

THE COST OF SUCCESS

season is nothing new. McMnamin says colleges began a rigorous effort to recruit Green during his junior year of high school.

By the fall of his senior year, Green had narrowed the list to five schools — Notre Dame, Penn State, Arizona, Michigan and Nebraska.

"Those five schools put a tremendous amount of money into recruiting him," McMnamin says.

The USA Today All-American didn't sign his letter of intent for Nebraska simply because Memorial Stadium is 50 miles away.

There were phone calls, recruiting trips. Osborne sent Green handwritten notes from fishing trips — telling him how the fish were biting.

"It was fun in the beginning," Green says while getting his bleeding elbows bandaged after practice. "After awhile it started to drag on. Everybody wanted to talk to me."

"You learn a lot about people. You learn that schools ... they'll do whatever to get you there."

All the attention given to Central's star players has brought the school its own rewards.

"We have a reputation," McMnamin says. "The recruiting process is positive for our football program because it gives us name recognition and the kids read about Central. Seeing (University of Iowa Coach) Hayden Fry and Osborne in our building is impressive."

And it helps with, well, recruiting.

Meanwhile, a small and shrinking sector of the college athletic world has stayed away from the money race. The Ivy League — ridiculed by some, laughed at by others — stubbornly holds to the terms set out by football's forefathers.

Chuck Yrigoyen is the league's associate director. There are few, if any, star athletes here. Television cameras are a rarity at league football games. The glitz is missing from these New England stadiums.

"It's safer, our way," he says. "People look at the Ivy League as one that has regressed. That may in fact be the case. But we've managed to stay away from the front pages of the paper as far as things coming out of the NCAA office."

"So, I guess we're pretty happy."

But there are rumblings of change.

Take Pennsylvania University.

The Quaker football program has won two league titles in the last three years, while compiling a 26-3 record. In the three years prior, the program went 9-21.

Penn's junior quarterback Mark DeRosa commented on the scrutiny placed on the Penn program in an interview earlier this fall.

"Everybody thinks we're breaking some rules," he says. "I'm sure we're bending some rules, but everybody else better start bending some, too."

This is a league that bans its football teams from post-season play. Spring practice was just instituted in April 1994. A few months before, freshmen were made eligible for the varsity team. At the same time, the number of freshman recruits were reduced from 50 to 35.

In the Ivy League all gate receipts and game-day monies go back to the school's general operating funds.

"It's generally a whole different attitude on how to operate the financial issue and the pressure it brings," Yrigoyen says. "It lends itself to more control."

And Yrigoyen says the league has one mainstay that will hold it back from the edge.

"One of the founding tenants of the league, which is obviously not going to change, is no athletic scholarships," he says. "We are not going to compete at a

high level without it. It simply isn't going to happen."

When Byers talks about what the "athletic scholarship" has done in Division I, and what the NCAA hoped to accomplish, he speaks of failure.

"Indeed, the full-ride grant did not achieve its announced purpose to stop 'all this cheating and outside payments,'" Byers writes in his book "Unsportmanlike Conduct."

"It only intensified that problem. The NCAA, in effect, had put in place a nationwide money-laundering scheme."

For more than four decades, the NCAA has struggled to maintain control of its member institutions. Currently, there are 106 Division I schools under the auspice of the association.

Byers has been called the "leading architect of the big-time intercollegiate athletics," a system he now criticizes at length.

He says the organization "was essentially blown out of the water" in 1984 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the NCAA's television controls unconstitutional.

"From that point on, the acquisition and merger efforts began taking place so major conferences started flexing their marketing muscle and negotiating power. They all realized that they were free in the market place and they were going to generate as much money as they could for themselves."

The most recent NCAA revenues and expenses report best details the explosion of wealth.

In 1985, the average total revenue of Division I schools was \$6.8 million. Eight years later, that total had increased 100 percent.

For football, average revenues rose 69 percent to \$6.3 million for that period. In 1970, the average football program drew about \$960,000 of an athletic department's \$1.2 million total revenue.

Eventually, there will come a time when there isn't an abundance of money, Byers says. Then, the more powerful teams will begin consolidating to grab larger shares of the wealth.

But Byrne says consolidation could hurt powerful programs like Nebraska.

"Because Iowa State won't make it," Byrne says. "Neither will Kansas State. Neither will Oklahoma State, if we go to mega conferences," he says. "We will. We will make it. But then, all of a sudden, something else is going to happen."

"We are not going to have (those schools) on the schedule anymore. Instead, our diet is going to be UCLA and Notre Dame and Washington and Oklahoma and Texas and Texas A&M and Colorado. And we are going to end up six and five."

"There are going to be a hell of a lot of six and five teams out there. And there isn't going to be anybody going undefeated anymore."

"Guess what that means?" "That means you're not going to be going to bowl games," Byrne says. "You're not going to be having the dynasties anymore. You're not going to be having the fan following. It's going to be a problem."

Notre Dame relies heavily on fan support. Busi- There was a time when playing the Kansas State Wildcats was the equivalent of an off week. The program was dubbed the "Mildcats."

It held the nation's record for the most losing program in Division I. Now, in the final Associated Press regular season poll, it ranks No. 10 in the country.

At the heart of this success story is the answer to who controls the game.

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Football puts Big Red in the black

Since 1992 Nebraska football has been solely responsible for keeping the athletic department out of debt.

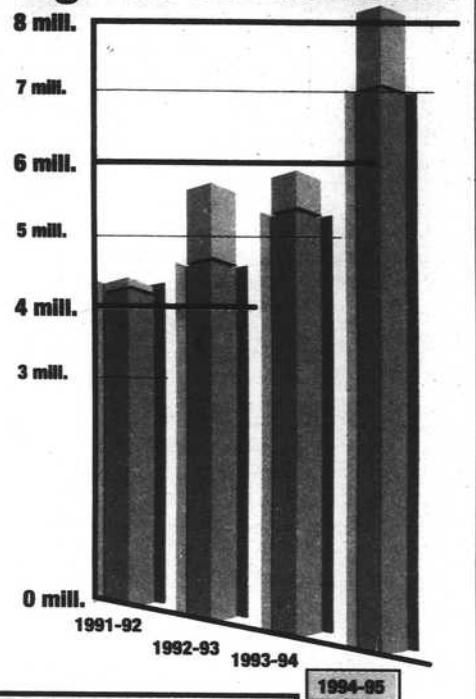
The graph to the right shows the amount of money made by football (red), owed by the rest of the athletic department (blue), and the net profit (green), or debt (blue).

The amount of money football made during the year

The debt of the athletic department without football

Total amount of profit, or debt collected by the athletic department

The chart below shows the amount of money made, and spent by the football team during the 1994-95 season



Below are pie graphs showing how Nebraska football made and spent money during the 1994-95 fiscal year.



Source: University Athletic Department

Aaron Steckelberg/DN

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Coach Bobby Bowden has found his position at Florida State University to be one of power, as well.

"No doubt about it," Bowden says, "your head football coach is nothing but a CEO of a major corporation."

And they play for high stakes.

"I wouldn't be surprised if royalties alone weren't worth a couple million," he says. "Talk about shortening the length of the season? Shoot man, you take a game off and you lose a million dollars. With that comes more pressure, headaches."

But the pressure to win sometimes leads to a program's downfall.

At the University of Miami, past violations have resulted in, among other things, the Hurricanes being banned from postseason play this year and a loss of scholarships.

Among Miami's violations were abuse of the Pell Grant system, extra benefits to athletes, pay for play and a lack of institutional control.

In an interview just hours before the NCAA findings were released, Miami President Edward Foote disregarded the alleged wrongdoings and said they would not affect how Hurricane athletics are governed.

Foote says he has a "fine athletic director" and a quality new coach. They are the ones who control the football program, he says, no question.

"It is a big business. The financial stakes are high," Foote says.

Back in the Husker state, the stands are empty. Memorial Stadium is quiet, silhouetted against the warmth of a red Nebraska sunset.

Down the road, team practice is just ending. Osborne has gathered his team in full circle. He stands in the center. Behind him stretch a row of Big 8 championship banners and three national title flags.

He maps out the schedule leading to Jan. 2, then dismisses his team.

"When you add it all up, football here probably generates \$15-, \$16-, \$17 million," he says during an interview as players slowly exit the pavilion.

"But when I call a play, I don't think too much about, 'Is this going to win money or lose money for the university?'"

By the time interviews are done, all the players are gone but two. One of them is Ahman Green, stretched out on the sideline.

Green's spectacular runs have helped clear the way for a trip to the Fiesta Bowl, a third straight undefeated season and a chance to repeat as uncontested national champions — a feat that hasn't been equaled in almost 40 years.

It has allowed Byrne and others with a chance to lay their hands, once again, on one of the most fertile financial stakes in college football.

He's part of a tradition. Nebraska has been on top for a long time. The Huskers have been invited to 26 consecutive bowl games and haven't had a losing season for 34 years, an NCAA record. They have been ranked in the Associated Press Top 25 for 238 consecutive weeks.

But the last time the Huskers were in this position was Jan. 1, 1972, against Alabama Coach Bear Bryant's Crimson Tide.

Bob Devaney was Nebraska's coach then. Now, the aging Devaney speaks quietly from his plush office down the hall from Byrne. His name plaque reads Athletic Director Emeritus.

A few months ago, he suffered a stroke. As he talks about the game, his memory wears thin and his words come slowly.

He compliments Osborne, the man he recommended to follow him as head coach. He talks about the problems. And he talks about yesterday's game.

"I've missed coaching, yes," Devaney says. "But I wouldn't want to go through what he (Osborne) has had to go through."

"I wouldn't want to coach today."

Today, success equals money. And money equals success.

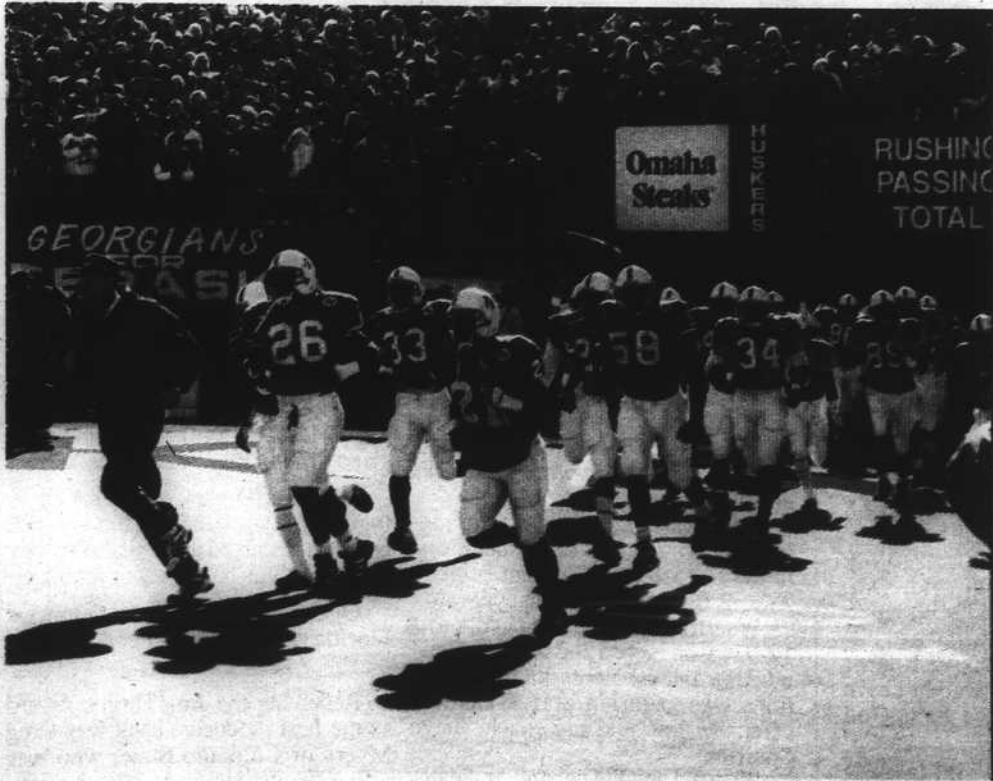
"The money is there, and you are not going to stop big-time colleges from trying to get their hands on more money," Byers says. "I'm not asking them to give back those millions of dollars. That is the way of the world."

The problem is, this is the world of amateur sport, where naive kids are playing a big-time game. It's dangerous stakes, he says, and at some point, the clock is going to run out.

"Time will tell," Coach Bowden says. "Are we piling too much on the top and skimming too much off the have nots? I can't answer that question. We'll have to see."

"It does seem like it was more fun 30 years ago, 40 years ago."

"It was more about football back then."



Courtesy of Nebraska Sports Information

Game Day at Memorial Stadium brings in almost \$1.5 million. "It's a business," says NU's athletic budget director, "and you have to look at it that way."