

# MARTLET



The University of Victoria's  
 Independent Newspaper

2007-11-29  
 Volume 60 No. 16

The University of Victoria's Independent Newspaper | [www.martlet.ca](http://www.martlet.ca)

## This Issue

News  
 Opinions  
 Feature  
 Living  
 Sports

## Archives

Download latest CUPcast

## Search:

Advanced search

We're Hiring!  
 Contact Us  
 Unarchived Issues  
 Advertising Rates

Statement of Purpose  
 Submission Guidelines  
 Writing/Style Resources

## Friday Night Lights star has B.C. roots

by David Karp

Taylor Kitsch was living the Canadian dream. The B.C. boy, who grew up in Kelowna, Port Moody and Anmore, was playing junior hockey for the Langley Hornets and hoped to go pro some day.

That was before the 20-year-old left-winger busted his knee in a game against Coquitlam.

"I was going to hit a guy, and he moved out of the way. He didn't want to take the hit," said Kitsch. "I stopped on a dime and my knee caught an edge in a little rut in the ice. My knee went forward and my skates didn't move."

Now, the 26-year-old Kitsch is living out an American dream on television. He plays Tim Riggins, a high school football player from small-town Texas on Friday Night Lights. But in real life, Kitsch didn't like football much.

"I remember going to one practice at my high school and then just quitting after that," said Kitsch. "I just wasn't into it."

Kitsch's route to prime-time television was an unlikely one. With a torn ligament and a shattered hockey dream, Kitsch moved in with his brother at the University of Lethbridge and spent a year taking nutrition and economics courses.



*Photo Courtesy Paul Drinkwater / NBC*  
 Taylor Kitsch, 26, plays the town's bad boy wide receiver in the fictive Dillon, Texas.

Meanwhile, his mother sent his photos to an agency and landed him a modelling gig in New York with Diesel, a clothing company.

Kitsch dropped out of university and decided to take up acting. There was one problem, however — his contract with Diesel only lasted one week.

“I didn’t work for 10 months after that. So I was living in [everything from] a subway, to a walk-in closet, to anywhere,” Kitsch said. “I lived in Spanish Harlem with no electricity and my best-friend’s girlfriend’s blow-up mattress was my bed. I don’t know how I did any of that shit. I don’t even know the mindset that you’re in. You just do it.”

Kitsch took acting lessons while in the Big Apple. “I was going to class free because I simply didn’t have the money,” he said. “After I got Friday Night Lights, I paid [my acting coach] a good chunk of change — what I owed her — and that was a good feeling.”

His newly-acquired acting skills landed him small roles at first. He had a bit-part in John Tucker Must Die and fell victim to an reptilian death while joining the mile-high club in Snakes On a Plane. Eventually, he landed the role of Riggins in the first season of Friday Night Lights in October 2006.

The show, now in its second season, focuses on the Dillon Panthers, a high school football team in the fictional town of Dillon, Texas. Riggins, the strong, silent type, is one of the team’s receivers — at least he was before he got cut for skipping practices and boozing.

Riggins is the town’s bad boy, going through drama last season when he slept with his best friend’s girlfriend while his friend was in the hospital, paralyzed from the waist down. But Kitsch thinks everyone, including himself, can identify with the character.

“I really do think anyone can relate to this guy in regards to how he internalizes certain things,” Kitsch said. “Maybe not to the degree of Riggins, but everyone I know, or come across in my life, has some kind of vice or hasn’t dealt with something that has shaped who they are.”

Last season, Riggins tried to reconnect with his absent father, something Kitsch identifies with first-hand.

“The father figure — lack thereof — I can relate to,” he said. “I had my older brothers to lean on and I had a guardian who was really influential in terms of a lot of characteristics I have now. But more or less he was in and out of my life.”

The role has helped Kitsch deal with other issues in his life he would have otherwise ignored.

“You dig inside to parts of you that maybe you wouldn’t dig into doing any other job. It’s such a self-exploration,” he said. “You try and break Riggins down to understand how he would deal with certain circumstances; you’re just making these unconscious decisions and they come out, and it’s like ‘Holy shit, that right there is something I can look at too.’ ”

Acting helped Kitsch cope with a tough break-up, which was on his mind while shooting the upcoming movie Gospel Hill during the

summer.

“I was in such a fucked-up mindset that I don’t even remember half the scenes I did on Gospel Hill,” he said. “Being in Gospel Hill let me escape from the bullshit of the break-up for at least that time being. Because if you get a lot of spare time, it just eats you.”

On Friday Night Lights, the show's writers give Kitsch a lot of freedom to explore himself through his character.

"Fifty per cent of what I say is improv — maybe more," said Kitsch. "That's the freedom we have. We don't rehearse."

Living in Austin, Texas eight months a year to film the show and living the on-screen life of a small-town Texan may seem challenging for a former B.C. hockey player, but Kitsch said he's starting to feel at home.

"Austin is kind of like Vancouver. It's not like any city in Texas," he said. "It's very liberal; it's very free. The people are great, and they're genuine people."

People are starting to take note of the show in Texas, but it's taking time to catch on in Canada.

"No one really knows who I am in Vancouver — last time I was there, anyways. I guess we'll see in December when I get back home," said Kitsch, who hasn't been home since May.

And while Kitsch misses his family and friends, he's loving every minute of his time on Friday Night Lights.

"I've played two tools in a row. I've played a kid from South Carolina [in Gospel Hill] and then a kid from Dillon, Texas, a small butt-fuck town," said Kitsch. "But it's funny, man. It's nuts how life plays itself out."