

# Heart attack still hasn't slowed Husker Bob

By Jim Hanna  
Staff Reporter

*Dear Husker Bob, You've helped us cheer through many, many games. You made us cheer when we didn't really want to cheer. So why don't you cheer us up one more time and get well.*  
-- An 11-year old Husker Bob fan

When Husker Bob Rowe had a heart attack before the Nebraska football game Nov. 7, 1987, many Cornhusker fans feared they might never see their favorite Big Red fan leading cheers again.

Two years and 23 football games later, however, Husker Bob is cheering louder than ever, and the fans love it.

"Husker Bob? He's all right," said football fan George Hanson with a thumbs-up.

And he is all right. His heart attack convinced him to quit smoking and he says he hasn't felt stronger in years. At 67, Husker Bob is in his 11th season as Nebraska football's most famous fan.

"I gave it (smoking) up, and it gave me strength," he said, raising his fists enthusiastically. "I thought I had a lot of strength then, but I have more strength now."

His strength as a Husker fan has made him a durable fixture at home and away games since 1978, the first year he was able to get tickets.

Decked out in a variety of red clothing and sporting his trademark white cap, Husker Bob roams the stands leading cheers and inciting the crowd.

"It seems like they all love me." And Husker Bob loves them. He even loves the students in the stands, a group that often gets a

bad rap for their unruly behavior. "I love the students, they're good students. I think we have the best students in the Big Eight. I don't just think, I know that's true," he said.

That is not to say that he thinks the rest of the teams in the Big Eight have bad fans. Having missed only seven games in the last 11 years, Husker Bob has a good grasp of the nature of fans throughout the league. He even speaks highly of Oklahoma, Nebraska's most-hated rival for nearly 20 years.

"Oklahoma is class," he said. "Oklahoma fans have class just like their team."

Still, Husker Bob remains loyal to the fans who pack Memorial Stadium on game Saturdays. He notes with pride the surprise expressed by visiting fans when they see how likable Nebraska fans are.

His favorite fan story involves a 1984 game against Florida State University, which Nebraska lost. After the game, as is typical Nebraska fan behavior, the winning team was applauded as they left the field.

After the game, several Florida State followers were hoping to celebrate the victory, but did not know where in Lincoln they could do so safely.

"I told 10 people to follow me, I said 'come on downtown, I'll take you down to the Sidetrack. I'm sure they're not moping in their drinks. They're singing and having a good time.' We walked in there and they couldn't believe it. They said 'Husker Bob, it looks like, the way you're celebrating here, that you won the game today, and we won.' I said that's just the way we are."

Though Husker Bob may be

proud of his fellow fans, there is one situation that does not sit well with him.

"When it's quiet," he said. "I don't like the quiet."

That's why Husker Bob often can be seen leading the crowd in a few cheers.

"The cheerleaders do a tremendous job, but they can't do it all," he said.

Husker Bob's role as Nebraska's most famous fan starts well before the kickoff. On the Friday night before home games, he attends the pep rally at Misty's in Havelock.

He goes to bed late and allows himself to sleep in the following morning, until 8 a.m.

From there, it's off to his own little tailgate party with a breakfast/lunch on the hood of his car across the street from the Hilton. Several other fans join up with him and by 11:30, they're off on a tour of pre-game hotspots.

At 11:30, you can find Husker Bob outside of Chesterfield's leading an alumni pep band in a few rousing numbers.

"It's just like clockwork. You can always find me there," he said.

Finally, at 12:50, Husker Bob and his followers head into Memo-

rial Stadium for the start of another Big Red contest.

See HUSKER BOB on 11



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Husker Bob Rowe kneels amidst his signs and puppet. Husker Bob has been a familiar sight at Cornhusker games since 1978.

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