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Former NU coach's lawsuit dropped

By JOSH FUNK
 Senior Reporter

Former Husker Linebacker Coach Kevin Steele's defamation lawsuit against Lancaster County Attorney Gary Lacey was dismissed by a federal court judge last week.

U.S. District Court Judge Richard G. Kopf ruled that Lacey was acting in an official and therefore protected capacity when he referred to Steele in a Sports Illustrated interview.

Steele filed suit in September 1996, requesting \$1 million in damages for Lacey's comments in the article.

The article, which quoted Lacey extensively, focused on the troubles of then-Husker players Lawrence Phillips, Christian Peter, Riley Washington and Tyrone Williams.

Steele's suit hinged on comments made by Lacey about a .22-caliber handgun Williams allegedly used in a January 1994 shooting.

The article stated that Williams gave Steele the gun, and Steele then held the weapon while police were still investigating the crime. No source was cited for that information.

In the article Lacey said the handgun should have been given to authorities immediately, but Lacey never mentioned Steele's name.

Nebraska law exempts public officials from slander and libel suit when they are acting in an official capacity.

Kopf ruled that Lacey's statements about Williams were related to his involvement in the case.

Despite the dismissal, Steele's lawyers maintain that his case had merit.

"We lost on a technicality," Morris Bruckner, Steele's lawyer, said.

But in spite of its merits, Steele, who now coaches for the Carolina Panthers in the NFL, will not pursue the case further, Bruckner said.

Neither Lacey nor his attorneys were available for comment Wednesday afternoon.

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Greek system to try new finance system

By AMANDA SCHINDLER
 Staff Reporter

After 10 years of wrestling with financial insecurity, fraternity members on the UNL Interfraternity Council took steps to resolve their problem Wednesday night.

IFC members unanimously passed a resolution to centralize fraternities' financial auditing, which will force fraternity members to pay their outstanding debts to their chapters.

IFC will enact the measure if chapter advisers approve it Friday.

Unpaid bills have piled up for many fraternities, said IFC President Jess Sweley, and resulted in financial difficulties such as those contributing to the closing of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Kappa Sigma chapter this year.

He said the auditing system is necessary to hold members accountable for their bills and to maintain some fiscal integrity within the greek system.

The new auditing system would also save chapters money, Sweley said.

Rather than each chapter paying a different accountant to check its financial records, one accountant would be hired to audit all fraternities.

Ideally, a university employee would be hired for the auditing position, Sweley said.

Chapter treasurers wouldn't lose power, but gain a checking system, he said.

Farmhouse Fraternity President and IFC member Matt Timm, who presented the resolution, said he first noticed the bill-collection problem after becoming treasurer of his fraternity last year.

"I was amazed at the amounts still owed from four and five years ago," he said. "There's no accountability once members leave the chapter."

He said all possible means of seeking out unpaid bills, such as using collection agencies, cost money. As a result, fraternity chapters rarely receive the whole amount owed to them.

"We need to advocate this now to prevent (more problems)," he said.

IFC first got the idea for centralized auditing from peer institutions including Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Okla., and Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

Under the Oklahoma State policy, the university withholds important paperwork including grades and diplomas from fraternity members who don't pay their bills.

If chapter advisers approve the resolution at their Friday meeting, the IFC will look at case studies from peer institutions such as Oklahoma State and will examine how to install the system.

Members hope the process will be implemented no later than the fall 1998 semester.

"The sooner the better," Timm said. "It will help our house a lot, as well as the whole greek system."

Nelson: Energy saving should begin with state

From Staff Reports

Gov. Ben Nelson said Wednesday that if government expects the state to use more energy-efficient resources, then government needs to lead the way.

At a press conference, Nelson announced an executive order calling for all state agencies to use renewable energies whenever cost-effective and practical, and to use only renewable energies by 2025.

"Renewable energy has played a considerable role in Nebraska's history," Nelson said. "And it's no secret the use of fuels made of grains is important to our economy."

State agencies like the Department of Roads and the Department of Administrative Services have already begun using ethanol- and soy-based fuels in some of their vehicles. Under

the Green Light Program, state government also has begun replacing burned-out light bulbs with bulbs expending one-fourth as much energy.

While some energy-saving steps cost more initially, they save money in the long run by reducing energy use and avoiding environmental fines for problems such as excess emissions, said state Sen. Don Preister of Omaha, vice chairman of the Nebraska Legislature's Natural Resources Committee.

Nelson said he was not asking state agencies to use experimental fuel sources. Rather, he said, they should examine the costs and benefits of ideas for saving energy before implementing them. State government thus could be a leader in promoting energy efficiency, he said.

"The key here is I want to set an example."



Man caught with drugs

A man found with methamphetamine in his pocket Monday afternoon claimed he was wearing someone else's pants.

Police responding to a neighbor's complaint found Michael Bell and Edward Stalder moving things from a garage. They said they were moving because the lease was up, Lincoln Police Sgt. Terry Sherrill said. But police found that Bell had two outstanding warrants. When police searched Bell they found the methamphetamine in his pocket.

After being charged for his outstanding warrants, Bell was also charged with possession of methamphetamine, a felony offense.

High school girl assaulted

A 16-year-old boy has been charged with assaulting a Northeast High School classmate during their lunch hour Tuesday.

The victim, a 16-year-old girl, was driving on Baldwin Avenue between 60th and 63rd streets when she stopped in the street to let someone into her car. Lincoln Police Sgt. Ann Heermann said.

But when she stopped, the assailant - someone she recognized from school - got into her back seat and refused to leave.

After pleading with him, the driver got out of the car and tried to physically pull him out. But the assailant responded by choking her, and he burned her face with a cigarette.