

# WWW

When Kelvin Clark left town in 1979, he left one thing in Lincoln — his education.

He is back to get that education.

Clark, an All-America offensive tackle for the Nebraska Cornhuskers, was drafted in the first round that year by the Denver Broncos. But he dropped out of school with two semesters left for his bachelor's degree.

"My mind was on playing football," Clark said, adding he didn't worry much about academics.

But seven years and two professional football teams later, Clark returned to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to finish that same degree in physical education.

Although Tom Osborne contacted him about returning to UNL to finish college, Clark said he always figured he would get back to school sooner or later.

"There was something I wanted to do and I couldn't do it without a degree," he said.

Clark is just one of many student athletes who walk a tight rope between studies and sports, according to Al Papik, assistant athletic director for administrative services.

"They have to balance practice, and keep certain grades to keep their eligibility, and perform well enough to keep their scholarship," Papik said. The combination creates a certain amount of pressure, although a lot of it is probably self-imposed by the player, he added, rather than from any members of the coaching staff.

Further pressure has been increased by a recent UNL Faculty Senate investigation into two summer courses allegedly designed for football players. Allegations that athletes receive undeserved academic help from instructors and counselors make the situation two-fold.

According to NCAA figures, 66.6 percent of all student athletes graduate from Division I schools, compared to only 59 percent of all non-athletes. Papik said that he would like to see the 66.6 percent rise to 80 percent.

Because many students on athletic scholarships at UNL were high school all-stars, they feel pressure to live up to their previous expectations, Papik said.

Papik said most students are able to overcome these pressures during their first year of college because they learn to cope with those pressures.

"We feel that while there is a strain, it is a necessary strain," UNL athletic director Bob Devaney said, adding that one of the athletic department's main concerns is for student athletes to leave college with an education.

Pressures can play havoc with any student when they pursue outside interests with their classes, he said.

But many students wouldn't have the opportunity to go to college if they didn't play in sports.

For Devaney, academics come first.

"We don't appreciate people who say that athletes are getting special consideration," Devaney said. "When we recruit, we don't ever try to sell a young man on their athletic ability and getting a pro career."

But what could make a difference in the academic caliber of student athletes is an NCAA proposition implemented two years ago that requires a higher grade point average in high school. Papik said it is too early to understand the full impact of Proposition 48. But he added that each of the past two

years the freshman classes have had significantly higher SAT and ACT scores, and higher high school grade point averages.

In 1986 the mean ACT score for incoming freshmen was 20.42, while it was only 17.62 in 1985, Papik said.

"The student athlete is now more well-qualified academically," Papik said.

"It (Proposition 48) definitely will help," Devaney said.

The proposition stipulates that while in high school, athletes must meet three requirements to compete in Division I intercollegiate athletics. The proposition applies only to Division I schools.

Under the proposition, student athletes must complete 11 core courses, which include three years of English, two years of math, two years of social science, two years of natural science and two additional courses such as a foreign language.

The proposition also requires athletes to maintain a 2.0 GPA in those 11 core courses. They must have a combined SAT score of 700 or an ACT score of 15 before they will be eligible to compete.

The requirements imposed by Proposition 48 are similar to basic graduation requirements of Lincoln Public Schools, so it doesn't burden local high school athletes, according to Virgil Horne, director of athletics and student activities for Lincoln Public Schools.

However, only a small percentage of the graduating class from Lincoln will compete in Division I sports, Horne said.

Although high school guidance counselors advise students to go to college, they don't counsel them to go to a Division I school, Horne added.

Proposition 48 has nothing to do with admission to a college, Papik said, but whether a student can get financial aid and participate in athletics.

Papik said there is some leeway in the regulation, although students must make satisfactory progress toward their degree as long as they are competing. They must take 24 credit hours each academic year toward their major, which includes all electives required for that major. They are not required to declare their major until the end of their fourth semester.

"This is the most significant piece of legislation passed by the NCAA that emphasizes academics," Papik said. "It has created extensive communication with coaches, counselors, students, parents and colleges that did not exist before."

Before the proposition went into effect in 1986, the only academic requirements for athletes was graduation from college with an accumulative GPA of at least 2.0. The system only caused trouble, Papik said.

Papik said he estimates that about 20 percent of all students in Division I schools did not qualify with the new regulations, but they met the standards of the old rules.

A lot of the trouble student athletes had with poor grades was caused before Proposition 48 went into effect, Devaney said.

Athletes frequently dropped out of college when they had used up their athletic eligibility.

Coaches lose control of athletes after they have used up their eligibility," Papik said. Some athletes are lured away by professional teams during their senior years. Papik said all the coaches are concerned about the problem.

But Devaney thinks students are only hurting themselves