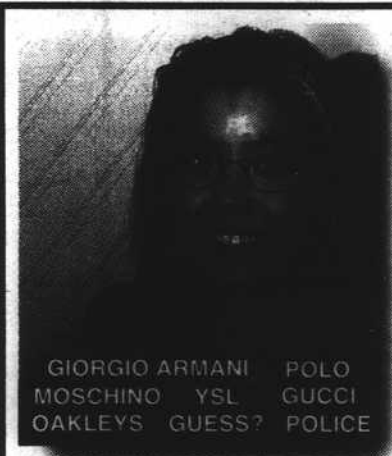


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# Bill would limit school age gap

By ERIN SCHULTE  
 Senior Reporter

The Cornhusker football coaches aren't the only people in the state to practice red-shirting.

Sen. Roger Wehrbein of Plattsmouth said too many parents "red-shirt" their 5-year-olds and wait until they're almost 6 to send them to kindergarten.

At the same time, Wehrbein said, "More and more 4-year-olds are being rushed into kindergarten."

The two-year age gap can cause problems in the classroom and place an undue burden on teachers, Wehrbein

said when he pitched LB174 to the education committee Tuesday.

The bill would move the cutoff birthdate for children entering kindergarten from Oct. 15 to Aug. 1, which he hoped would decrease the age gap.

Four-year-olds with birthdays in August, September and October would have to wait until the next academic year under the bill's provisions, as well.

Several kindergarten teachers testified in support of the bill, and said the age level wasn't the only problem — emotional, intellectual and physical levels caused problems, too.

Kay Vonderschmidt, who has taught kindergarten for 20 years, said just because

**Legislature**

kids knew their letters and numbers didn't justify entrance to kindergarten.

"As a society, we're really starting to pressure kids," Vonderschmidt said.

A few opposed the bill, saying it wouldn't make much difference, and that children's developmental levels would vary regardless of new entry date restrictions.

"No matter where we move the date, there will always be a 12-month variation," said Carolyn Law, an Omaha elementary school principal. "The range tends to slow down by the third grade."

# Washington to take stand for first time

**TRIAL from page 1**

inside, bought some liquor and walked outside.

As they walked to their car, Cole and some associates drove up. Brown said Cole tried picking a fight.

Brown said he and Washington got in their car and drove away.

Brown said that later he, Washington and Abdul Muhammed decided to go to the Kwik Shop to buy some snacks. Brown said that when they tried leaving the store, Cole was there shouting "fighting words."

Brown said Muhammed threw

the first punch at Cole, which started a fight. Brown later jumped in.

When Brown let up, he backed off to make another charge at Cole, Brown said. That was when the first shot sounded.

Brown said he did not see who fired the first shot, and was running away on the second and third. He did not call police, and got a ride home from where he ran — only three blocks from his apartment.

"It's not that common where I live to go back to tell the police," Brown said. "I was scared, and I just don't talk to the police."

Another defense witness said she saw

another man, Jason Narcisse, come to the Kwik Shop several times. Mary Caldwell, a Kwik Shop assistant manager, said Narcisse's car, a red Honda Prelude, left the Kwik Shop moments after the shooting.

She said Narcisse came back hours after the shooting. She said he was wearing a red basketball tank top.

Three prosecution witnesses, who said Washington was the gunman, described the former football player as wearing a red tank top. Video evidence shown by the defense showed Washington wearing a black T-shirt.

# Firefighters could get higher wages

**UNION from page 1**

the same desire as always to protect the city.

However, the morale and attitude toward the city is diminishing, Spadt said. The fire department had always held faith in the city and trusted its officials' leadership, he said, but lately, members of the department have found fewer reasons to trust Lincoln's government.

Mayor Johanns said that while he sympathized with the complaints of comparably low wages of Lincoln

firefighters, other factors were involved in the delayed decision.

"The benefits for Lincoln firefighters are truly outstanding," said Johanns, citing time off and insurance for Lincoln firefighters, which are better than most packages at fire departments in the comparison cities.

Lincoln firefighters also receive complete uniforms, extensive insurance, sick leave, longevity pay, vacation time and pension benefits.

Under their insurance plans,

firefighters get 73 percent to 100 percent of health insurance and 50 percent of dental insurance premiums paid.

The firefighters' longevity pay gives those who have been there longest the highest raises.

Despite this, many firefighters think that the city council doesn't care about them, Spadt said. He said many firefighters think Lincoln residents should get more than that.

"Citizens expect and deserve our services in full."

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