



Honoring the Past to Inspire the Future

Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation
Newsletter — November 2005

Raters prep sports' lightning rods

Fans' gifts part of Nebraska high school sports lore, memorabilia

By Conde Sargent

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Half a football's probably not worth much on eBay, but I've been hanging onto one for almost 30 years. And it's not for sale.

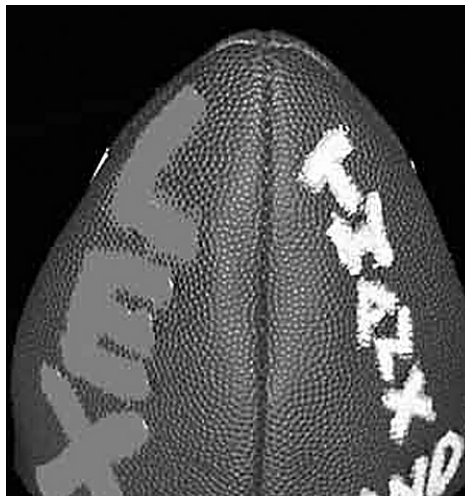
The only place it's going outside of my computer room is into the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame, when the organization eventually gets a museum in which to display some much more meaningful mementos from high school sports' past.

This old football sliced through the center is offered as a Hall of Fame keepsake to illustrate some of the mostly good-natured exchanges between newspaper prep raters and their critics down through the years.

This one came to me from the 1970 football team at Lexington High School, not too long after the season ended. Lexington, you see, shared No. 1 in the final Top Ten standings in Class B football in that pre-football playoffs year with another powerhouse team, Pius X of Lincoln.

Somebody in Lex, perhaps someone who worked in the Athletic Director's office, thought up the "give-him-half-a-gift" idea if he's just going to give us half a state championship. There was a sneaky presentation and the folks in orange and black were snickering, but, undoubtedly, still fuming a little THAT someone could really believe another team was as good that year as the Minutemen. It said merely, "Thanx, Conde. Lex".

That wasn't the most unique present ever made of a prep rater. I believe The World-Herald's



Half a championship nets half a football for former Omaha World-Herald prep rater Conde Sargent.

Gregg McBride received that one back in the late 1940s when his ratings never quite came up to the expected standards from Seward basketball fans. So they grabbed up an old typewriter and sawed off all the keys except S-E-W-A-R-D. They sent it along to McBride with a note: "Now every story you write and every Top Ten you make will have to start with Seward."

It is my understanding this typewriter is stored at the World-Herald and hopefully will be donated

(Conde Sargent is a member of the Hall School Hall of Fame board of directors, former sportswriter, 20-year Nebraska School Activities Association executive, a die-hard high school sports fan retired in Taylors, South Carolina, with his wife, Sue.

to the Hall of Fame at an appropriate time, when we are able to assemble the finances to have a building where we can call home and start to put together some of these 'keepers.'

I've put all the call out for additional memorabilia to two other members of The World-Herald's family of Prep Raters, Larry Porter and Stu Pospisil. Times have changed from the McBride days, but I'm counting on them to make a contribution from their days of ranking teams and facing the consequences.

If nothing else, we put on display the letter jacket that Creighton Prep presented Pospisil. (Just kidding..... anybody who's ever published a Top 10 and deservedly included the Junior Bluejays has caught it from all corners — about being a Prep graduate, being Catholic, needing to go to confession, getting 5 per cent of bingo receipts, having a Prep letter jacket, etc., etc., etc.)

I'm sure there were any number of banners we could display from the state basketball tournament that said "Gregg Who?, Conde Who?, Larry Who?, Stu Who?, Rly Jane Who?. Mine

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Lifelong friendship most valuable prize for prep rater

An Old Typewriter: \$25
An Old Football \$10
A Warm Friendship: Priceless

Times were changing by the time Larry Porter took over the prep beat. No altered typewriters, not so many tangible exchanges between prep raters and his fans. (Well, there was the No. 2 final Top 10 ratings certificate that was mailed

back to him by the head coach.)

But he does have a touching memory about those days, one that makes the rest of us envious.

"I did get a warm friendship as the result of being a prep rater. Tom Ash and I were hunting geese with a guy who lived in a house overlooking Lake McConaughy. The guy's hunting partner was named Royston Mayer, and he

lived in Grant.

"We woke up early the morning of the hunt, 4 a.m. or so, and the telephone rang as we were eating breakfast. Royston was on the phone, and he just wanted to talk about the goose migration that was taking place. "I'll bet you can't guess who I've got with me right now," the guy said. "Tom Ash and Larry Porter. Yeah, the World-

Herald guys. Sure, he's right here."

"The guy handed the phone to me and said that Royston Mayer wanted to talk to me. I had never met him. Hadn't ever talked to him. But I got kind of puffed up because he wanted to talk to me. That didn't last long. I said hello, and Royston called me a string of names, then

See ♦ RATER, page 3

Members of the Nebraska High School Hall of Fame Foundation Board of Directors gather before September's induction ceremony. Board members are: (front row, from left) Bob Whitehouse, Roger Neujahr, Steve Shanahan, Wally McNaught, Jo Dustako, Aldie Johnson, Buck Mahoney and Dan Moore; (second row) Dick Beechner, Ken Fischer, Sue Wilcoxson, Jim Paige, Nancy Becker and Jerry Stine; (third row) Al Papik, Bob Jensen, Jack Guggenmos, Del Shoenfish and Duane Haith; and (back row) Pat Salerno, Ray Ehlers, Britt Ehlers, Randy Cordes, Dennis Smith and Buck Edwards.



Meet the officers:

The Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation elected new officers at the September meeting prior to the induction ceremony. The new officers are:

Wally McNaught

President

Born: On a farm west on Polk.

High School: Polk, 1951

Currently: Retired, living outside Lincoln.

Age: 72.

Why believe in prep sports?

Sports activities make a major contribution to the mission of educating young people. Sports experiences mirror life experiences and provide for personal growth. The classroom is a field, gym, track or pool. The coach is the instructor. He/she can expose students to the rewards of industry, skill development, sense of self worth, benefits of teamwork, goal-setting and the motivation to succeed. Someone once said that it is not what Johnny does with a basketball, but what basketball does to Johnny.

Your "Great Moment" In High School Athletics?

"I will not hazard a guess as to the most significant achievement. Two events do jump out at me when I was asked to think about it — (1) The 100-yard dash in Hastings in 1961 when (Kent) McCloughan, (Bobby) Williams, (Steve) Regan, (Tom) Millsap and a young man named (Doug) MacArthur all ran 10 seconds or better, and (2) one that I personally saw was the state long jump in 1961 when Gale Sayers, on his last jump, beat Bobby Williams with a distance (24-10½) that was the best high school jump in the nation that year."

Steve Shanahan

Vice President

Hometown: Omaha

High School: Omaha Benson

Currently: Superintendent, Blair Community Schools (since 2001).

Age: 55

Why support high school sports/activities?

"I have seen young person after young person become ... not only a better student, but a better person because of their involvement in high school activities. This lays the foundation for later life. The character traits of hard work, ethics, dedication,

commitment, grace in defeat and dignity in winning are all what help to make successful adults. There is no better place than high school activities to teach this.

The most significant happening in high school sports history?

"It is not about which particular event is important to me, but it is really about which event is important to the participants and the spectators. There are many, and there should be!"

Nancy Becker

Secretary

Hometown: Crete

High School: Crete High School

Currently: Principal at North Star High School in Lincoln.

What has led you to believe in high school sports (activities) and the Hall of Fame?

Seeing the important athletics plays in student's lives has made me a true believer. The leadership skills students learn on the court and field are truly amazing!

What is the single, most important achievement in Nebraska High School Sports? When I grew up in Crete, girls were not allowed to participate in sports, so Title IX was a huge event for the young women in Nebraska.

Dennis Smith

Treasurer

Hometown: Cherokee, Iowa

High School: Washington High School, Cherokee, Iowa

Currently: Retired from education in 2000 after 38 years, lives in Papillion.

Age: 65.

Why have a Hall of Fame?

"It is the way of preserving the past in athletic achievement. Nebraska has had many outstanding athletes, coaches, officials, athletic administrators and contributors. We never want to forget all that they have accomplished and all that they did."

Great achievements in sports?

"The Wahoo-Lincoln Pius boys state championship basketball game in 1989. Wahoo was

down by six points with 11 seconds to go, they made a three and then stole the ball and made another three at the end of game and went on to win, in overtime the state championship, 68-66, and they went on to win 114 straight games. Another achievement that needs to be mentioned is the boys golf teams of Oakland-Craig, under the coaching of Harold "Swede" Hawkins. They won 11 straight state championships."

Bob Whitehouse

Past President

Hometown: Bellevue

High School: Bellevue 1962

Currently: Retired educator, candidate for University of Nebraska Board of Regents, residing in Papillion.

Age: 61.

Why do you believe in prep sports?

"It's about more than the competition. The life-long bonds that are developed because of the spirit of the game are worth more than any of the immediate competitors will know. It's only later that we can look back together and appreciate the dog days of practice, the fun of competition, and the joy of winning that special race, game or event. The adults must believe, too, or we wouldn't have life-long coaches, proud parents and grandparents who travel to communities, and states in pursuit of that memorable victory. With all the negative factors that are out there, the sporting event itself takes center stage in the eyes of each participant. What a way to get away from the troubles of the world. As they say, High School Athletics — it's the Best Game in Town! I do believe it."

Greatest high school Performances?

"I'm leaning toward the last state track meet (2005) — the lad from Bellevue East, Robert Rands, breaks a 40-year mark ranks high with me. It's hard not to compare the 1961 meet with Kent McCloughan, Bobby Williams doing their thing in competition. The 1960 Omaha South basketball has to rank in there someplace. I'm betting last year's Millard North football team will be honored 25 years from now (as a Silver Anniversary team)."

● GIFTS

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came from a Grant team. You know what, fun-loving Grant folks might have done that for each and every one of us. I know McBride was invited to a banquet in Grant once after he had picked someone else to win and he was served instead of steak and potatoes a plate of a real (but dead) crow, with all the trimmings.

That crow wasn't saved for posterity. But here's something we have: A ton of scrapbooks from Hall of Famer Bill Madden's newspaper career at Hastings and Scottsbluff. These days, records are saved to disk and called up any time you wish on your computer. In the days gone by, Bill Madden (and McBride, too, for that matter) clipped their stories on the preps and pasted them in notebooks. They wrote a lot. They did a lot of clipping. They needed a lot of paste. They did this sports after sport, year after year. And they wrote for many, many years. Who was No. 1 in the third week of the 1953 season? Find the scrapbook on the shelf, flip back through the ratings book until you find it. Nowadays, you get on the computer and click on file in question and bingo, you have it.

The Madden family's gift will make good reading once we come up with a "Preps and the Press" corner.

We need to be thinking about other significant items to go in this Hall of Fame museum, even if the building itself is still in the dream stage. I hope the Hall's board of directors will contact each person who has been inducted into the Hall to think about this and figure out something they could contribute, and give us one

comment about their "greatest high school sports memory" or "as I look back, what high school sports has meant to me."

We have nice, shiny plaques on all these honorees. Wouldn't it be great to also have something personal along with the official piece of hardware, a uniform, a clipping, a picture, a program, anything?

I always wished I had the handkerchief Coach Frank Smagacz tossed in the sand of the long jump pit at the University of Nebraska's indoor track arena as an incentive to Gale Sayers when Sayers made that historic 24-10 1/2 long jump in the 1961 state meet, an achievement that stood the test of all jumpers until Robert Rands' 25-1/4 in the spring of 2005 and 24-11 1/4 in the 2005 state meet.

There will be no hanky from those jumps since the rules now forbid it. But maybe, just maybe, the Bellevue East coaches or the Rands or the NSAA can give us something that illustrates the magnitude of his performance. The official long jump card, copy of the approved application for the record, his shoes, his state meet number, something!!!

I've downsized in retirement, so please don't begin sending me a ton of Hall of Fame display items. Hang on to them until the time is right or contact one of our officers, most logically Executive Director Dick Beechner, 3214 20th Ave, Kearney, NE 68845, 308-236-9471).

● RATER

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hung up.

"A week earlier, Grant's football team had beaten an opponent something like 54-0 and I dropped the Plainsmen a few notches in the ratings. This was my first year as the prep rater, and I didn't yet know that football was sacred to Grant folks.

"I met Royston a few weeks later and one of those rare friendships began to develop. He taught me how to hunt geese and pheasants and to fish for trout and walleye and catfish. He and his wife owned a trailer at McConaughy, and each year he let me and my family stay there for a week and use his boat, too. I was at his house deer hunting the day Matt Davison made his miracle reception against Missouri. I was in his boat fishing for rainbow trout on McConaughy the day officials extended the width of the field at Penn State, which kept alive the Nittany Lions' winning touchdown drive.

"Two years ago, Royston died of cancer and I got to the Denver hospital 30 minutes after he passed. At the funeral, his son noted that I had driven to Denver, but that I was too late.

"Whenever they went hunting or fishing," his son said, "Dad had to wait for Porter all the time. He finally decided that he wasn't going to wait for him any longer."

"Everybody laughed. Even me. But I still haven't fished at McConaughy since Royston's death.

"A man is extremely fortunate to have a true friend. Royston was one, and that relationship occurred because I was the prep rater and he was an angry reader. It's nothing that can go into a museum, but Royston's friendship was the most treasured gift I ever received during my 14 years as a prep rater."



Executive Director's update

As we move into a new year you can see in another part of the newsletter that the Hall of Fame has new officers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bob Whitehouse for his dedicated and fine leadership over the past several years. He has kept the Hall of Fame moving along in the direction that makes us all proud of our organization.



Dick Beechner

We are making progress on our effort to get people to join the Hall of Fame Foundation as members. For \$40 or more, you can join for one year and receive a ticket to the annual induction ceremony, a decal, newsletters and a program from the induction ceremony. The membership year is Sept. 1-Aug. 31. If you haven't joined, now is the time to help the Hall of Fame continue to move forward.

As many of us grow older, we have items in our homes that at some point need to be passed on so that they can be displayed and enjoyed by others. If you have some items that should be displayed in the Hall of Fame someday, or scrap books that could be used for research or put on display, please let us know and we will do our best to pick them up for the archives.

A special thank you to the staff at the Nebraska Sports Council for handling the ticket function for the recent induction ceremony.

Until next time, be a good sport.

Want to nominate someone?

Nomination forms are available by contacting the Hall via e-mail at golopers@aol.com or by checking our Web site at www.nebhalloffame.org.

Induction Ceremony DVDs for sale:

Anyone who would like to purchase a DVD of the 2005 Nebraska Hall of Fame Foundation's induction ceremony can purchase them for \$20 by contacting Dick Beechner at 3214 20th Ave., Kearney, NE 68845

Donation Form

The Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame is a non-profit, tax-exempt (IRC Section 501(c)(3)) organization that relies on contributions from individuals, organizations, foundations, etc. Please consider making a contribution. You can copy this form or simply send your donation to:

Sports Hall of Fame
1123 Delmar Street
Papillion, NE 68046

Make checks payable to the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation

Contribution enclosed for \$ _____

Name: _____

Street: _____

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Our mission:

The Board of Directors of the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation pledges to establish a continuing program to honor athletes for outstanding careers during their high school years, pioneers of high school athletics, administrators, coaches, officials, and community members who have made significant contributions to high school athletics, and athletes who have made significant impact on their chosen field or society after completion of their high school career. The board also desires to establish an appropriate repository for all memorabilia associated with Nebraska high school athletics.

Please share this newsletter with as many high school sports fans as possible by placing it in an accessible area.

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