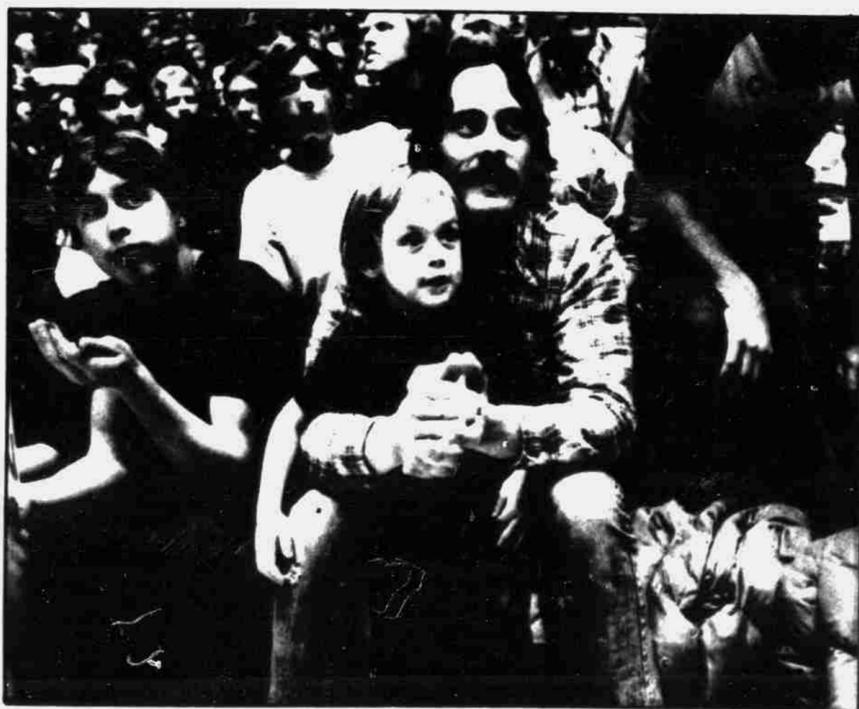




The fans want it, they get it — and they pay for it



Story by Jim Hunt
Daily Nebraskan Photos

A mad dash to the liquor store to pick up a twelve pack of brew, run home in time to throw a couple of burgers into the pan, tear open a bag of chips and voila—you're ready for another weekend of television sports.

From noon Saturday until Sunday evening the American public is under a constant barrage of sports on the boob tube. John Q. Public can see everything from the best in college and pro football and basketball to the doldrums of tennis and golf.

For example, this past weekend with the Nebraska Boy's State Basketball Tournament, the opening round of the NCAA Tournament and professional basketball, those of us basketball nuts who thrive on the game had a chance to watch no less than 11 games.

When you throw in two golf tournaments, a bowling tournament, a tennis tournament, a boxing match, a ski match, *SportsWorld*, *Wide World of Sports* and *Sports Spectacular*, it's no wonder many housewives are ready to sell the family's color TV to the first pawn shop they can haul it to.

Yet the public wants it so that's what it gets, and gets and gets.

Although I think basketball is the greatest game ever invented, CBS has gone overboard in its coverage of pro-basketball. Pro basketball begins in early November and ends around the first of June. Coverage starts on Christmas and bores us through the regular season until the playoffs begin in mid-April.

No one cares about the regular season, so why don't they just broadcast the playoffs?

Even though college basketball is the king of sports and we get a healthy dose of Big Eight Conference games on Saturdays, NBC has gone overboard with its Sunday coverage.

Every Sunday we are "treated" to one of the finest college games in the nation and it seems like three out of four Sundays we are stuck watching Notre Dame.

I don't know about most people, but watching the Fighting Irish on the tube every Sunday does about as much for me as the potato famine did for Ireland. As a good Irishman I don't intend to give up green beer on St. Patrick's Day, but if that Notre Dame leprechaun shows up again, I just might be tempted to pour one on him.

Even though the networks devote many hours a week to sports coverage and cover many of them well, there are some pseudo-events that just do not belong on television. These include *Challenge of the Sexes*, *Celebrity Challenge of the Sexes*, *Superstars*, *Superteams* and *Dynamic Duos* and similar staged events.

Who really cares if the Dallas Cowboys are better than the Kansas City Royals in a tug-of-war competition?

In actuality all these competitions do is waste good air time and give the people who have run out of Sominex a headstart on their Sunday afternoon nap.

Although millions watch sports on television each week, the networks are not the only ones to benefit from this rise in the entertainment value of sports.

Over 500,000 people turned out to watch the University of Kentucky play this year. In Lincoln over 172,000 have turned out to see the Huskers play this season, including a record 14,912 UNL fans for the Kansas State game—at Manhattan.

Attendance at college and pro football games continue to skyrocket and baseball is enjoying an increase in attendance.

One of the few sports which seems to be declining is hockey. In recent years the NHL has been hit by sagging attendance and the loss of its network TV contract.

With ticket prices soaring as high as \$10 for professional football games and \$8 for pro basketball games, it is easier to see that many Americans are spending more money to watch the O.J. Simpsons and the Julius Ervings do their things.