

JAMIE KARL

# Sports are life's centerpiece

Despite all the anticipation of tomorrow's game with UCLA, games of the past keep entering my mind.

On a brisk, cool September night almost three years ago, I was playing my last high school homecoming football game. Down 14 to 7 with three minutes left in the first half, my team was not only losing the game, we were losing hope as well.

Deep in our own territory, we broke the huddle and lined up for the third-and-long play. Our quarterback, Doug Weber, looked over the defense as he squatted to take the snap. With the hike of the ball, I broke from my end position to go deep downfield. My speed was nothing great, but I could make the defender break a sweat.

The play seemed to last forever. The quarterback had unusually good pass protection but still had not found an open receiver. I was playing stop-and-go with my defender, when the turf beneath his right foot gave way and he fell. I was all alone.

My quarterback saw me and unleashed a 40-yard bomb that hit me square in the numbers. I ran to the 10-yard line, and taking a page from James Lofton — or maybe James Brown — I turned around and walked into the end zone. I knew I would have some explaining to do. But it was a happy time.

Tomorrow, the basin called Memorial Stadium will come to life, flooded by a sea of red. It, too, will be a happy time, as yet another season of Husker fever has set in.

It is difficult not to be excited about the Huskers this year. Here, in the heart of the country, our university lays claim to the nation's No. 1 ranked football team and a volleyball team that has been deemed No. 2 in the national polls.



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But athletics are more than winning. Tom Osborne knows that. Terry Pettit knows that. Athletic Director Bill Byrne knows that, as well.

Athletics hold considerable meaning for most people across this state and country. Sports are the centerpiece in many families.

In my hometown, I practiced and played baseball or football or basketball, while my old man instructed and coached. My mother would be at all the games, cheering and encouraging. Our sports teams were things my family talked about, agreed about, laughed about and cheered about — together.

Sports are more than just games we play to pass the time. They teach us about life, about ourselves. On the playing field, name, title and wealth suddenly mean nothing. Sons and daughters of all tiers are given, for a couple of hours, an equal chance at the starting line that America is supposed to promise.

Competitive sports provide the means of establishing the equality, or even superiority, of one's self and group. For instance, the national flags and the national anthems at the Olympics represent not the players themselves, but the nation for which they play — along with nationalism, pride and patriotism of the players and fans.

When Jesse Owens came home

with four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics (which were supposed to be dominated by Hitler's Master Race), he won them for the United States. And America was rooting for Owens.

Owens had broken the color barrier in American sports. By the middle of the century, African Americans had proven that, given a fair shake, they were more than equal to the finest athletes of the Third Reich.

Sports make heroes out of ordinary people, and help us live our dreams.

Sports have allowed Tommie Frazier from Florida to quarterback a top-ranked football team with an unprecedented program history and for Kelly Aspegren, a spirited young woman from Callaway, to lead a No. 2 ranked volleyball team.

Indeed, sports are the stuff memories are made of. Even today, I can still recall walking into that end zone, backwards. I can still see the yellow flag, flying above the referee's head. And I can still hear Coach O'Brien yelling: "Karl, what the hell are you doing?"

Like I said, the stuff memories are made of.

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RAINBOW ROWELL

# Adolescence has eight wheels

Most people my age went through a phase sometime between the ages of 10 and 16 when Friday nights meant an adventure-filled night at Skateland.

Now, I never went through that stage. I tried, but my mother thought roller skating would make me a loose woman.

I never had a Panda Party or shiny white roller skates with big pink pompoms. When I did find my way into a rink — usually at a church party or gathering — I had to rent those ugly beat-up, brown skates.

Last weekend, three friends and I were looking for something to do. Someone suggested roller skating. Why not, I thought.

If you haven't been inside a roller-skating rink since your face cleared up, listen up: nothing has changed. There, inside Holiday Skate World, were no less than 3 billion adolescents. Forget Shakespeare — nothing has more human drama than a roller rink on a Friday night.

Just before "YMCA" started, I saw a clump of girls trying to comfort a crying friend. They hugged and patted, enjoying her misery in the vicious way that only teenage girls can.

No doubt her boyfriend was caught smooching by the shoe lockers with another girl, probably her best friend. Make that ex-best friend.

The boys, barely as tall as the girls' new-found bosoms, looked tough in their "No Fear" T-shirts, like extras in a rap video. Macho. The hormones were so thick in the air, you could hardly smell the nachos.

There is nothing new under the sun, or at least at the rink. I once believed people who worked at the skating rink ranked somewhere between Andy Gibb and the Fonz on the Cool-o-Meter.

But now I'm wondering, what does this guy, pushing 30, tell



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prospective dates?

"So what do you do for a living?"  
"I keep kids from skating too fast, and sometimes I get to lead the Hokey Pokey."

After two hours of skating in circles, we were huffin' and puffin' and feelin' our age. So we decided to go to Burger King for unlimited drinks.

We thought our run-in with adolescence was over. We were wrong.

At the table next to us sat four mean teens. But they were different. They were Cool — with a capital "C," that rhymes with "P," that stands for Pretentious.

And shamelessly cool. They sported about 10 different hair colors between them, with combat boots larger than third-world countries and bad attitude to spare.

Being cynical and anti-establishment hasn't changed much since I was a tadpole: wear lots of black. Screw up your hair. Listen to ugly bands and think deeply.

But I hung around with that crowd a for a few long years myself, so I was judging not until ...

We noticed they were talking really loud, and trying desperately to make eye contact with us.

"What sorority are you in, MUFFY?" said the leader, whom I'll call Sid Vicious. "Alpha Eta Pi? Rho Rho Rho your boat?"

And on and on, trying to slander the greek system. Their flaw? Only one of us was in the greek system,

and just barely.

I tried to ignore them, but after awhile I started to get offended. I'm not some sorority girl. I was cool once. I was grunge in the third grade, dammit.

And besides, there are a lot of benefits to being in the greek system. Fraternity, unity, liberty. And formals.

Finally, they started to leave. As they walked out, my boyfriend (amazing, isn't it?), whom I'll call Tex (just because I've always wanted to), said in his best Al Pacino voice:

"Hey, are you talking about my girls?"

Never mind that we weren't all girls and we weren't all his. Sid looked nervous.

"Are you talking about sorority girls?"

Never mind that I'm not in a sorority. I held back Tex and explained to Sid that we were all such loyal Alpha Eta Pi members that we got defensive sometimes. He escaped.

So my three college-aged friends and I sat in our orange Burger King booth and reflected. About growing up, I guess. About being adults and acting mature. About judging people by more than their rollerskating skills or the color of their hair.

And it was good.

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# HUSKER FANS

You are invited to a  
**FREE CELEBRATION**  
at Memorial Stadium  
**September 16**  
Stadium gates open at 6:30 p.m.

**Fun and excitement  
for the whole family!**

Enjoy the NU marching band, fireworks, concessions, the new sound system and the instant replay boards! Stop by the tent near the southwest corner of the stadium to meet coaches and athletes and to purchase Husker media guides, programs and posters. **FREE TO ALL!**



# Candye Kane

- Live Set
- In-store Appearance
- Autograph Party

Twisters Downtown  
1339 "O" Street

Friday, Sept. 16  
5:30 pm



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"Home Cookin'"

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