

Husker Bob exits Cornhusker stage

A mainstay has passed away. The mascot that outlasted Mad Mike, Harry Husker (Herbie's brother), the cosmic Cob, the cheesy Husker Rat and Dead Dog Alley has retired to Husker Heaven. His death was fitting.



Todd Cooper

At one moment, Robert Rowe, otherwise known as Husker Bob, was frolicking underneath Memorial Stadium, trying to spark life into thousands of Husker fans.

The next, he was fighting for his life.

Just 69, Bob died at Lincoln General from the heart attack he suffered at Nebraska's first home game this season.

But his spirit will live on. That spirit was contagious.

According to a friend, Bob was single-handedly the greatest senior citizen sports fan in the nation. He pointed to the fact that Bob could be seen anywhere from Memorial Sta-

Special rivalry Match should be thrill

By John Adkisson
Staff Reporter

It's a long-distance rivalry, and the teams have only played four times.

No, we're not talking about Notre Dame-Southern Cal football. We're not talking about the Giants and the 49er's. Nor the Lakers and the Celtics.



John Adkisson

We're talking Nebraska-UCLA, we're talking rivalry and we're talking volleyball.

Volleyball? Yes, and the sport gets no better than this. The two teams, which arguably have been the best in the country the past five years, will clash Saturday night in the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

It will definitely be special. The history of the series is glitzy: Each of the last three Husker-Bruin showdowns has had a direct implication on the national championship. And get this: Nebraska has a 3-1 edge in the series.

Nebraska's only loss to UCLA came in 1979 when West Coast volleyball reigned supreme and nobody touched the likes of Southern Cal, Hawaii and UCLA. In a best-of-three format in the National Women's Volleyball Invitational, Nebraska lost 15-3, 17-15.

UCLA has not beaten Nebraska since.

In the 1986 Wendy's Classic in California, the Huskers permanently solidified their national prominence by pounding the Bruins 15-11, 15-4, 15-9. Later that season Nebraska became the first non-West Coast team to make the Final Four.

In 1989, Nebraska again shocked the heavily-favored Bruins in the Final

dium, to the Devaney Sports Center, to the Coliseum, to the softball field. He could be seen anywhere from Miami to Tempe, Ariz., following the Huskers' flailing bowl hopes, he reasoned. And besides, he was the only fan who didn't mind sitting with the band at all those places.

Despite that faithfulness, many have said Husker Bob was in desperate need of a hobby. Yet, Mr. Bob had lived all the hobbies he needed.

Bob was a printer, a trucker, a clothes retailer and a restaurant host before he became the Husker mascot in 1978.

That transformation came when Bob attended a game with a friend, according to the Lincoln Journal. He was sitting in the south stands when the fans grew more and more hostile. So Bob cut across the field to where the band was playing.

Bob promised to never hop on the field again unless they got rowdy. Of course, the fans ranted and raved on purpose.

Bob never stopped hopping. Bob became the epitome of the extreme supporter of the Huskers. Bob and his trademark hand puppet could be seen at everything from bowl games to softball games.

Four in Hawaii, blasting their way into the national title game 15-13, 15-11, 15-6.

Then last season Nebraska was the only team to beat UCLA, winning a five-game classic in an early-season tournament in Hawaii. After that match, the Huskers ascended to a No. 1 ranking for the first time in school history. However, it was UCLA that went undefeated from there to win a national title.

There is no reason to believe that Saturday's match will be less pivotal than the first four, especially for Nebraska.

This match could easily become a coming-out party for Husker middle blocker Stephanie Thater, who has ripped the ball in five matches thus far. If Thater can slow down UCLA All-American Natalie Williams, Nebraska has a great shot to win.

Husker Coach Terry Pettit will also be able to get a good handle on his team's depth. Thirteen different Huskers have seen action this season, and a big match will give Pettit insight into which players he can look to in December.

The biggest question Nebraska faces is whether it can win without senior Janet Kruse, who is out with an ankle injury. Last season UCLA was without Williams for the Nebraska match, and it paid the price.

The program itself will be seen in an entirely different light. Nebraska officials hope to break an NCAA single-match attendance mark.

Yes, this is volleyball. And this weekend fans will see a Nebraska program that has entered the 1990s with a full head of steam.

There has been no better time to see the Huskers, and the Nebraska-UCLA match Saturday undoubtedly will showcase a couple hours of the best volleyball anybody could want to see.

Try to catch it if you can.

Adkisson is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.

Last year at the Big Eight basketball tournament in Kansas City, Mo., Bob danced with delight in front of us.

A few Missouri fans — acting as gracious as they always do — scoffed at Bob's actions. The Huskers were trailing badly at the time.

With one flash of his pearlys, Bob handed them his "business" card. It read "Husker Bob — All Sports Fan."

He had one more brief message for the unsportsmanlike Tigers: "It's all in good fun."

We realized how much fun Bob could make out of a Saturday football game.

I remember fondly one game day last year, when Bob entered the southeast corner of the student section.

He started his trademark chant of "Go Big Red," in which he vocally varied the chant.

But as the chant grew tiresome, a group of guys next to us did their own variance on the chant.

Oblivious to his true spirit, they started chanting "Bob Is Drunk" to match his Go Big Reds.

Bob just kind of looked at those guys and smiled.

He knew better. He was liquored on life.

Spirits weren't the cause of Husker Bob's spirit. Loyalty to a team that never won a national championship during his reign was.

No one preceding Bob could uplift thousands the way he did.

And no one after Bob will be able to.

A friend and former co-worker of mine, Bob Nelson, said he spotted Bob the night after his death at Burger King.

Of course, Nelson was referring to the continual spottings of Elvis since the rock singer's death. Husker Bob and Elvis?

Actually, that may not be far off. Neither entertainer did anything monumentally noble. Elvis sang songs, Bob sang out cheers.

But both uplifted the spirits of thousands.

Bob's spirit most likely is somewhere between here and Husker Heaven right now.

It might make some pit-stops along the way.

Like, maybe, at Burger King.

Cooper is a sophomore news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraska sports senior reporter.

Rugby

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souri. The regional champions go on to nationals, where the winners of the four conferences compete for the national championship, he said.

The UNL club was started in 1974, and last year's No. 12 ranking was the highest-ever for the team. The club should be strong this year with 12 of the 15 starters returning, Lichter said.

The club's goal is to continue to grow.

"California just made rugby a varsity sport," Lichter said.

Although becoming a varsity sport at Nebraska may take a while, the team hopes to at least duplicate last year's success, he said.

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