

U.S. swimmer Biondi laments athletes' pay for play

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) - America's best swimmer took a swipe Monday at an unfair system of pay for play in the Olympics as a growing number of countries reportedly planned to reward medal winners with fat bonuses.

Matt Biondi heated up a simmering controversy over under-the-table payments and blatant pro contracts for Olympians shortly after the American flag was raised in the Olympic Village.

Rival swimmer Jens Peter Berndt had more political concerns on his mind as he won a squeaky over his eligibility. The International Olympic Committee rejected East

Germany's demand that Berndt be banned from the Games because he defected to West Germany in 1985. While more than 400 athletes arrived in Seoul, bringing the total to more than 4,500 five days before the Games begin, political issues also were broached by South Korean President Roh Tae-woo.

Beset by several violent student protests last week, Roh said he expected "further democratization and liberalization of the country" after the Olympics.

North Koreans will have an opportunity to see the Games on television for free, if their government allows, thanks to an agreement by the IOC to

let a coalition of East-bloc television companies provide the transmission.

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IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch opened the committee's

94th session with a speech that included a blast at the North Koreans for boycotting the Games, saying they sacrificed their athletes for politics.

"I cannot find words strong enough to express my regret at the way in which these athletes, regarded as insignificant, are thus unhesitatingly manipulated and sacrificed to supposedly 'high' interests," he said.

"Higher than what, one might ask."

He also said the IOC needs to change its rules "to the world of today," and keep a sharp eye on the "indispensable but controlled advent of commercialization in sports."

At least seven nations reportedly plan to reward their winners with bonuses, though they're all very hush-hush about the money so far.

The Soviet Union, China, Hungary, Saudi Arabia, France, West Germany and Malaysia are believed to have pay-for-play plans, some as high as \$30,000 for a gold.

Biondi, a contender for seven medals, said he had virtually no chance of winning all golds as Mark

Spitz did in 1972, and had as little likelihood of cashing in on his performances.

Biondi considers himself the favorite in the 100-meter freestyle, in which he holds the world record, and his U.S. relay team is favored in the 400 freestyle. The 6-foot-7 Californian says the favorites in his other individual events are Tom Jager of the United States in the 50 freestyle and West Germany's Michael Gross in the 200 free and 100 butterfly.

"Maybe the only true amateurs that are left are in the swimming program," Biondi said. "I have a hard time believing that tennis players who are competing here are amateurs. I have a hard time believing that Carl Lewis is an amateur."

The Olympics have all but officially gone professional for many sports. Lewis and several other track and field stars have been socking away six-figure incomes for years, tennis pros like Chris Evert and Mats Wilander also make hundreds of thousands of dollars and basketball players like Danny Manning are already signed to hefty NBA contracts.

Former NU player teaches skills

By Mark Derowitsch
Senior Reporter

Former Nebraska fullback Micah Heibel deposited his football knowledge in the back of his mind, but his new job is making him withdraw it.

Last year, Heibel was the starting fullback for the Cornhuskers. Now he's coaching the sophomore football team at Lincoln High School.

"I spent five years at the university learning to play football," Heibel said, "and now all that football knowledge is useless. At least coaching puts some of that knowledge I learned to use."

Heibel said that since he just finished his college career with Nebraska, he knows how to handle most coaching situations.

"I know what it's like to play high school football since I played in high school not too long ago," said the 1983 graduate of Lincoln Pius X High School.

"I know what a high school athlete should and shouldn't be able to do," he said.

Heibel, who played for Nebraska from 1983 to 1987, said his students respect him more since he played college football. Heibel rushed for 356 yards on 64

carries during his senior season. He scored four touchdowns and gained 7 yards in Nebraska's 31-28 loss to Florida State in the Fiesta Bowl.

"Playing at the university gives me some credibility with the players," he said. "At least all the football knowledge I gained there didn't go to waste."

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Although he played for Nebraska last year, Heibel said some of the players at Lincoln High don't remember him.

"Some do and some don't," he said. "Others don't believe that I

played at Nebraska. I guess nobody knows where the fullbacks play."

Besides coaching, Heibel also teaches two algebra courses at Lincoln High. But he said his first priority is teaching math, not coaching.

"I didn't go to college to play football," he said. "I went to become a teacher. To be perfectly honest, I didn't think I would mind coaching football, but that's all."

Most students in Heibel's classes are sophomores. But he said he helps coach most of the players.

"I work with sophomores mostly," he said. "But on game day for the varsity, I'm up in the booth helping out."

Heibel said he would like to play football again, but only on one condition.

"It would be fun to play again only if I could just show up on Saturday," he said. "Those guys put in a lot of time during the week. I don't know if I could make a commitment like that to football again."

He said practices go much more smoother for him at Lincoln High than they did at Nebraska.

"Two-a-days didn't seem to be as taxing this year," Heibel said, "since I just walked up and down the sidelines."

B-rate college football fans can enjoy a day at the park

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that shined in June begin to fade like cheap denim in September. It's character testing time; time to bite fingernails.

And all we can do is watch — not from either a 3rd-base box or bleacher seat — but from our living rooms.

That's too bad. Baseball is a sport that needs to be viewed from ringside to be fully appreciated.

With baseball over yonder, people back home often dismiss baseball as an action-lacking game dominated by a man on a mound.

But let's not forget that baseball is a game of strategy, parity and ageless tradition.

This is a game where managers bolt from the dugout, scream bloody

murder and kick dirt on umpires' Hagar slacks. Only at a ball park.

In Nebraska, the football team's perennial success breeds sympathy for others — like those people back East.

They're the ones cheering for B-rate college football teams every Saturday. Poor guys.

But save those condolences. Those poor fellas are the same ones who get home from work and don a wind-breaker and ball cap.

They catch the train or subway to Yankee Stadium or Fenway Park. A hot dog and a beer or so later, they're in their seats, watching baseball.

It's a grand ol' game. Always was. And on this weekend, it's too far from home.

Pro success hasn't surprised Washington

By Tim Hartmann
Staff Reporter

Brian Washington thought he never lived up to his potential as a Cornhusker football player — which has been a pleasant surprise for the Cleveland Browns this year.

Browns coach Marty Schottenheimer has labeled Washington, a former strong safety at Nebraska, as a surprise. Washington was selected in the 10th round of the 1988 National League Football draft, and has earned a starting spot at defensive back as a rookie.

"Brian had a very good sophomore year at Nebraska, but he didn't start all the time as a junior or senior," Schottenheimer told The Associated Press. "However, he tested very well with us."

Washington said he knew he had the ability to play professional football, so his NFL success has not surprised him. However, he said, his limited playing time as a junior and senior at Nebraska did hurt his confidence.

'I never thought (making the NFL) would be a long-shot. My thing with Nebraska was just try not to quit and to stick it out.'

— Washington

"When I came to (Cleveland's) training camp it was a fresh start for me, and I started to build up my confidence again. I never thought (making the NFL) would be a long-shot."

"My thing with Nebraska was just try not to quit and to stick with it."

Washington knew that if he stuck with football at Nebraska he could get a tryout with an NFL team because of his physical skills. Washington, who

now weighs 215 pounds, runs the 40-yard dash in 4.4 seconds.

Although the Browns drafted him in the lower rounds, Washington came to training camp believing he could play with anybody in the league. If a player coming to the NFL from college is intimidated he's going to have a tough time, Washington said.

"Some guys come into training camp, see all their idols and they're in a daze," he said.

Washington played with Nebraska's varsity as a freshman and started as a sophomore. During his sophomore season, Washington made 37 tackles and intercepted three passes. As a junior and a senior, Washington split time at strong safety with Jeff Tomjack, finishing with 18 tackles in 1986 and 33 tackles in 1987.

A personal conflict with George Darlington, Nebraska's secondary coach, was one of the main reasons Washington did not play well and as much as he would have liked to while at Nebraska, he said.

"I was not only playing against the other team — I was playing to keep my job, and in a way, I was playing against Coach Darlington," Washington said. "With a young athlete, you can't do that."

Washington attributes his success at Cleveland to the coaching staff. He said the Browns' coaches allow you to make a mistake.

"The one thing that the coaches tell you in the NFL is to have a short memory," he said. "That's the best thing they could have told me. If you make one mistake and keep thinking about it, the mistakes start multiplying."

NFL coaches want their players to be loose and relaxed, Washington said. Before one preseason game, Schottenheimer walked by Washington and asked him why he looked so uptight.

The mental aspect of the game is the key difference between college and professional football, Washington said.



Former Cornhusker defensive back Brian Washington, a starter this season for the NFL's Cleveland Browns, congratulates a Louisiana State player after the 1987 USF&G Sugar Bowl.

well. Before an NFL game begins, players usually go out on the field and talk to each other, he said.

Cleveland is a lot different than Lincoln, Washington said, but there is one similarity: the fans.

"The fans are crazy about football," he said. "Most NFL teams don't have it like that. We sell out the stadium almost all the time."

The Browns are 1-1 this season after dropping a 23-3 decision to the New York Jets on Sunday.

Washington has made six unassisted and four assisted tackles in the two games. He said several of his tackles have come when Cleveland was in the 'Bear' defense, where he moves to a linebacker position.

Now that he is playing in the NFL, Washington said, it's important that he keep a level head.

"You can put it up on a pedestal and say that the NFL is God's gift to the world, and you'll get your head floating every which way it can," he said. "You can't do that. You've just got to go out and stick to your game plan and give 110 percent every play."

Washington was a Parade Magazine Prep All-America selection at Highland Springs (Va.) High School and could have gone to just about any major college in the country. He said that going to Nebraska, which plays in the run-oriented Big Eight Conference, might not have prepared him for all the passing in the NFL.

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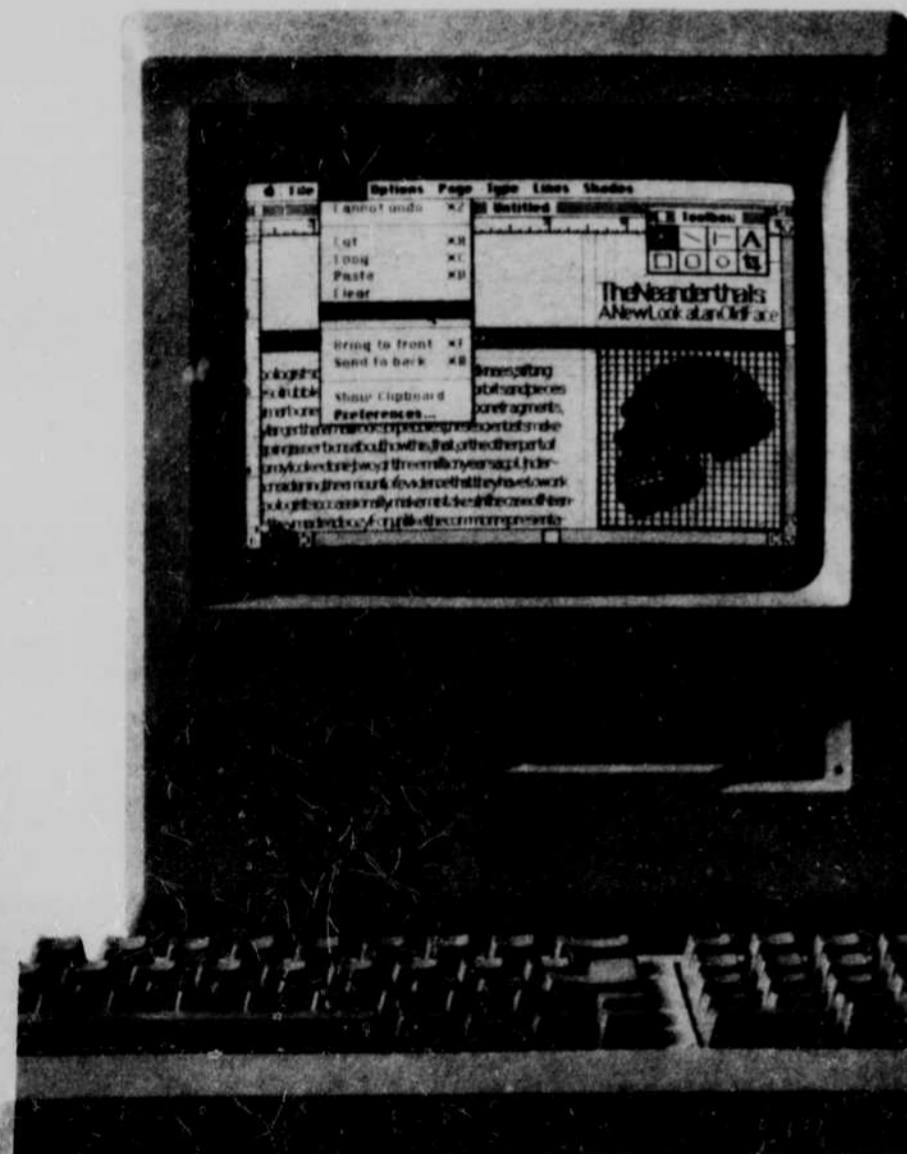
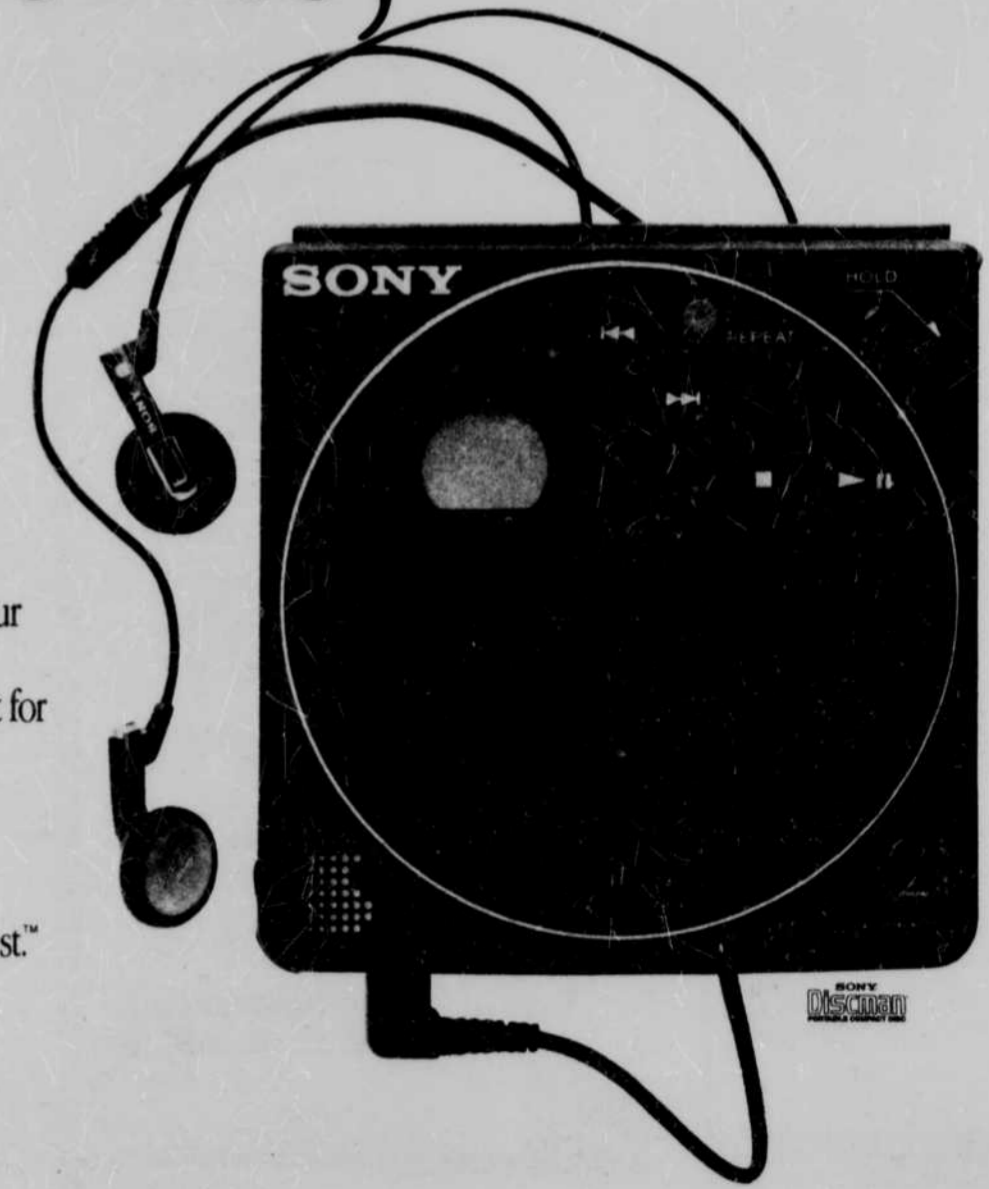
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