

Stop sniffing, start facing 'big time' reality

This is a bush-league story about an anything-but-bush-league athlete.

Chuck Green



Calvin Jones, the 6-foot-1, 205-pound Omaha Central High School I-back who has been grabbing headlines, breaking records and winning games for the Eagles is one of the finest prep football players ever to come out of Nebraska.

He's the latest product of a high

school that has produced such star running backs as Gayle Sayers, Keith Jones and Leodis Flowers. His size, speed, strength, determination and drive are an asset to his team, to football and to any college program lucky enough to get his signature on a national letter of intent next February.

But that's about it for the compliments -- at least in this column.

Quite some time ago, I toned down the practice of taking out frustrations in my weekly column space. I guess I just learned somewhere along the line that people around here just don't listen indifferently enough to make editorial opinions matter.

But once again, I've had enough.

Back in September, First Down Magazine, which I co-edit, ran a story about this year's high school football standouts. The story featured the views of Allen Wallace, a national recruiting expert based in Costa Mesa, Calif.

The article happened to mention the fact that Wallace, who publishes SuperPrep Magazine, said he thought Jones was one of the top high school players in the nation this season, but that many Division I programs might stay away from him because of his low grades that may not meet Proposition 48 standards, and would render him ineligible for next season.

"Recruiters won't tell you," Wallace told First Down, "but they're worried about his grades. More and more schools are beginning to stay away from prospects with grade problems. It just takes too much time and effort to take a chance on them."

Notice the attribution? Wallace said it -- not First Down, not me, not our staff reporters, not our publisher -- Wallace.

But never mind the facts, not in Nebraska. Let's talk scapegoating.

Earlier this season, Jones, who happens to be a friend of Cornhusker I-back Leodis Flowers, was looking at Nebraska's program with more than a passing fancy. According to Central Coach William Reed, the Huskers were keeping up with Jones well enough to have a lock on his letter of intent signature... until the article.

It seems that Jones attended Nebraska's game against Northern Illinois, picked up a copy of First Down and proceeded to misinterpret the story, taking offense to it.

The next thing I know, the Omaha World-Herald reports that Jones is looking at Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee, and letters from irate Husker fans pour into its Omaha offices.

The readers were livid over First Down Magazine's obvious attempt to make Nebraska lose its top in-state prospect and otherwise upset the balance of nature.

We admit it. We're jerks. We planned it all along.

By the way, we caused the San Francisco earthquake, too. None of us like the Oakland A's.

But the readers, being the unobjective, double-standard-spewing Husker fans they are, forgot one simple point: It's not our job to help Tom Osborne and the boys with their yearly recruiting campaigns by smoothing over stories and deleting quotes that might bring a tear to a player's eyes and snifle to his little nose.

Which brings me to my next point: Tears and sniffles are not high on the list of things that make college football recruiters lick their lips and envision Heisman Trophies dancing in their heads.

In other words, whimpering about criticism doesn't score touchdowns. It doesn't score brownie points with anybody, either.

If Jones wants to make it to the "big time," he needs to learn that criticism is part of a football player's everyday life. If he really is thinking about snubbing the Huskers because of some discouraging words -- which didn't even come from Nebraska, or any aspect thereof -- then he didn't want to come here very badly in the first place.

If Jones plans on throwing a Husker football career, a shot at national championships for four years and subjection to Heisman Trophy talk because of someone else's opinion, then I'll personally help him pack his bags.

Hell, I'll even buy him his plane ticket and a fruit basket.

The last thing Nebraska's program needs is a prima donna player who turns his back on a challenge, especially a challenge from a so-called high school football expert.

And if he thinks the media in the South is any more forgiving when it comes to college football and its players, he'd better do his homework.

If anything, Nebraska's the safest place to be for a player who wants to escape the harsh words of a big, bad sportswriter who thinks 100 yards a game isn't enough.

Next year isn't high school anymore, Calvin. Learn it now, or it will be the worst year of your life.

Wherever you spend it.

Green is a senior news-editorial major, co-editor of First Down Magazine and a Daily Nebraskan sports senior reporter.

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Eight teams previously mentioned and in-state rival Colorado State.

"They played a good schedule," Osborne said, "a stronger schedule overall than what we played."

Notes:

● Osborne said he does not mind playing in Boulder. He said road contests have their advantages because most of the press disappears by late in the week.

"It's a little bothersome to have people ask you the same question 500 times," Osborne said. "It gets a little wearing."

Osborne said Colorado's Folsom Field is different than any playing site in the Big Eight because beer is sold before and during games. He said Colorado officials add to that uniqueness by allowing students into the stadium early.

"It can be a little bit of a wild scene," Osborne said, "but that's the way they've chosen to run the place."

● Osborne joked that he did not know why Colorado prints its schedule with the Nebraska game in red letters and the rest of its opponents in black letters.

The Buffaloes have printed Nebraska in red ever since Colorado coach Bill McCartney declared Nebraska as the Buffaloes' official rival.

"I don't know what that means," Osborne said, "whether they ran out of black ink or not."

● Osborne said he is disturbed by the attention that point spreads receive in college football. He said most of the negative incidents in college athletics can be traced to individuals who have lost money through betting.

Osborne said he has noticed the newspaper advertisements that promote gambling by guaranteeing sure bets.

"Maybe you've got to take whatever ads you can get," Osborne said, "but I really don't like that mentality."

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second consecutive day.

"Our No. 1 and 2 doubles didn't produce like they could," McDermott said. "They didn't rise to the occasion when we needed."

Nebraska also had to win two out of three doubles to defeat Southwest Missouri State Saturday. McDermott said he was particularly pleased with the play of Moyer and Rahme, who won all three of their doubles matches over the weekend.

They were the only Husker entry to go undefeated.

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