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# KEYPORT

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## Badger stars are strangers

Wisconsin's Allen, Davis cheer for one another despite having never met

**By Jim Polzin**  
The Wisconsin State Journal

They are two of the hottest names in University of Wisconsin athletics right now, homegrown stars who share plenty in common as they navigate stardom at a young age.

But what you may be surprised to learn about Braelon Allen and Johnny Davis is they've never met. Allen knows of Davis, and Davis knows of Allen, but not once have the freshman tailback on the football team and the sophomore wing on the men's basketball team shared a conversation or even crossed paths on campus.

"If I were to see him around," Davis said, "I'd definitely say what's up to him."

Prior to even knowing whether or not they knew one another, were good friends or something in between, I considered trying to arrange for Davis and Allen to sit down for a dual interview because having them in the same room could have sparked an interesting discussion. Alas, the combination of the football team's Las Vegas Bowl preparations/travel schedule and the ongoing pandemic complicating the men's basketball schedule made that possibility unrealistic.

Besides, it may have ended up being an awkward setting for a first meeting between Allen and Davis, neither of whom seems particularly outgoing. That's not a knock, it's just something I've noticed during my limited interactions with the two. Both are serious and don't waste words while answering questions. Not unhelpful, by any means, just direct and, for the most part, expressionless.

"Down to business," Davis said, "That's all it's about."

Fair enough, and both have done plenty of business since arriving on campus.

Davis is in the midst of a breakthrough second season with the No. 24 Badgers (9-2), who are scheduled to host Illinois State on Wednesday night after having a game canceled last week due to COVID-19 protocols. He leads the team with 20.9 points, 6.1 rebounds, 2.3 assists and 1.6 steals per game, putting himself on the radar of NBA scouts in the process.

Allen has rushed for 1,109 yards and 12 touchdowns as a true freshman for UW (8-4), which was scheduled to end its season on Thursday, Dec. 30, against Arizona State (8-4) at Allegiant Stadium in

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Mark Hoffman / USA Today Sports  
Badgers running back Braelon Allen (0) runs into the end zone to score a touchdown during the second quarter of their game against Northwestern on Nov. 13 at Camp Randall Stadium in Madison, Wisconsin.



Tim Fuller / USA Today Sports  
Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Greg Jennings celebrates his touchdown during a Dec. 14, 2014, game against the Detroit Lions at Ford Field.

## Jennings the answer to Rodgers' 'trivia question'

Jennings caught Rodgers' first NFL TD pass, before they drifted apart

**By Chris Tomasson**  
St. Paul Pioneer Press

In the final minute of the first half on Thursday Night Football on Nov. 29, 2007, Green Bay receiver Greg Jennings caught the first NFL touchdown pass from a backup quarterback. It didn't look like much back then since the 11-yard score simply cut the deficit to 27-17 in a game the Packers would lose 37-27 to Dallas at Texas Stadium.

But it looks significant now. That backup quarterback was Aaron Rodgers, who was then in his third season with the Packers and saw his first significant action in that game when ironman starter Brett Favre was knocked out early in the second quarter with an arm injury. All Rodgers has done since then was add 444 more touchdown passes to get to 445. And when he threw his 443rd in last Saturday's 24-22 victory over Cleveland, he broke Favre's team record of 442.

"It's definitely a trivia question," Jennings said of catching Rodgers' first touchdown pass. "It was a big deal for him but it wasn't a big deal for me then because all of that season I had big touchdown catches from Brett Favre. So, when it was Aaron's first, shoot, we're losing. It never dawned on me like, 'Shoot, that was his first touchdown pass.'"

Jennings played in the NFL from 2006-15, including with the Packers from 2006-12 and with the Vikings from 2013-14.

He was watching with interest from his Edina home when Rodgers broke Favre's mark.

"I thought it was just a special moment," Jennings said. "It was a sign of his durability, his consistency and just pure elitism. I was reminded of all he's been through, from taking over from Brett and the first time he stepped on the field at our Family Night, our first scrimmage at Lambeau Field in training camp (in 2008), he was greeted by a barrage of boos. And to see him turn into what he has is just a true testament to his ability to stick to a plan and be great."

After Favre started 253 consecutive games for the Packers, retired (very) briefly, then moved on to the New York Jets in 2008 and the Vikings in 2009 and 2010. Rodgers made his first career start in the opening game of the 2008 season, when he led the Packers to a 24-19 win over the Vikings at Lambeau Field.

On Sunday night at Lambeau Field, Rodgers, 38, will make his 205th career start — and his 26th against the Vikings. Jennings is amazed at how far he has come.

"It's cool to see what his career has turned into, obviously a first-ballot hall of famer, and for me to have jump-started his touchdown-throwing barrage, it's something that my kids enjoy," said Jennings, who has four children, ranging in age from 9 to 14. "They love it." Jennings is also the answer to

another trivia question involving Rodgers. He caught his first career playoff touchdown pass, a 6-yard grab in a 51-45 overtime loss at Arizona on Jan. 10, 2010. And he caught two touchdown passes from Rodgers in Super Bowl XLV, a 31-25 Packers win over Pittsburgh on Feb. 6, 2011.

These days, Jennings no longer has a good relationship with Rodgers. In 2013, after he signed a five-year, \$47.5 million contract with the Vikings as a free agent, Jennings made some negative comments about Rodgers, and the quarterback seemingly hasn't forgotten.

"We don't text, we don't communicate like that," Jennings said. "We haven't had an official sit down, like bring it all in for a hug, since I left Green Bay. ... We had a great relationship (in Green Bay)... Our relationship now has been non-existent. I tried to reach out to refurbish it but haven't had any success. The acceptance from his side has just not been there."

Jennings was critical in 2013 of Rodgers' leadership, saying he sought the spotlight and wasn't an ideal team player. He said he was upset at the time because he believed the quarterback was not "in my corner" about wanting him to remain with the Packers. In response, Rodgers told Sports Illustrated in 2013 that "people taking shots at me who aren't relevant to this team and to this locker room doesn't mean a whole lot to me."

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## Going for 2 gold medals

**By Brandon Veale**  
Duluth News Tribune

EVELETH — John Shuster and his United States men's Olympic curling team flew home from Korea in 2018 as an unexpected success story of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics.

In a few weeks, they'll fly west again to defend their Olympic title. They won't be under the curling world's radar anymore at the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, but they're mostly the same on and off the ice.

At a Media Day for the Olympic curling teams Dec. 15 at Curl Mesabi, Shuster, a Chisholm native who lives in Superior, said though there have been some speaking engagements

and a recent guest appearance on "The Voice" for the team, he believes the pressure is actually reduced.

"I actually think it's probably less for me, because we have Olympic champions by our name, I think the pressure is kind of off. We don't need to go win a gold medal for me to be an Olympic champion for the rest of my life, so I think I'm actually viewing it as exactly the opposite. I think there's maybe less pressure because we've actually accomplished that. It's more, for me, excitement to go after it and try to accomplish it again," he said.

Shuster, second Matt Hamilton (McFarland, Wisconsin) and lead John Landsteiner

(Duluth) are returning for a shot at a second gold medal. Chris Plys (Duluth) joined the team at the third position after Tyler George stepped away from elite curling after the 2017-18 season. Colin Huffman serves as alternate.

Even though the roster is slightly different, the personalities still match what fans saw in the middle of the night from Korea. The burly, mustachioed Hamilton has added a "man-bun" under his flat-billed baseball cap and remains the team's "hype man."

"I'm also kind of like the team cheerleader-slash-clown, so to speak. I just kind of keep the guys loose, keep it energetic,

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Jed Carlson / Superior Telegram  
U.S. Olympic curler John Shuster, of Superior, throws a rock during the media day event at Curl Mesabi in Eveleth on Dec. 15.