

NU player dies from gunshot

From wire and staff reports

Brian Heimer, a senior tight end on the Nebraska football team, died Wednesday at University Hospital in Omaha after shooting himself in the head at his parents' farm four miles north of Shelby.

His body was found sitting against an outbuilding by his father Willard. According to Polk County Sheriff Tom Siemek, Heimer had shot himself with a .22 caliber rifle.

Heimer was transported by the Shelby Rescue Unit to Columbus Community Hospital late Tuesday afternoon. He was then taken by ambulance to University Hospital, where he died Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.

An all-state performer at David City Aquinas, Heimer was a walk-on on the Nebraska football team in 1981. He didn't catch a pass in his first year with the Husker freshman team and wasn't invited back to the varsity that spring, but convinced Coach Tom Osborne to reconsider.

Heimer was redshirted in the fall and began spring practice in 1983 listed as the No. 10 tight end. However, he worked his way up to the third spot in the fall, earned a scholarship and shared the No. 1 position with Todd Frain last year. He caught 12 passes for 174 yards and led the team in touchdown receptions with four.

A mechanized agriculture major with a 3.3 grade point average, Heimer was 17 hours away from completing an undergraduate degree.

"Brian will be greatly missed by all of us," NU football coach Tom Osborne said in a prepared statement. "He was one of the most popular players on our team. I feel Brian symbolized the good things in athletics — a top student, a dedicated person, an overachiever on the football field."

Heimer died the morning of the



Photo Courtesy of UNL Sports Info.
Heimer

Huskies' media and photo day. The Nebraska Sports Information Department cancelled the annual event Tuesday night when it learned that Heimer had shot himself. It will not be rescheduled.

However, the Huskers did go through

with their opening day practice as scheduled Thursday morning.

"Everyone is enough of a competitor that they try to do their best," Osborne said after the two-hour workout Thursday morning. "I'm sure some players are affected by it."

The team is also considering dedicating its season to Heimer, Osborne said.

"Some players have expressed an interest in doing something, but we haven't made any plans yet," Osborne said. "Whatever we do will come from the players."

Nebraska receiver's coach Gene Huey said Heimer was "a real conscientious person, a very gentle, compassionate human being."

"Every coach talks about what great people their players are," Huey said. "That certainly wasn't a cliché with Brian."

Huey, who saw Heimer working out in Lincoln this summer, said he could offer no explanation for the suicide.

"There was nothing that led me to believe anything was wrong," he said.

Huey said Heimer wasn't the kind of person who talked about himself.

"He was very quiet, unassuming, somewhat shy," he said. "He was the kind of person you had to initiate a conversation with."

Heimer would have turned 22 Sept. 5, two days before the Huskers' opener against Florida State.

Funeral services for Heimer will be at 10 a.m. Saturday at Sacred Heart Church in Shelby.

Town 'in shock' over player's death

SHELBY, Neb. (AP) — When University of Nebraska tight end Brian Heimer walked into Sacred Heart Catholic Church Saturday night, 8-year-old Becky Bonsack looked at him with awe.

"She said, 'Mom, there goes Brian Heimer.'"

In this small farming town about 80 miles west of Omaha, that's the way a lot of residents viewed Heimer, an all-American hometown boy who made the grade at one of the nation's top collegiate football programs.

A walk-on who became a part-time starter, the popular 21-year-old honors student seemed to have it all as he headed into his senior season this fall.

So his hometown reacted with shock and disbelief Wednesday to the news that Heimer had died after shooting himself in the head at his parents' farm a few miles outside town.

"The whole town's in shock," said Mrs. Bonsack, a family friend whose daughter and 18-year-old son idolized Heimer. "I know it must sound like a broken record, but Brian was the last person in the world you'd expect to do a thing like that."

Friends and family acquaintances said they had no idea why Heimer would kill himself. They said they weren't aware of any major academic, social or athletic problems that might have been bothering the former three-sport star at Aquinas High School in nearby David City.

"He was a prime student and a top-notch kid," said the Rev. Adrian Herbek, superintendent of Aquinas High. "He had a good attitude toward school and a good attitude toward life. He was just an all-American kid."

Dave McMahon, Heimer's high school football coach, called Brian an "excellent student, a great athlete and a good kid. He was kind of quiet, very polite, a real friendly boy. You never could get him riled."

Some Shelby residents speculated that the pressure of playing big-time college football may have played a part in the tragedy.

"Maybe we don't know how much pressure these young people are under," said Naomi Thelan, who works part-time at a downtown bar and luncheonette.

Several friends said they heard Heimer

left a suicide note, but Polk County Sheriff Tim Siemek declined to comment on the rumor.

Meanwhile, Shelby residents tried to console themselves over the loss of the hometown hero they had planned to honor on Brian Heimer Day after the football season.

"My little boy thought he was the greatest," said a teary-eyed Jerry Vrbka, whose farm is about two miles from the Heimer farm. "He had his picture taken with Brian at last year's spring game. He really looked up to him."

Heimer was a football, basketball and track star at Aquinas, where he played on the school's 1980 Class C-1 state championship football team. He won postseason honors as a place-kicker and basketball player and finished second in his class in the state high jump competition.

Heimer was also a member of the National Honor Society, worked on the school's newspaper and yearbook and was elected Prom King his senior year.

"He worked so hard to get where he was at, and now this," Vrbka said. "It just doesn't make sense."

News Briefs

Iraq claims it destroyed Kharg Island terminal

BAGHDAD, Iraq, (Reuter) — Iran's important Kharg Island oil terminal was "destroyed" Thursday by Iraqi warplanes which left the valuable facility in the northeastern Persian Gulf in ashes, the Baghdad command said.

There was no immediate independent confirmation of the report carried by radio and television stations in Baghdad, which interrupted programs to announce the High Command communique and play military marches and national songs.

Later Iran reported that an Iraqi warplane was shot down in the Northern Gulf at roughly the time that Iraq reported the attack on Kharg Island.

The Iranian news agency IRNA, received in London, made no direct reference to Iraqi reports of the Kharg Island raid, which the Baghdad military communique timed at 3:10 p.m. (7:10 a.m. EDT).

It quoted an Iranian military bulletin as saying an "intruding" Iraqi jet was brought down by a ground-to-air missile in the northern area of the Gulf at 3:25 p.m. Kharg Island, about 30 miles west of the Iranian mainland and some 110 miles southeast of the southern Iraqi coast, lies in an Iraqi-proclaimed war zone.

Botha offers no apartheid reform

DURBAN, South Africa, (Reuter) — South African President P.N. Botha Thursday dashed hopes of fundamental changes in apartheid, and warned that he would consider sterner measures to end the racial unrest.

In a speech lasting more than an hour Botha said he was committed to negotiations with South Africa's black majority but proposed no specific reforms. As he began talking, the white-minority government clamped a 10 p.m.-4 a.m. curfew in the nation's biggest black township of Soweto outside Johannesburg where an estimated two million blacks live, and in Alexandra, north of the city.

Botha said he and other "reasonable" South Africans would not accept the principle of one-man one-vote in a unified state which "would lead to domination of one group over another."

"I am not prepared to lead white South Africans and other minority groups on a road to abdication and suicide," he said in a speech, which was transmitted live by some foreign broadcasting organizations.

Botha's speech was certain to disappoint South Africa's Western allies, who are under increasing pressure to apply sanctions against Pretoria and who were hoping for liberal, fundamental reforms to apartheid, the system of strict racial segregation that permeates South African life.

Boat misses trans-Atlantic record

LANDS END, England, (Reuter) — Nine British sailors attempting the fastest-ever crossing of the Atlantic abandoned their \$2-million powerboat Thursday in a violent storm just hours away from setting the record.

A spokesman for the organizers of the attempt said the crew members were spotted by a Royal Air Force plane in lifeboats 138 miles off the southwest coast of England and an accompanying helicopter picked them up.

The boat, the Virgin Atlantic Challenger, later sank.

The attempt to win the coveted Blue Riband for the fastest Atlantic crossing was financed by Richard Branson, the millionaire owner of Virgin Records and Virgin Atlantic Airplane, who also skippered the boat.

Rockwell awarded B-1 contract

WASHINGTON, (Reuter) — The Air Force Thursday awarded the Rockwell International Corp. an \$8 billion contract to build 82 airframes for B-1B bombers.

Rockwell delivered the first B-1B to the Air Force on June 29. The Pentagon has ordered 100 of the intercontinental bombers, which will replace America's aging fleet of B-52s.

Kerry plans no active rally for LB662

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Gov. Bob Kerrey said Thursday he won't make an all-out effort to defend a school consolidation law that faces a statewide referendum vote, but Kerrey indicated he will speak for the the controversial measure when an opportunity arises.

At his weekly news conference, the governor said it would be wrong to use his executive powers to blunt the referendum, which will appear on the 1986 general-election ballot.

"...somewhere inside of me it just does not seem proper for me to do anything other than indicate my support for retaining the law but now to try to organize from the governor's office some effort," Kerrey said.

Kerrey said his defense of LB662, narrowly passed by the 1985 Legislature will be similar to his efforts last year on behalf of Amendment 4, which allowed agricultural land to be classified separately from other types of property for tax purposes.

Secretary of State Allen Beermann announced Wednesday that the summer-long petition drive against LB662 has collected 50,252 signatures from registered voters, easily enough to place the repeal question on the 1986 ballot.

Woman sentenced in loan conspiracy

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Dana Saylor-Robinson, one of four people convicted in a loan conspiracy case that also involved Lincoln developer Newt Cople, was sentenced Thursday to one year and one day in prison.

Susan K. Wilson and Connie H. Kahle, who were also convicted in the case, received suspended sentences from U.S. District Judge John B. Jones.

The sentencing of Cople was delayed until later in the day because his attorney was involved in a trial.

Cople and the others were convicted by a jury in June of conspiring to manipulate loans illegally at a bank and a savings and loan association in Beatrice.

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