

The Magazine of the Mizzou Alumni Association

MIZZOU

Thunderstruck

Mizzou tight end Sean Culkin is a musician, missionary and Norse god of thunder.



Sean Culkin, a sophomore tight end from Indian Rocks Beach, Florida, is an imposing force for the Tigers' offense.

Story by Marcus Wilkins

Photos courtesy of Mizzou Athletics

Published Oct. 2, 2014

If you are standing nearby when the 6-foot-6-inch, 245-pound tight end Sean Culkin crashes to the ground after snaring a reception,

brace yourself for a quake and rumble. Like Chris Hemsworth's Thor, the Hollywood hero to whom Culkin bears a striking resemblance, the Mizzou sophomore overwhelms opponents by commanding the elements — namely solid route-running, fundamentally sound blocking and reliable hands.

Tight end, once a position of prominence in Coach Gary Pinkel's offenses when occupied by All-Americans Martin Rucker (St. Joseph, Missouri), BS '07; Chase Coffman (Peculiar, Missouri), BS '08; and Michael Egnew (Plainview, Texas), BS '12; has drifted from the limelight lately at Mizzou. Culkin, an increasingly frequent target for sophomore quarterback Maty Mauk (Kenton, Ohio), is trying to put it back on the marquee.

“I was going to play basketball in college even up to my senior year in high school,” says Culkin (Indian Rocks Beach, Florida), who chose the Missouri football family over midmajor basketball programs at Liberty (Virginia), Davidson (North Carolina) and Sam Houston State (Texas). “Mizzou made it clear they wanted me, and I love how close the teammates are here. I've gotten into a lot of new stuff. Last year, I killed my first buck, and I recently bought a bow.”



Culkin, who could practically be actor Chris Hemsworth's stunt double, is frequently called Thor by family and friends.

Add hunting to Culkin's hobby list along with fishing, his pastime of choice back home. He's also a musician (guitar and piano) and man of faith whose missions have taken him to Nicaragua; El Salvador; and Tuscaloosa, Alabama, after the 2011 tornado. The trips included running a children's camp in Nicaragua, cleaning up debris in Alabama and door-to-door evangelism in El Salvador.

Despite his trademark golden locks and brief turn as a young "rock star" — he and a couple sixth-grade buddies once covered Switchfoot's "Meant to Live" and Green Day's "Wake Me Up When September Ends" at a birthday party — the football field is his stage of choice.

"We performed plays for the whole town in El Salvador, and I got to speak in front of 500 or 600 people," Culkin says. "Not really my thing."

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Published by MIZZOU magazine, 109 Reynolds Alumni Center, Columbia, MO 65211 | Phone:
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