

# The odyssey of homers

## Americans addicted to instant gratification of home-run drama



**ADAM KLINKER is a sophomore English and history major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.**

This summer, as I sit back and marvel at a production played out on a grand stage with grander characters, I feel a little guilty I'm not gaping at some monumental Shakespeare on the Green production or an uncut version of "Citizen Kane."

Instead, it's a baseball game I revere.

It's a baseball game on television. It's really the highlights of a baseball game on television played on late night ESPN.

It couldn't have been written better in Hollywood or on Broadway by Tarantino or Marlowe. All this mystique is behind two men, one a marvel of human hugeness and the other a soft-spoken

young Dominican, converging on a record of immense proportions and unthinkable lore.

This was indeed the summer that Babe Ruth built, Roger Maris haunted, and Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa owned.

America is a curious place, and those who have summed it up best have found a heart and soul to our nation buried deep within the lines of our pastoral "National Game" of baseball.

But this is 1998. This is the Gilded Age of Gargantuan Athletes, where a playing field elevated by the performance of a few who surpass the mere mortals dominates the image of a Sunday afternoon pick-up game in the park.

As a new, power-loving game, baseball is back with its power-loving people.

Watching McGwire proves to be an interesting look. A foreign citizen might learn a lot about the American people just by watching his movements.

There's the graceful force in his swing, his easy dispatch of the bat as he watches the ball disappear into the seas of raving fans, maybe a pump of the fist skyward as he

rounds first base.

It's what so wholly captivates us. It's what keeps us on the edge as we watch him, chewing his gum calmly like he was indifferently walking the aisles of some perverse house of freaks — all in turn watching him.

And then, of course, for the roughshod Chicago Cubs fans, the answer to pennant drought is the home-run chase. The answer to the absence of any Ruthian clout is Sammy Sosa-esque splendor.

America can't get enough of these guys, and that's great. It may be the return of American heroism in sports. It certainly signals the return of baseball.

How about this American game?

Ratings are up all over the place. It's not a team sport anymore, but America's not a team country either.

It's a game about two men or three men where the other stars fade into the background behind these greater celestial beings.

America's psychosis over the long ball transcends anything in sport or entertainment. It's instant gratification. You can't get it with a 100-yard touchdown or even a slam dunk.

A homer has the happy medium between the two. Sports fans don't

have to wait for the athlete to run the gamut, and there's just enough awe-inspiring look to a home run to discount it as a scant, short attention span fling.

A home run has the right look, sound and feel. It also has the right propulsion behind it — a normal human being swinging a stick.

At least, at one time it did have the right acting member wielding the bat.

Times were that a baseball player was different from a football player or basketball player. A baseballer didn't have to be of enormous size, height or weight.

Baseball was America's game because the little guy with a great arm could become a hero, and he looked like everyone else.

That's not what America wants anymore. America wants the McGwires and the Sosas with arms resembling trunks of mid-sized trees. Relatively skinny Ken Griffey Jr. is a marvel because he hits with what he's got in technique.

Griffey probably spends 10 times longer working on his fundamentals than McGwire or Sosa do lifting in the weight room. He's probably a rarity not only in baseball, but in the American lifestyle in

the 1990s.

McGwire and Sosa are the perfect American heroes because of their raw strength and their ability to hit a 9-ounce leather spheroid to obscene distances.

Griffey is a member of the original American mystique because, like Ruth, Maris and Willie Mays, he's just an ordinary man doing extraordinary things.

If we can learn something of ourselves from this home-run craze, then we must also learn something of our nation.

We are addicted to this thing. We like the idea of the long ball. We like the energy of it. It is our thing.

As the season comes to a close and the pace grows frantic and the mark grows closer and America presses an intent ear to the radio and casts a watchful eye on the television, hopefully baseball will remain our preferred game.

Hopefully, baseball will keep giving us these exciting outlets and maybe offer a way for us to see ourselves in the game.

It's not really the race that matters at all, but the people who run it, that we might see ourselves in them.

# Eggs-traordinary problem

## Two weeks of television abstinence leads to pro-life poultry pondering



**TODD MUNSON is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.**

When I moved back into the little slice of hell that I call my apartment, a significant change was afoot.

It wasn't the disappearance of the rooster over my living room or the various critters that set up shop during my three-month absence, but the television. It has yet to be plugged in.

During the first few days, the telly still had a firm grip on my life. More than a few times I caught myself sitting in front of a blank screen hoping it would spring to life.

A scant two weeks later, I have more free time than I know what to do with and have begun to freely think on my own since the ol' radiation cube's mind-sucking capabilities are no more.

Perhaps I've been thinking too much. The other day I began to ponder this question: Is it morally correct for a staunch, rah-rah pro-lifer to eat chicken eggs?

Since I could get no answer channel surfing, I went downstairs to ask my neighbor, Goody, what he thought of the subject. I found him on the front porch in his underwear. Picture a psychotic version of Kramer and you have Goody.

**ME:** Do you think it's wrong for a pro-lifer to eat eggs?

**GOODY:** What kind?

**ME:** Chicken eggs.

**GOODY:** Oh, not necessarily.

**ME:** Why not?

**GOODY:** Because chickens practice external fertilization and the eggs people eat aren't yet fertilized by the rooster.

**ME:** You're full of crap.

**GOODY:** No way man. I saw it on TV. When the egg rolls out of the hen the shell is still porous and that's when the rooster goes around

and makes his deposits, so to speak.

**ME:** You jackass, you're talking about sea horses.

Ten minutes later, our argument ended and I marched upstairs to call Chris, the most morally sound person I know.

**ME:** Hi. Is Christopher home?

**Chris' Roommate:** No he's not.

**ME:** He's probably out drinking, eh?

**CR:** Yep.

**ME:** Well, on the odd chance that he comes home in the next few minutes, have him call Todd. I have a philosophical question and need to have my moral stance corrected.

**CR:** No problem. What's the question?

**ME:** Is it okay for a pro-life, save-the-fetus type to eat chicken eggs?

**CR:** You better talk to Chris.

Undaunted, I placed a call to Mark. Hell, he's a philosophy major and would be ecstatic for the rare chance to put his education to good use.

**ME:** Hey, Mark. What's up?

**MARK:** Not a whole lot.

**ME:** Hey, do you think it's morally right for a pro-lifer to eat chicken eggs?

**MARK:** Sure.

If people eat chicken then it's OK to eat the egg. You're just eating the chicken at a younger age, that's all.

**ME:** Interesting. Do you know if the eggs people buy in the store are fertilized? My neighbor says chickens practice external fertilization.

**MARK:** I don't know, but I remember in the "Red Pony" they talked about the rooster leaving his mark. That book was such a

gyp. It wasn't even about a red pony.

**ME:** I gotta go; there's a beep. Hello?

**CHRIS:** What's up, Snapper?

**ME:** I've got a question for you.

**CHRIS:** That's what my roommate said. He couldn't remember what it was, but he said it was out there.

**ME:** Is it morally correct for pro-lifers to eat eggs?

**CHRIS:** Long ago in society, a distinction was made between the value of animal life and the value of human life. As you know, the value of animal life is much lower, and because of that, it is socially acceptable to kill animals whether it's for food or for fun gotten by blowing something away and mounting it on your wall.

Besides, many of those people's beliefs are strongly rooted in the Bible, which says

that humans can do what they choose with animals.

**ME:** You drinkin' this weekend?

**CHRIS:** Ha. What do you think?

By this time, my politically scientific roommate had stumbled in, and I knew he would have the answer.

**ME:** Do you think it's right for a pro-lifer to eat eggs?

**AARON:** Are you sniffing glue again?

**ME:** No. The question just popped into my head, and I'm trying to find the answer.

**AARON:** Well, that depends. If someone is one of those crazies who'll kill to save a fetus, then I don't think they would have any objections to eating an egg. But, on the other hand, if they're the type who sits on the Capitol steps weeping for the unborn, then I

**ME:** That's disgusting.

**AARON:** Or what about my sister? Every morning she shares an omelet with her bird. Is that cannibalism?

**ME:** What, it sits at the kitchen table?

**AARON:** Yeah, she just lets it fly around the house.

**ME:** Is it potty trained?

**AARON:** No. It just goes where ever, but it's easy to clean up.

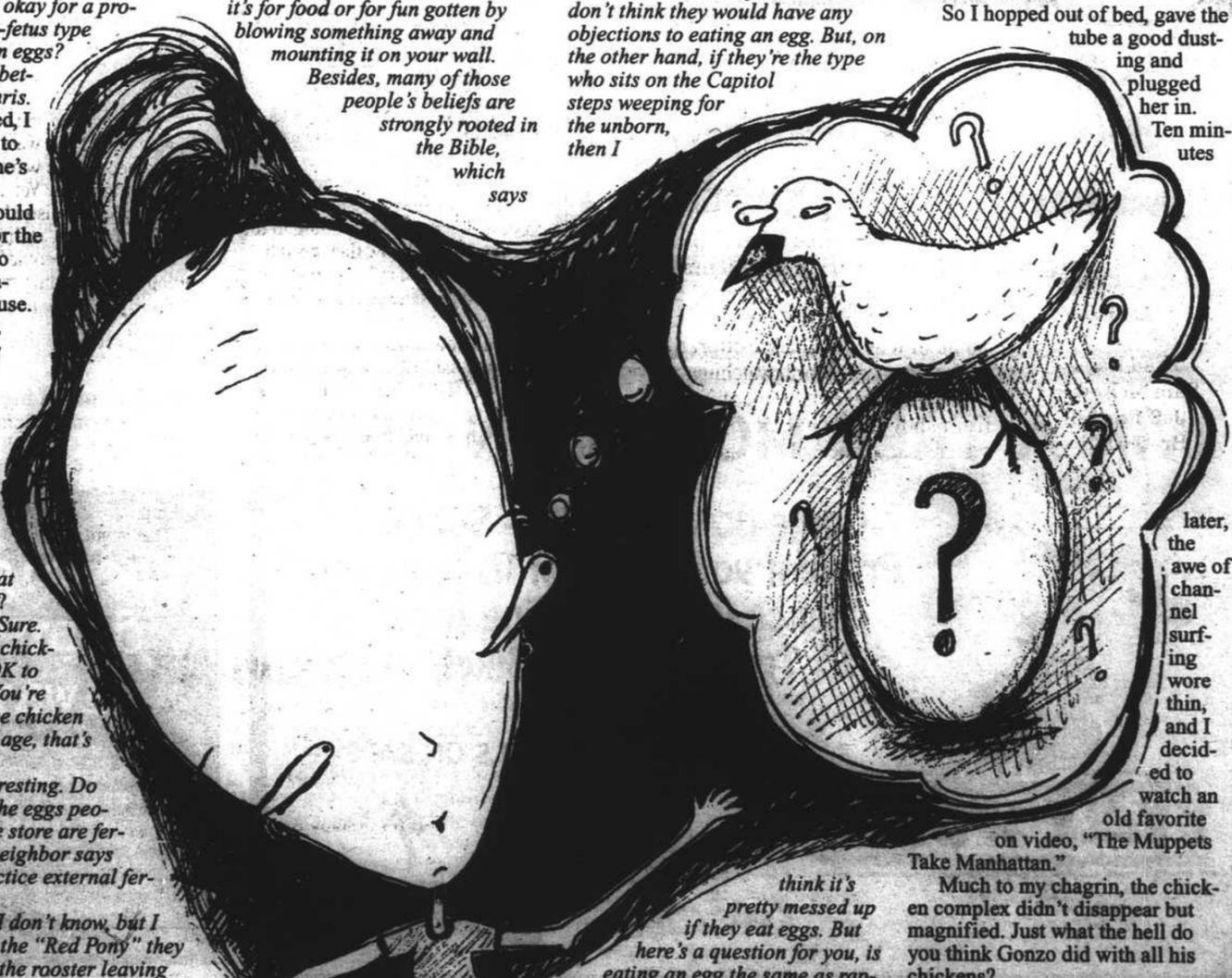
**ME:** I'm going to bed.

Later that night, as I tried to fall asleep, I realized that I missed having the television subliminally telling me how to think and what to feel. Stalin was right. Free thinking is for the birds.

So I hopped out of bed, gave the tube a good dusting and plugged her in. Ten minutes

later, the awe of channel surfing wore thin, and I decided to watch an old favorite on video, "The Muppets Take Manhattan."

Much to my chagrin, the chicken complex didn't disappear but magnified. Just what the hell do you think Gonzo did with all his chickens?



AMY MARTIN/DN