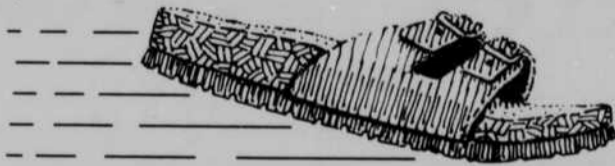


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Torch carried across state

By Scott Stempson
Staff Reporter

The Cornhusker State Games' torch left the western border of the state July 6 on a 575-mile journey destined for the opening ceremonies in Lincoln on July 17.

Approximately 400 runners legged the journey through Sidney, Ogallala, Kearney, Grand Island, Seward, David City, Blair, Omaha and then into the capital city.

According to Dale Nichols, media coordinator of the games, the 400 runners ran about one-mile segments. Nichols said runners in the western part of the state ran closer to two miles simply because of "the fewer people in that part of the state."

Nichols said more applications were submitted than could possibly be allowed in the torch run.

"At least 50 applicants were turned down in the Lincoln area alone," he said. "The run turned out to be very

popular this year."

The Cornhusker State Games, now in its third year, has developed a custom of keeping the final torchbearer a secret until the opening ceremonies. This "mystery runner" is a Nebraska sports celebrity which was chosen to represent all the athletes of the state.

In 1985, the mystery sports celebrity was Jim Hartung, outstanding gymnast at UNL and a 1984 member of the U.S. Olympic team.

Last year the celebrity was Julie Vollertsen, member of the 1984 United States Olympic Volleyball team.

Vollertsen said it was a "tremendous honor" to represent the state's athletes at the games last year. She said when an athlete puts the time, energy and pride into his/her sport and is rewarded with a privilege like that, it's a "special feeling of joy."

Vollertsen was contacted at the beginning of June last year about being the celebrity runner. She said she was so busy in the month leading up to the

games that she didn't have time to tell anyone "the secret."

Vollertsen said that these games are "fantastic for this state. Every age group can get involved," she said. "It's for the whole family."

Many couples from across the state participated in the torch run. A Lincoln couple will cover part of 70th street late Friday morning.

Tom Tingle, 38, and his wife Colleen, 31, became interested in the run because they are "runners anyway," he said.

Tingle will begin his run at approximately 11:20 a.m. Friday at 70th and Cornhusker. He'll hand the torch to his wife at 70th and Morrill Avenue. She will take it to 70th and Adams.

The torch will eventually end up at the FirstTier bank, the sponsor of the run, for a 2 p.m. observance.

The 1987 Cornhusker State Games will begin when the flame is lit at Seacrest Field by the mystery runner at 8 p.m.

Nebraska coaches approve of Cornhusker State Games

By Jeff Apel
Staff Reporter

A survey of four Nebraska coaches revealed that all were in favor of this weekend's Cornhusker State Games.

Nebraska men's gymnastics coach Francis Allen, women's gymnastics coach Rick Walton, volleyball coach Terry Pettit and men's tennis coach Kerry McDermott all said they liked the state's amateur sports competition.

Allen said he was in favor of the Cornhusker State Games because they provide an opportunity for long-lasting friendships. He said many of the individuals who compete in the third-

annual games will form friendships that will last throughout their competitive careers.

"You never know what kind of deals can be made," Allen said. "If you look at it in the long scope, there are many opportunities."

Walton said he likes the games because they are able to attract some of the state's top female gymnasts. He said the Cornhusker State Games are able to do this because they are conducted at an ideal time of the year.

"It's something to do to break up the summer," Walton said. "It comes at a good time."

Both Walton and Allen said they

aren't surprised by how the games have increased in popularity because they offer a wide range of sports.

Tom Ash, the games' executive director, said 11,089 entries have been processed so far. That compares to 8,873 entries in 1986 and approximately 4,000 entries in 1985, Ash said.

Walton said the fact that the Cornhusker State Games are able to handle the number of participants they do is a tribute to the volunteers and other persons in charge. He said the games could have never grown to the level they are at if it weren't for careful planning.

"The organization (of the games) is super," Walton said. "They're doing a remarkable job."

McDermott agreed. "It's kind of a good idea," he said. "They're doing a good job of promoting it, and the public is taking advantage of it."

McDermott said this year's competition will be stronger than usual because Cornhusker State Game officials were able to make their tennis competition the only sanctioned tournament held this weekend. He said many of the state's top players have skipped the games in the past because they were competing in other sanctioned tournaments.

Pettit said the level of the game's volleyball competition will be "super" because they will match persons of all ages against one another.

But Pettit said he discourages his athletes from entering the volleyball competition because he believes the competition is for amateur athletes.

"The real focal point of the games is for amateurs," he said. "I don't think it would be appropriate for Nebraska athletes to enter."

Pettit said he supports the Cornhusker State Games because they promote volleyball. He said he also supports the games because the health of society is measured more by the physical well-being of average people rather than the participation of non-amateur athletes.

"These games are popular, no matter who is competing," Pettit said. "It's certainly a big event."

Cornhusker Games . . .

STATE GAMES from Page 2

tainment will be provided by the Magoos, an Omaha band.

Ash said the games are part of a national trend. More than 40 states hold state games, he said.

The Cornhusker Games were organized in 1985 by three Lincoln men: Bill Smith, the state softball commissioner, Jerry McGinn, state athletic commissioner, and Richard Hammer, a Lincoln physician, Ash said.

The event has grown steadily since its beginning. In 1985, 4,000 people took part in 19 events, Ash said. Last year 8,800 Nebraskans competed, he said.

Ash said that the Cornhusker Games are different from other state games in that they receive no state funding. The

ANSWER

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