

Former UNO, NFL football star topic of new locally produced film

RYAN RAKOWSKY

STAFF WRITER

Who was the first black man to start as an NFL quarterback? Don't know? That would be Omaha's own Marlin Briscoe.

Omaha is also the hometown of film and television actor John Beasley, who is set to star in a film based on Briscoe's life story titled *Third and Long*, to be shot (where else?) right here in Omaha.

Briscoe grew up in an era of segregation and racial tension. He dreamed of being a star football player but was told it would never happen, which makes it even more important to Briscoe that his story be told.

"At that time, blacks and whites had a lot of racial disharmony," Briscoe said.

Third and Long, a production of West Omaha Films, will reenact Briscoe's life and his career, which wasn't always a pleasant picture. After attending Omaha South High School and the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Briscoe rose in the ranks of the Denver Broncos to be named the team's

starting quarterback in 1968. In his first year as quarterback he completed 14 touchdown passes, a record that no other rookie has yet surpassed. Briscoe would later go on to play for the Buffalo Bills and the Miami Dolphins.

Briscoe's life took a turn for the worse after he was finished with football. He became addicted to drugs, a struggle that eventually landed him behind bars.

Today, he is a mentor to young people in Los Angeles. He teaches them about the dangers of drugs and the route to overcoming adversity, among other lessons.

Warren Moon, a 2006 Hall of Fame inductee, pointed out the value of Briscoe's athletic accomplishments.

"If any African-American quarterback had any doubts and saw Marlin out there playing, he saw the possibility of getting that same opportunity," Moon said.

Third and Long isn't the first time Briscoe and Beasley have worked together. The two played college football together and have been friends for years.

Beasley is best known for his recent stint

See **BIOGRAPHICAL**: Page 8



Marlin Briscoe.

From **BIOGRAPHICAL**: Page 6

on the WB's "Everwood" as Irv Harper and roles in Hollywood films like *The Sum of All Fears*, starring Ben Affleck and Morgan Freeman.

Beasley said the film represents a "great

opportunity" for Omaha and showcasing the city is a priority for the film.

"One of our objectives is to promote Omaha, its people and the great things that come out of this city."