

Football player hopes dream comes true this weekend



Michelle Paulman/DN

Ex-Nebraska football player Wilhite with daughter Kianna.

Children grow up with big dreams for themselves. . . to be a pop star, model or doctor. Or even to become a professional NFL player.

This was one of former Nebraska defensive back Kenny Wilhite's dreams.

When Wilhite was in junior high, he hung around a "clique" of four or five kids in his neighborhood. He said they always got into trouble.

It was only until his last encounter, when Wilhite and his friends were pulled over by police, who searched their car and found a gun, that Wilhite knew he had to change his life around.

"We were arrested for carrying a concealed weapon and they took us to jail," Wilhite said.

"They (Wilhite's parents) gave me the worst butt-kicking that I ever experienced."

Wilhite played running back, receiver, defensive back and quarterback while in high school. As a sophomore he won the starting job as quarterback on the varsity squad.

Although that year his school had a losing season, it was also one of Wilhite's most memorable when his school played its last game in the St. Louis Cardinals' Busch Stadium.

"We were down by four points, it was our ball with five seconds on the clock, and we were on our own 45-yard line," Wilhite said.

At a last-second cry, Wilhite said

his coach called for him to throw a Hail Mary pass.

"I was going to throw it, but I couldn't find anyone open," he said.

So, Wilhite's last alternative was to run.

"I got hit at the line of scrimmage," he said. "And as I got hit, I can recall other players on the team telling me that Coach turned his back and said, 'Ah shit!'"

Wilhite said he managed to keep his balance, elude seven more players and make it to the 5-yard line.

"The last player on the team hit me, and I dove into the end zone for the winning score — I can remember the whole team piling on me in the end zone," he said.

When he finally dug his way out from under his teammates, Wilhite said, his coach told him to look at the instant replay board, where they replayed his touchdown run seven more times.

That year Wilhite was named to the first team all-conference, followed by a senior season being again named to the first team all-conference, making all-state and being named player of the year.

After graduating, Wilhite attended Dodge City Junior College in Kansas, where he received an Associate of Arts degree.

While at Dodge City, Wilhite played quarterback, was player of the year in the conference and was voted unanimously first team All-

American quarterback.

Wilhite said he decided to attend Nebraska in 1990

because of the way Coach Tom Osborne and Assistant Coach Ron Brown presented themselves to him.

Wilhite said Brown and Osborne flew to Dodge City to visit with him, and upon leaving there, flew to St. Louis to visit with his parents.

"That really impressed me," Wilhite said. And the following Monday he signed a letter of intent to attend Nebraska.

Nebraska recruited Wilhite as a receiver, but after his first year, he said that the coaches wanted him to play defensive back.

"I wasn't willing to do that at first, because I was afraid of not being able to be as good of a d-back as I would have as a receiver," he said.

The first scrimmage game that year as a defensive back, Wilhite caught an interception. From that point on, he said, he felt that he would do a good job at his new position.

That season Wilhite's career was igniting as he went on to intercept six passes in eight games. But on his sixth interception, Wilhite tore his ACL ligament in his left knee and was out for the rest of the season.

"I was very depressed," Wilhite said. "I felt that my football career

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Writer answers women's questions Why men love sports is revealed

One constant regarding men is that most of them love sports, and one constant regarding women is that many of them don't understand why.

I empathize with those women. It's not easy to watch men sit around the television sets with their hands buried in their pants, cursing out the Chicago Cubs for losing another game, when they could be doing something else with their women.

And so, out of the kindness of my heart, I'll answer questions women have been asking each other for years. This is not meant to excuse what "Real Men" do; it shouldn't have to be excused. But it will explain us.

QUESTION 1: Why do men like sports?

It's hard to understand why so many men like to run around a field chasing a ball or get on a field or a mat and try to kill each other.

But I have a theory. It's not an educated one, because I know nothing about anthropology, but it somehow makes sense to me.

Fifty thousand years ago, men were apes. (In fact, some women I know say men are still apes.) They

didn't have technology, clothing, or other essential parts of our present society.

Neither did men have grocery stores — if a Cro-Magnon was in the mood for a good 12-ounce steak, he had to kill the deer himself. Naturally, he had no guns either, so he had to tackle the deer and bash his brains in or something.

Man also had to hunt, chase, and tackle his women. This sounds hopelessly sexist, but this was 50,000 B.C. There was no NOW, Gloria Steinem or Anita Hill.

Mother Nature gave the Cro-Magnon the testosterone and the desire to tackle and kill the thing. But being the gradual being she is, she didn't let the desire to tackle something expire in humans when they became civilized.

Therefore, men still want to tackle and kill something.

Unfortunately, it's hard to find a place to hunt down and tackle a deer. Mother Nature, though not easing our desires, used evolution to turn our bodies into useless things whose best everyday use is to push buttons on machines.

What better a thing to tackle and

kill than another human? And so, people invented sports like boxing and wrestling where humans could beat and tackle each other to their hearts' content.

Of course, some sports were made more civilized. In ancient Rome, wrestlers could do anything to their opponents except to grab the opponents' um, pizzles. Now, unless one watches the WWF, one won't see the same kind of thing.

Other sports, on the other hand, were made more rough. A few people who were dissatisfied with the potential bloodsheds of rugby and soccer invented football, which has since, admittedly, become more benign with the plastic armor a player must wear.

This is not to say, however, that all sports are meant solely for killing each other. Baseball, for instance, is more of a skilled sport, although hitting a baseball with enough force to make a man's head explode can be interpreted as a very violent thing.

Basketball is also considered by some to be relatively nonviolent, although referees often have to remind Charles Barkley of that fact.

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