

# UNLV center passed on familiarity of UH

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UNLV football player Leif Fautanu is one of more than 50,000 Hawaii transplants living in Las Vegas.

But unlike the others, Fautanu was the unlikely one who went away.

Uncles Joe Onosai and Ed Ripley were University of Hawaii football players. His mother, Roselyn Fautanu — famously known as Roz Ripley — was a standout volleyball player at Hawaii Hilo. Fautanu, like his uncles

and mother, attended UH Lab School, a crosswalk away from UH's Manoa campus.

As a multiple-sport athlete, Fautanu practiced with his high school basketball and volleyball teams at Klum Gym and UH's Gyms I and II.

"I used to run around the track (at the Ching Complex) because our PE teacher made us run a mile over there," Fautanu said. "I was very familiar with the UH campus. I definitely saw UH every single day."



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**Leif Fautanu:**  
*Practiced at Klum Gym while attending UH Lab School*

But when it came to choosing a football scholarship, UNLV's offer and opportunity proved to be the best fit. Fautanu also wanted to experience a change.

"He wanted to live off on his own, regardless if it was the 'Ninth Island,'" his mother said.

Fautanu said: "There are so many locals out here. I had no clue this was called the 'Ninth Island.' There are a lot of locals everywhere you go, especially in the hotels. I bump into them, and they're like, 'Oh, are you

from Hawaii?' They're like, 'Me, too. I moved here last year.' The culture didn't really change coming here. I feel I'm at home but not at home."

Fautanu has found his place as UNLV's center, a starting role in which he makes the blocking calls and works in sync with quarterback Doug Brumfield and co-offensive coordinators TJ Woods and Nick Holz.

"Being a center in this offense is not an easy task,"

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# UNLV

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said Fautanu, who is on the Polynesian Football Hall of Fame's watch list for college player of the year. "But it's definitely good if you know your stuff."

In 623 snaps this year, Fautanu has not allowed a sack.

Fautanu is looking forward to a family reunion when UNLV travels to Hawaii for Saturday's Mountain West game at the Ching Complex.

Fautanu is one of six siblings in a loving but competitive family.

"I feel that's where I get my competitive nature, growing up in a household of, 'No, I'm first,' or 'I go first,'" Fautanu said.

Family rules sparked him to become a skilled cook.

"If you make the food," he said, "you get to go first."

Growing up in Kunia, the siblings played H-OR-S-E and 3-on-3 basketball at the neighborhood park. "It was really competitive," he recalled. "Everything was a

game to us. Just going to the car first, sitting in the front seat, stuff like that."

Calling "shotgun" did not reserve the front passenger's seat in his mother's Toyota Sienna.

"You had to be there 10 minutes before we actually leave the house," Fautanu recalled. "Just waiting by the front door of the car before my parents got to the car and unlocked the door."

Fautanu and two sisters had to wake up at 5 each morning to catch a ride to school with their father, who worked for the Army at Diamond Head. We'd try to beat the traffic in the HOV," Fautanu said.

Fautanu said he enjoyed living in Hawaii, and also has adapted to the mainland. He has a routine after attending church where he visits a store that sells palusami and taro.

Fautanu is named after his father, who was named after Norse explorer Leif Erikson. Asked if that meant the family followed the Minnesota Vikings, Roselyn Fautanu said, laughing, "No we're Raiders fans."