

Senior Josh Bristow is living a story for the ages, stuck in a war between two worlds: one on the 50-yard line; the other, center stage.

“Dance is the biggest change [to my high school life] without a doubt,” Josh said. “Before [dance], I got involved in all these science- oriented things, and I lost a passion for [science].”

He said he found himself asking, “What am I going to do?”

It was at that point that Josh discovered *The Wiz* (a theatrical version of *The Wizard of Oz*). The rest is history.

“I auditioned for *The Wiz* my [sophomore] year in high school, and I got the lead role as the Cowardly Lion,” Josh said. “During the first rehearsal for dance I was really struggling with it and I asked [dance instructor Ginny] Haynes, ‘Hey so what can I do to get better?’ and she said, ‘Take my class.’”

And that was the start of what Josh now describes as his “passion.”

But there was just one problem: Josh was still on the varsity football team.

That issue became a bigger and bigger problem the more Josh missed football practice to go to dance rehearsals. His absences caught notice of varsity head coach Tom Knotts.

“I had a meeting with coach Knotts and he said, ‘Well if you don't come to conditioning today then you are off the team,’” Josh said, “and I didn't go.”

After Josh’s resignation from the team, he decided that telling his parents would be catastrophic.

His dad breathed football.

“[My dad] would come to every single game; he would be there early [and] stay late,” Josh said. “He would stop at the drop of a hat and leave his job and do everything to make sure that I had what I needed to be successful in football.”

However, his family's passion for Josh's new hobby was less-than-stellar.

“I didn't see [my dad] at *The Wiz* until the last night because I made him go. I didn't see him at the dance concert until the last night because I made him go,” Josh said. “You could tell that because I was not doing what he wanted me to...the relationship was definitely different.”

Haynes was there to guide Josh through those now-strenuous times with his family.

“The special thing about Josh is that he is already an amazing person,” Haynes said. “Give him something that he is passionate about or has an interest in and his work ethic and drive is nothing short of incredible. It is something I wish for all of my students.”

Josh credits Haynes with a significant portion of his success on and off the stage.

“[Haynes] is the best person I've ever known. She is the one that knew all of this information right as it happened to me. She was my confidant; she was the one that helped me through it,” Josh said. “If it wasn't for her, I don't know where I'd be.”

Two years later, Josh reflects back on that transitional period between the field and the stage.

“[It was] really difficult because the thing that I didn't like was taking me away from the thing that I loved,” Josh said. “[Now] I would say I'm very happy, and my dad and I are better than ever. I'm loving my dance experiences whether in school or out of it.”

Although Josh dances competitively for the Dance Department, he said nothing quite compares to acting. Josh is currently the head of the Drama club, and has been in two school musicals just this year.

“[Josh] fills up the stage space and you can’t take your eyes off of him,” Haynes said. “He belongs in the spotlight and the spotlight adores him.”

And being in the spotlight is where Josh feels he was meant to be.

“When I’m on the stage my goal is to touch someone through my performance,” Josh said. “If not, that’s OK, but I know for a fact that I am going to do the best to my ability, to go out there and touch someone's life with my performance. That’s much better than any touchdown.”