

# 'Rocky' road

## The Huskers have taken a turn similar to Balboa's fall from grace



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Sooner or later, everyone falls from the top.

Poison, Gary Coleman, Crocodile Dundee, the two Coreys — it happens to the best, and now that list includes the Nebraska Cornhusker football team. It's only natural. When you're on the top, the only place to go is down.

As a KRNU sports director and host of "Turf Talk," which, I might add, is the wittiest pre-game show this side of Fox (and an hour before every home game! On 90.3 on your FM dial!), I've had a prime view for the last four years as the Huskers have gone from the highest of highs to their current quagmire.

Both the team and the media have been searching for answers with no luck. However, in my finite wisdom, I've diagnosed the Huskers' ailment, and it's as simple as explaining the theory of relativity: They're going through what I'd like to call "Rocky III" Syndrome.

Blame it on the rickets setting in because of the recent lack of sunlight, but the proof is in the pudding, with Rocky Balboa being the spoon.

The 1993 campaign ("Rocky") ended with a heartbreaking 18-16 loss to Florida State in the Orange Bowl. Much akin to Rocky battling Apollo Creed to a draw, the Huskers about pulled out the victory, but Byron Bennett's field goal wobbled wide to the left.

One year later ("Rocky II"), the Huskers found themselves back at the Orange Bowl facing perhaps an even stronger nemesis in the form of the Miami Hurricanes, a team that had won 62 of its last 63 games played at the Orange Bowl.

Like Rocky fighting Apollo toe-to-toe once more, the Huskers played with the gritty smash-mouth panache of a team that practiced against sides of beef in a meat locker. And just as Rocky didn't rise until the count of nine, the Huskers didn't seal away the win until there were two minutes, 46 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter.

I'd like to call the 1995-97 seasons the period between "Rocky II" and "Rocky III," which if you remember is neatly synopsized at the start of "III" by showing Rocky successfully defending his title. With the exception of the '96 season, the Huskers more or less did the same as Tommie Frazier and Scott Frost lead the 'skers to another pair of championships. (Note to Tommie Frazier: Dude, legends leave. They don't make appearances at used car lots or deny autograph requests to kids when approached on the street, which you did to my little brother, you chowderhead.)

Now that the preliminary story has been told, here's where "Rocky III" and Huskers '98 begin to look alike.

Rocky had to adapt to a new trainer in the form of Apollo Creed as Mickey, his longtime trainer stepped into the afterlife.

The Huskers had to adapt to a new head coach in the form of Frank Solich, as Dr. Tom, their longtime coach, went fishin'.

Rocky was handed a stunning loss at the hand of the hungry Clubber Lang (Mr. "I pity the fool" T) and became the former champion who no

one wanted to know.

The Huskers have been handed stunning losses at the collective hand of Texas A&M and the

University of Texas and have become the former champions that no one wants to cheer for.

And why have the Huskers lost?

My man Apollo will tell you it's for the same reason he chewed Rocky's butt; like the Italian Stallion, the Huskers have focused

more on the glitz than the football. Even Mickey saw it coming before he kicked the proverbial spit bucket. Think about it.

In "Rocky III," just before his demise, Rocky worked out by

fighting bubbles in his new state-of-the-art gym, while making an un-Rocky-like appearance on "The Muppet Show."

The current crop of Huskers has been playing under the shadow of a new state-of-the-art skybox that's set to open next season and have been making quite a presence on the HuskerVision screens in very un-Husker-like skits.

Unlike the previous 107 seasons, this seems to be the first where the action on the field has acted as sideshow instead of the main event. I long for the days where the only distraction at a Husker game was the marching band's halftime show and the only form of scoreboard entertainment was a few lousy pixels.

Sorry HuskerVision, but in my mind's eye, you're the major culprit.

From the clichéd music to the 3-D animated turkey

flying the championship trophy, the beauty of a college football game has been reduced to one big advertisement.

And about those skits featuring players, do you really want to claim those as yours? Shevin Wiggins makes a big catch and he gets wiggy wit' it on the big screen. The defense takes the field and punches a clock. And let's not even discuss the racial undertones of the "Brown Brothers." Instead of wasting all that time filming those segments, the players could have used that time to concentrate on something more important — football.

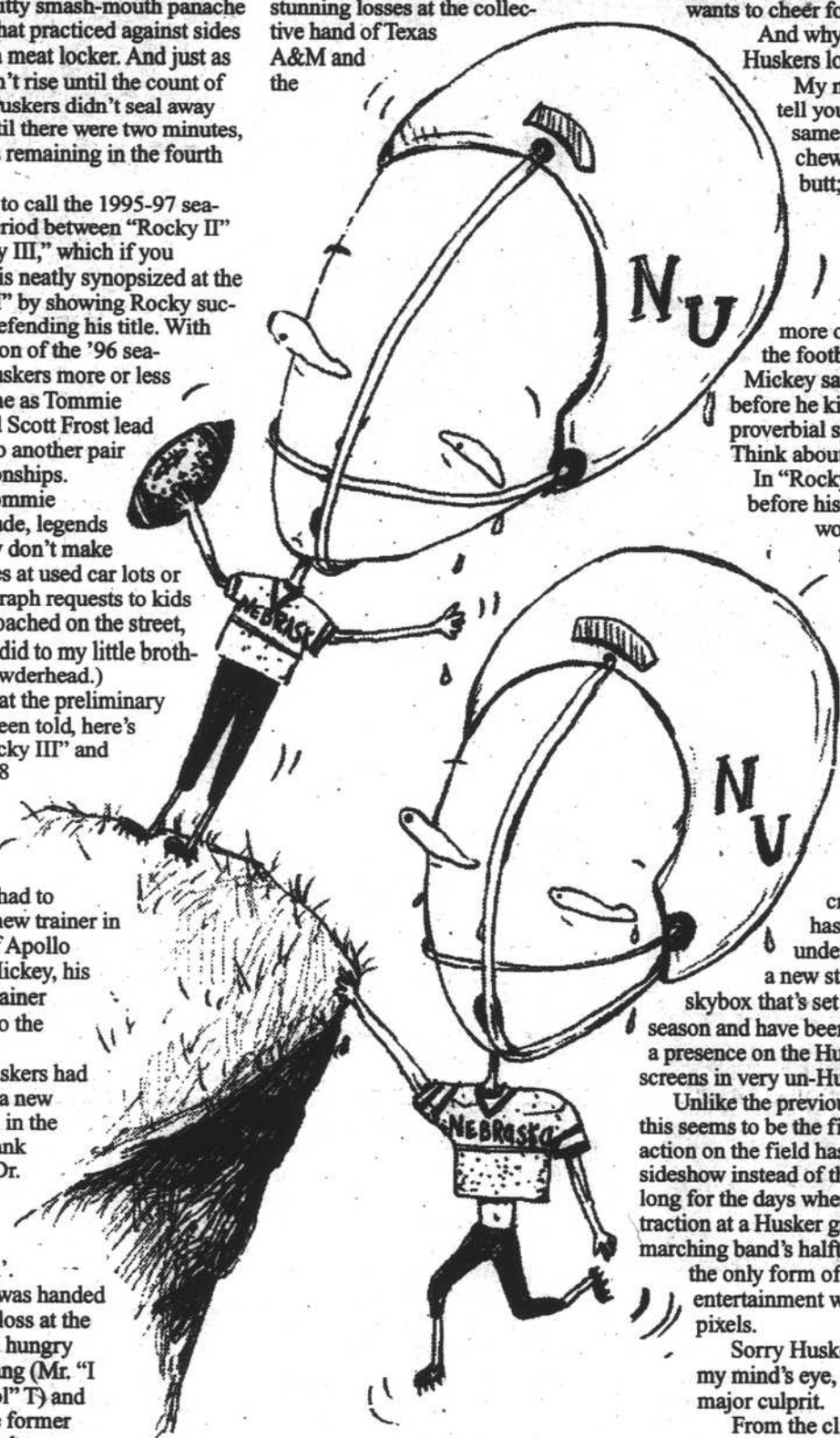
If you remember, Apollo's wisdom made Rocky a champion once more, and since my middle name happens to be Apollo, I feel I'm the most qualified to get the Huskers back on track.

First, the Big Red Faithful need to actually become the Big Red Faithful, not the Fair Weather Suzies they've been acting like. When the Huskers lose, fans need to realize they lost a game and nothing more. I know that next to Carhenge, Husker football is Nebraska's only claim to fame. However, none of the Huskers comb the city softball fields to jeer the dolt who pops out to end a game; so why should these stellar athletes get hate mail from lunatics without normal lives?

Second, the offensive line needs to get mean in a hurry. Center Josh Heskew is quite possibly the nicest, most mild-mannered, 290-pound fella in existence. Could his congenial attitude be the reason the Husker running game goes about as far as a hamster in a wheel? Probably not, but if Heskew led by example and developed a mean streak, even if it started by pummeling a 175-pound weakling in the form of myself, I'd wager that the Huskers' rushing attack would become an actual attack.

Finally, when the Huskers return to Memorial Stadium the day after Thanksgiving, HuskerVision should be toned down a notch or 10; that way the focus would solely rest on a Husker team fresh off a dominating, skull-crunching win against their Clubber Lang — former No. 1, Kansas State.

*It's the eye of the tiger. ...*



AMY MARTIN/DN

# Revitalizing Republicanism

## GOP needs to rebuild on its original principles



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Congratulations, America. On behalf of the Republican Party, let this be a thank you to all voting Americans for their hard work in ousting several Republican members of Congress and restoring some sanctity to this nation.

You read that right. While Republicans maintain control of the Senate and Congress as a whole, the GOP lost five seats in the House of Representatives. What may be more, the Republicans lost House Speaker Newt Gingrich, the heart and soul of conservative Republicanism.

Gingrich resigned his seat Friday.

Indeed, America sent a message, and congressional Republicans nobly came through with a resolution.

America is ready to get over President Clinton's fiasco, and the Republican Party should be ready to sever ties with the radical fringe groups that have obsessed over the scandal for the past 10 months.

With last week's election, the Republican Party has become the laughingstock of American politics.

With Gingrich's resignation, there was recompense. While far from heroic, altruistic levels, Gingrich did make a sacrifice for the good of the party and the benefit of the nation.

Now, in the current shambles of the Republican Party, expect to see some turnover.

Expect to see congressional Republicans such as Rep. Steve Largent of Oklahoma and Rep. Bob Livingston of Louisiana stepping up and, with the help of the rest of the party, ousting the decaying party leadership.

Expect to see some change coming out of the 1998 election. Expect the triumphant entrance of a user-friendly Republican Party.

In this, an election diverted from the issues to a judgment on Clinton's

morality, the GOP failed miserably. This was supposed to be the year of total domination for the Republican incumbent juggernaut.

Instead, tied to the drowning rock of the Christian Coalition and mired in the self-concocted swamp of filthy politics and intern scandals, the GOP sank to the depths of embarrassment on the political scope.

But then there was a miracle — Gingrich resigned. There was a breath of life from other Republicans in Congress.

It is time for revolution in the Republican Party.

The GOP can no longer withstand the type of press it receives in connection with the Christian Coalition and the other organizations that latch on to coattails of the GOP's conservative front.

Fiscal conservatism, yes. Humanitarian conservatism, no.

Dwight Eisenhower, a revered hero in Republican ranks, once said that it was the duty of a Republican — nay, an American, to be conservative when it came to matters of money and liberal in dealing with people.

America as a collective society cannot afford to be an intolerant, judgmental, isolationist nation. In

short, America cannot afford to be pulled down by the perceived notions and stereotypes of conservative factions.

Behind the fresh strength of new Republicans such as Largent, Livingston and J.C. Watts of Oklahoma, the Republican Party just might step into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with some vim and vigor. Members can strive to be more than the decrepit gargoyles who have haunted the party in the latter half of this century.

Largent should emerge as the new House majority leader replacing Rep. Dick Army of Texas, and Livingston should admirably fill the void as Speaker.

With new leadership should come new policy. The religious right, the imposing bastion of the Republican morality and family values platform, needs to be dropped entirely from its Republican association.

Such an organization can lead only to a constriction of freedom, and the self-righteous rhetoric of leaders in the movement has no place in America today.

Other shifts away from the puritanical witch hunts of the religious right can amount only to a greater credibility and openness in the party.

This shake-up was exactly the kind of thing that the GOP needed. There was a realization; a sense of urgency that transcended all the petty squabbles over impeachment proceedings and hit Republicans like a ton of bricks.

There is a peace. A certain feel that says let it be and get on with the business of America.

And America needs a Republican Party that can create that business and bring it to fruition in tax cuts and balanced budgets, not to mention unity in the party and in government as a whole.

Republicanism got a wake-up call on Nov. 3, one I hope it will not soon forget.

The dawn of a new party era, complete with teamwork and compassion for all America, should strengthen the GOP. The Republican Party should now seek to be a more welcoming, inclusive institution in American politics.

What brought it to greatness 140 years ago — the basic principles held sacred in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence — will now seek to bring it to consolidated national prominence again for the next century.