgt. Rick Bomia, 1st Maintenance Battalion, twirled her flag to "I ain't got nobody" and the KSU fight song.

"She admitted she was nervous to be performing in front of such a large crowd. On the other hand, Band Day veterans and Fort Riley family members, Ashley Wheeler and Geoffry Thomas, felt right at home.

"My first year I didn't really know what was going on because I had never been in a marching band before," said Wheeler. But now, the senior hopes to play for a band in college.

As the bands played through

the rain, hundreds of fans fled to the concession stands stocking up for the second half.

Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Smith, Company B, 70th Engineers, was prepared for the rush of hungry purple people eaters. As a Sgt. Audie Murphy Club member, he

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Amanda Bomia, a Junction City High School Color Guard member, stands in formation on K-State's football field during halftime Sept. 14. Bomia is the daughter of 1st Sgt. Rick Bomia, 1st Maintenance Battalion.



Post-Vanover



Post-Vanover

Fort Riley soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor display the Garrison Flag during pre-game activities on Kansas State University's football field.

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Post-Vanover

K-State's Rashad Washington blocks Eastern Illinois' Tom Schofield's punt, which led to the Wildcat's first touchdown of the day.

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and four others sell sodas, candy, popcorn and peanuts on the west side of the stadium to raise money for their scholarship fund.

"This is a good opportunity to raise money, plus support the K-State football team. It's very successful. For the last two games, we've raised significant money for them (KSU) and we get a percentage of it of course," said Smith.

Although feeding 45,000 plus fans is hard work, Smith said it's also rewarding. "At half time, we all need to be here, but throughout the course of the game a couple get to watch the game. We rotate in and out. It's great! It's football! K-State fans are really supportive."

In addition to being a football fan, Smith also respects K-State for its Green to Gold program. "A lot of soldiers I know have gotten out of the Army, trained and go to K-State to become officers in the Army. That's a great program in itself," he said.

Jason Heaser, a security guard at the game, is participating in the Green to Gold program as an Army ROTC cadet.

The former Fort Riley 331st Signal Company soldier and his fellow cadets run security during

home games to the west tower for the VIPs and press.

"They choose cadets primarily because they know that we're going to be responsible enough and present a good enough appearance," he said. Heaser has worked two of the three home games and enjoys the interaction with the VIPs.

"Ironically enough, at the Louisiana Monroe game I got to speak to my battalion commander from Fort Riley, and Lt. Gen. Seitz has a suite on the third or second floor, and he comes in and chats with us a lot," he said.

Heaser now senses the community's appreciation for the military, and recognizes the common bond the communities share. "A lot of them really appreciate what the Fort Riley community is doing for Manhattan and K-State," he said from the dry press box.

Back on the saturated field, cheerleaders belly surfed across the turf and students, most without raincoats, rattled their keys and bounced to the Wabash Cannonball as K-State rained victorious. Willie the Wildcat ended the game in military style, doing 63 pushups for each point scored by K-State, bringing their record to 3-0.