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Al Schaben/Daily Nebraskan

Fans line the fence to get Husker football player Kenny Walker's auto graph.

Huskermania keeps 'em coming

By Jennifer O'Cilka and Sara Bauder Schott
 Senior Reporters

Huskermania! Any casual observer can see it in the red-clad fans streaming to Memorial Stadium on football Saturdays.

But, why do they do it? What is the mystique behind being a Husker? What does it mean to be a Husker? Probably the biggest Husker fan, "Husker Bob" Rowe of Lincoln, said being a fan of the Nebraska Cornhuskers was "just a thrill."

"There's just so much joy to hear

this," Rowe said referring to the National Anthem played by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Marching Band and sung by the 76,000 fans in Memorial Stadium.

Rowe, who is listed in the telephone book as "Husker Bob" said he enjoyed "the color, the young people, students and alumni" involved in the sport.

"It's just hard to explain how I feel about it," he said. "It's super."

David Klements of Omaha said he went to NU Athletic Director Bob Devaney's first pep rally as coach of the Husker football team.

He's been a fan ever since. "While I was in the service, Husker football meant a lot," Klements said.

Klements, whose son and daughter attend UNL, said the Huskers brought a sense of unity to the state.

"I think it's good clean fun," he said. "It gives some focus to the people of Nebraska. Everybody is sort of rallying around the same thing."

Klements called Husker fans "patient sufferers" in wait of a national title.

Mary Talbot of Omaha said she got interested in the Huskers because she "married a football idiot and after 12 years it was divorce him or join him."

Also, she said she could vent a lot of frustration by yelling and screaming at Husker games.

Talbot called the Husker players "my boys — win, lose or draw."

Linda Remmers of Auburn said she believed in "Nebraska football and the young men who participate."

"I guess Nebraska is Husker power," she said. "Bob Devaney built the era and it's continuing."

Riley Packard of Omaha said he attended every home game and enjoyed bringing his children to games.

"I love football, I love the excitement of being here and I love the Cornhuskers," he said.

While football is mostly fun and games for the fans, the Husker players often experience pressure when they become part of the program.

Tom Punt, a 6-foot-8, 285-pound offensive tackle, said being part of the Huskers meant setting an example for young athletes in Nebraska. Setting an example means pressure, Punt said.

"Sometimes you do feel a lot of pressure from society," Punt said. "There is a lot of pressure to win games."

George Achola, a junior I-back from Omaha, said he felt pressure to uphold the winning tradition Nebraska has established. He said that because the Huskers are always a top-10 team, people were quick to ridicule them when they stumble.

Achola said sometimes people stared at him in class and on campus because he is a football player. He said it was important to keep football separate from the rest of his life.

"I always try to keep a low profile," he said. "I don't wear clothes that would make people think I'm a football player."

Greg Barrios, a 5-foot-8, 170-pound kicker, said that being a Husker meant being proud to be part of a winning tradition.

"It's a good feeling — you're sort of representing Nebraska," he said. "Ever since I've been little, I've wanted to come here and play."

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