

OPINION PACKAGES

Our VIEW

Foul ball Moving start of season back helps north teams

Tuesday afternoon the temperature dipped to about 30 degrees with a wind chill of about 15.

Students ran across campus braving the weather to get to class, and at Buck Beltzer Field the Nebraska baseball team played Creighton.

Baseball? On a day with brutal weather like that? Is the NCAA insane?

When it comes to baseball they are — at least baseball in the Midwest.

Teams in up-and-down weather climates have to adapt to the problem that does not plague college baseball's elite.

The NCAA does not have a rule stating when teams can start practicing or playing baseball games — the only sport it does not have a rule for concerning the beginning of a season.

That puts teams like Nebraska and the Bluejays in a tough position. While Hawaii or Miami have played almost 10 games by Feb. 1 and practiced for a month, the Huskers have to hope for one nice day to practice outside by mid-February. In the meantime they prepare for the year in Cook Pavilion or Schulte Field House.

Earlier this year, the Big 12 Conference baseball coaches discussed the problem during a preseason media teleconference. While the coaches from the South teams expressed concern about playing in the North this time of year, the Northern coaches laughed it off — their feelings coming from the experience of playing in the Big Eight.

As long as this continues, no team from the north will be able to battle with those who play in warm weather climates.

Moving opening day back a few weeks or months will put all teams on a level playing field — an advantage that warm weather teams have had for so long.

On a day when Creighton and Nebraska played in weather better suited for a November football game, the NCAA should finally take notice.

All gummed up

From The St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Chewing gum can be a nuisance. It stains and sticks, and it can be very hard to remove.

But — happy day! — a subsidiary of the Wrigley Co. has received a patent for a biodegradable gum. Gum has always been biodegradable, but only very slowly. Now, when treated with water-soluble protein-based polymers, it will break down faster, be easier to unstick, even be safe to swallow, avoiding the problem of undigested gum sitting in the stomach for years.

More impressive still is a patent granted to Enamelon Inc. for a soluble calcium and phosphate mix that can be put in gum, which coats the very enamel that gum, as well candy and food, eat away.

But patents are just the first step. Manufacturing in volume is the real challenge, so benign if not beneficial gum isn't just around the corner. But it appears to be down the road. Dentists beware.

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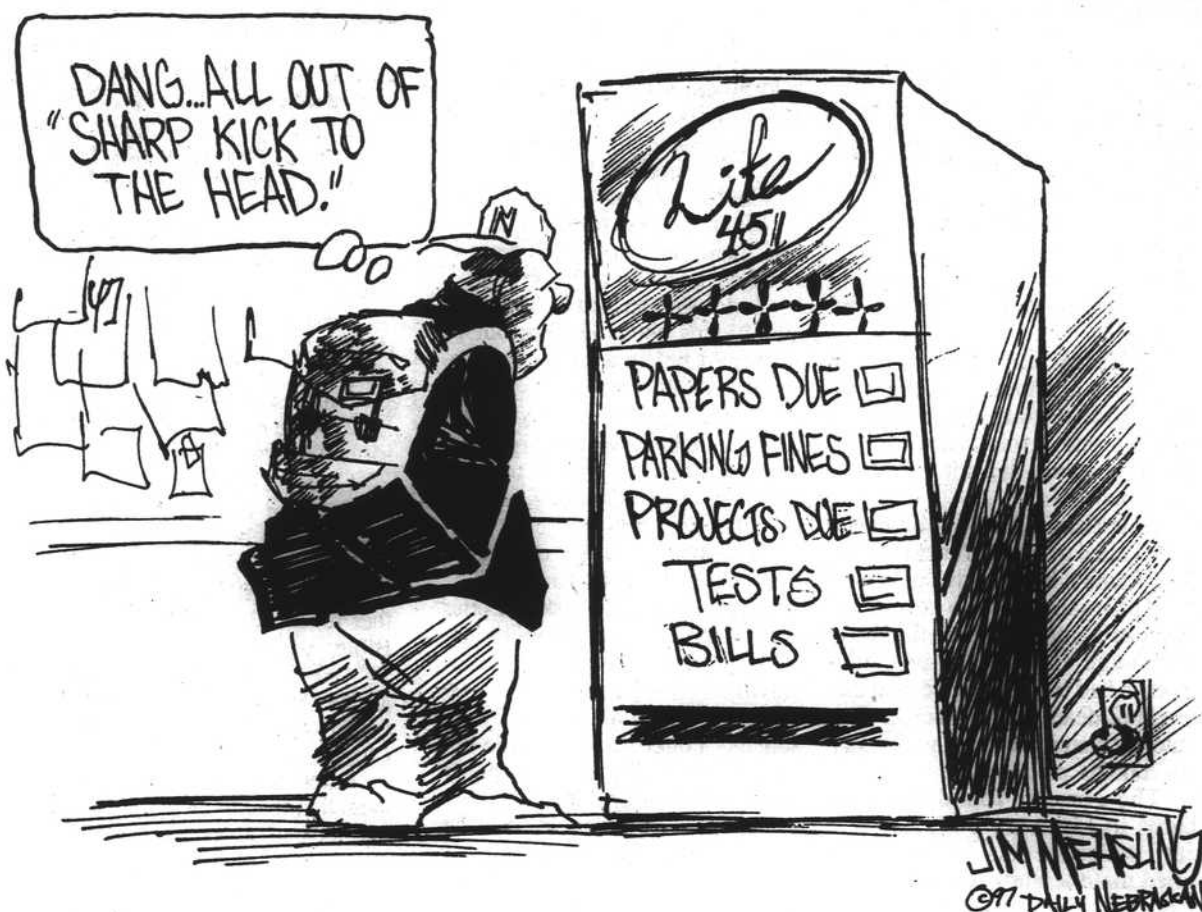
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Mehsling's VIEW



Guest VIEW

Judge me by my size do you? The Muppets are more 'human' than us

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (U-WIRE) — Cynics say the Muppets are for kids; they're silly little dolls with someone pulling their strings and with something up their asses. I say cynics are stupid. I say cynics should shut up and change the channel. I say the Muppets are for everyone: young, old, woman, man or weirdo. I'm sick of cynics. I want my Muppets.

We live in a dark and depressed time, lacking heroes and ideals. Sure the Muppets are fake, but reality doesn't leave too many options. Our heroes used to come from sports, entertainment and politics. Charles Barkley doesn't want to be a role model, and somebody has to tell Dennis Rodman not to be one.

The media feed on our hunger for gossip and negativity by highlighting the worst, not the best, of human kind. Certainly there are role models to be found, but these people rarely make the evening news. We need more role models on television.

Jim Henson was a genius. Though the Muppets have always been marketed for children, only an adult can get all of the jokes. The Muppets, unlike Beavis and Butthead, can use subtle word play as well as physical comedy.

The Muppets are never offensive. Few comedians can make this claim and few sitcoms live up to it. As funny as "Seinfeld" and "Friends" (the two most popular sitcoms) can be, the humor often comes at someone's expense. George Castanza might be funnier than Dennis Rodman, but he's no better as a role model.

The moral center of the Muppets is Kermit the Frog. Granted, he's a frog, and a fake one at that. Yet mysteriously, Kermit is much more human than the protagonists of other "real" comedies. He makes mistakes and he learns from them. He makes jokes, but he knows when to be serious.

Toward the end of "The Muppet Movie," Kermit goes through a period of self-doubt far more real than anything I've ever seen in a



MATT HANEY/DN

human comedy. It's a sober moment of truth that somehow, as if by magic, seems perfectly at home among the zany antics of frogs, pigs, bears and weirdoes.

Name one sitcom with a multiracial cast. I'm not talking about one token character who's race is often an issue of the show, but a cast of many races. Though sometimes Gonzo feels pangs of loneliness, it's because he doesn't know what he is and not because the others isolate him.

When Kermit gets amnesia in "The Muppets Take Manhattan" he goes to work with a bunch of other frogs. Race is clearly an issue here (this happens to be the most mature of the "trilogy"), with Kermit feeling more comfortable among his own in his vulnerable state. Yet when he regains his memory and identity, he immediately realizes the importance of his multi-species friends. He makes everyone part of the show. Race might matter, but ultimately, we're all animals.

I realize that violence on television is a serious issue, but nobody, not even a child, takes Muppet violence seriously. A kid may have burned his home down after watching Beavis and Butthead, but I'm confident that nobody watches the

antics of "Gonzo the Great" and decides to shoot herself out of a cannon. Even a child can tell the difference between Muppet violence (which never hurts or causes bleeding) and human violence.

Muppet morals already reach young children in the form of the characters of "Sesame Street." This show is loved and admired for its ability to entertain and educate children while holding the interest of parents.

Yet once we're comfortable with the letters B and Q and the number 7, we stop watching. "The Muppet Show," and more recently "Muppets Tonight!," aims to entertain first, educating by example only.

I wish everyone could realize that Muppets can be cool. Yoda's a Muppet. Not only is Yoda cool, but he's a powerful Jedi master who just happens to sound a lot like Miss Piggy. If Luke Skywalker is willing to listen to a tiny green muppet, so should we all.

Kermit may not teach us how to lift stuff with our minds, but he'll show us how life should be lived — with humor, joy, compassion and sincerity. When a Hollywood agent tells Kermit that he could gain fame and fortune in movies, Kermit refuses, expressing content with his simple swamp life.

Unmotivated by fame or fortune, Kermit goes to Hollywood in order to make "millions of people happy." How many other stars got started this way? In a society of misplaced morals and diminishing expectations, the Muppets stand out for their idealistic approach to living.

The Muppets, much like a young Jedi, bring hope. They sometimes make life seem a bit simple. On the other hand, life's a lot more simple than we make it. If there really is a rainbow connection to be found, we'll need help in finding it. We'll need more lovers, and we'll need more dreamers.

Let Kermit lead the way.

— Jonathan Olin
The Brown Daily Herald