



# *Honoring the Past to Inspire the Future*

Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation  
Newsletter — November 2004

## Hall inducts 20 at 11th ceremony

Inductees share honor with family, coaches, teammates, communities

The pictures projected behind the inductees at the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame's induction ceremonies on Sept. 26 sometimes told their own stories.

Ron Witt of Otoe, who graduated in 1954, looked up at a photo of himself in his high school basketball uniform from 50 years earlier and couldn't help but say, "That's a nice picture."

The comment drew a laugh from the 700-plus in attendance at the Lied Center in Lincoln as the Hall of Fame conducted its 11th annual induction ceremony, where 18 athletes, coaches an official and a contributor became the latest inductees.

Henderson standout John Kroeker picked a photo with the Henderson water tower in the background, using that as a tribute to everyone from the small-town community where he has his roots.

"I appreciated the upbringing in the community. The people of the community were behind me," said Kroeker.

He added that his induction gave him a chance to prove to his children that once upon a time, he was someone special.

Indeed, all of the Hall's inductees were special to Nebraska High School sports.

"It is truly an honor to receive

this award," Witt said. "With all the people who have gone in before and the people are going in today, it's truly an impressive group."

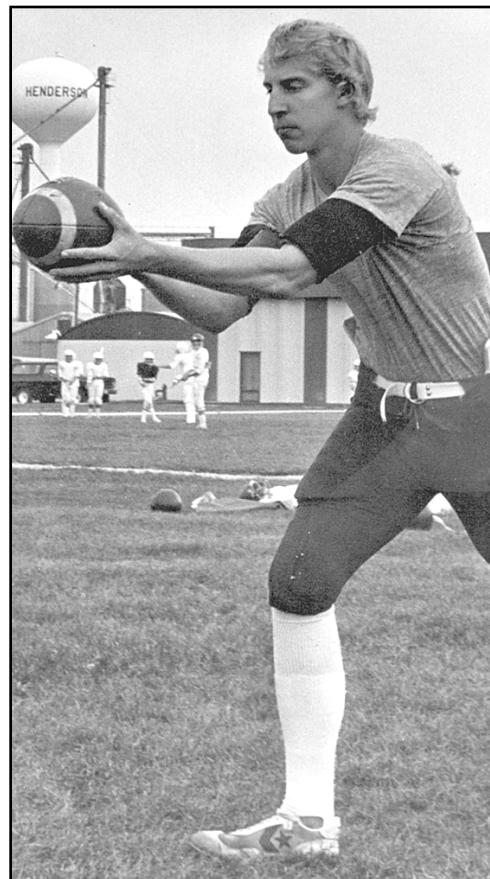
The group included athletes Bob Eickholt of Omaha Holy Name, Diane (Beideck) Van Brocklin and Heather Taggart of Millard North, Bob Churchich of Omaha North, Maury Damkroger of Lincoln Northeast, Kerry Karst of Lincoln East, Susan Marchese of Omaha Duchesne, David Lammel of Millard South, Irv Thode of Loup City, Max Linder of Plattsmouth, Kroeker and Witt.; coaches Sandy Genrich, Richard Beran, Jack McIntire, Phil Sprague, Don Knauss and Pat Panek; and referee Pat Mallette of Blair and contributor Dr. Jack Lewis of Omaha.

The induction gave many a chance to look back on athletic careers that shaped their lives.

"Through sports I have met many wonderful people," Witt said. "Sports are very vital in our high schools today. But one of the very first things that get cut are the activities programs, and they are very, very important."

Genrich, the recently retired Lincoln Northeast volleyball coach, looked back on the first match she coached at Lincoln Pius X.

"We had to call the NSAA



**John Kroeker works on his punting in the shadow of the Henderson water tower. Kroeker said he picked the picture as a tribute to the people of the community who supported him throughout his athletic career.**

two days later to find out who won," she said. "It was at Holmesville. ... It's 12-8 in the third game and in comes the sheriff with a bullhorn and quickly announced that there was a tornado in Holmesville. We left their Quonset-hut gym, did the drill and covered ourselves in the hallway for the next three hours."

Linder has had to return to

high school sports to watch the younger generation.

"I forgot what the smell of freshly cut grass and fresh popcorn are like. I think they ought to put that in a can," he said.

Churchich dedicated his induction to his brother, Ely, who died during surgery in August.

"He's the guy I followed, wanting to be in his footsteps," Churchich said.

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## Championship Performance



Allison Aldrich of Schuyler poses with her bronze medal from the 2004 Para-Olympics in Athens, Greece, where she participated in the women's sitting volleyball competition. Aldrich was participating in the Games and could not attend the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation's induction ceremony in September when she was a co-recipient of the Ron Gustafson Inspiration Award.

## Salerno joins board

Pat Salerno of Omaha has joined the Nebraska Sports Hall of Fame Board of Directors.

Salerno, was a long-time administrator with the Omaha Public Schools. He is a former coach at Omaha Central High School and the English supervisor for the school district after serving as an assistant principal at Omaha South High School.

He has been very active in the Central High alumni as well as serving as an adjunct professor at UNL.

Salerno has mentored many student teachers over the years.

At its September meeting, the Board of Directors approved its slate of officers for the 2004-05 year. The officers are:

- President — Robert Whitehouse, Papillion.
- Vice-President — Wally McNaught, Eagle.
- Secretary — Steve Shanahan, Blair.
- Treasurer — Dennis Smith, Papillion.

### Want to nominate someone?

Nomination forms are available by contacting the Hall via e-mail at [golopers@aol.com](mailto:golopers@aol.com) or by checking our Website at [www.nebhalloffame.org](http://www.nebhalloffame.org). Nominations should be sent to the chairman of the selection committee, Randy Cordes, at York High School, 1005 Duke Drive, York, NE, 68467.



### Executive Director's update

As I write this I am in the country of China, more specifically the city of Beijing where the 2008 Olympics will be held. I mention this for several reasons.

First, the Chinese have been preparing for this event for some time. The country and Beijing have made amazing progress the past 10 years in many areas. The Chinese also are very respectful of their past and preserve their history as much as possible through dedication and reverence.



Dick Beechner

The Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation has followed a similar past. We, too, are working towards a goal of having a facility to house the Hall of Fame.

Things that are worthwhile take longer to develop than one may think. Just like Beijing, hosting the 2008 Olympics, that goal was not realized over night.

We have just recently completed our 11th induction ceremony. It seems each one gets better than the previous one, exemplifying our slogan, "Honoring the Past to Inspire the Future." It is important for us to recognize the accomplishments of the past to preserve sports history and to allow those of today to build on a strong foundation.

I would like to thank Bob Jensen of Huskerland Prep Report for his article and picture on the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation.

Until next time, be a good sport.

# Presnell dies at age 99

2003 inductee played in NFL for Ironton Tanks, Detroit Lions

Glenn Presnell, a 2003 inductee into the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame, died Sept. 13, 2004, at the age of 99.

Presnell was one of the National Football League's oldest living former players.

Presnell, who attended high school in DeWitt, was an All-American running back at Nebraska and Detroit Lions player in the 1930s.

After playing semipro ball for the Ironton, Ohio, Tanks from 1927 to 1930, Presnell joined the Portsmouth Spartans of the NFL, which three years later became the Detroit Lions.

It was in Detroit that Presnell enjoyed his finest NFL seasons, leading the Lions to the 1935 league

championship. It was also in Detroit that Presnell earned his best-ever pro football salary of \$4,000.

Presnell led the league in scoring that season and was first team All-Pro. He had earned second team honors before and on Oct. 7, 1934, kicked a then-NFL record 54-yard field goal. The record stood for 19 years.

Presnell retired after nine professional seasons and spent one year as an assistant coach at Kansas, then went to his alma mater Nebraska before serving in the Navy for three years during World War II.

After the war, Presnell was hired at Eastern Kentucky and spent 17 years as head coach and another 11 as the athletic director before retiring in 1974.

## Leonard Bond, Omaha North coach and 1998 inductee, dies of cancer

Leonard Bond, a Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame inductee in 1998, died Aug. 26, 2004, of cancer at age 81.

Bond taught at North for 27 years and was the Vikings' head football coach for 16.

Bond coached four sports — football, basketball, baseball and track — at Omaha North. He coached the Vikings' freshman and junior varsity football teams for 11 years before

guiding the varsity from 1959 to 1974. His teams won or shared Metro Conference American Division titles four times and went undefeated twice.

Bond coached North's famed Four Norsemen — Bob Churchich, Rick Davis, Danny Miller and Rookie Taylor. Those four, who played together in 1962, made up what's still considered to be one of the best high school backfields in the state.

## Induction ceremony available on DVD

DVDs of the 2004 Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation induction ceremony are available for \$20 plus \$3 mailing.

To obtain a copy, contact Hall of Fame Executive Director Dick Beechner via e-mail at [golopers.com](mailto:golopers.com) or by writing to Beechner at 3214 20th Ave., Kearney, NE, 68845.

## Hall thanks those who lend a hand

The Hall of Fame Board of Directors would like to thank the following for their gifts from Feb. 18, 2004 and Sept. 25, 2004:

Alan and Kristene Garey  
 Aquinas High School Booster Club  
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 West Point Public Schools Booster Club

### Donation Form

The Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation 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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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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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