

Sports Opinion



David Wilson

## Neuheisel's image lands him UW job

He walked in fashionably late — with his wife and kids — and heads turned. Fans whispered and pointed as he took a courtside seat next to a couple of opposing-team-student-paper sportswriters at the Coors Events Center in Boulder, Colo.

It was February 1996, and Rick Neuheisel was coming off a 10-2 record in his first season as Colorado's head football coach, but there was more to his presence. Thin, wavy blond hair, boyish good looks and a smile that demanded respect — not to mention his upscale Nike sweater vest.

He was a decent football coach, but a great image.

Neuheisel took his players on playful outings to improve team togetherness. He played guitar for them. When Boulderites closed their eyes, they pictured Neuheisel leading the Buffaloes as they pranced through the daisy-filled forests outside of town singing "Rocky Mountain High" with John Denver and the Muppets.

Another 10-2 season followed in 1996, and just when it looked like Colorado had made a great move with the addition of Skippy, a 5-6 season followed in 1997. Then the Buffaloes finished 8-4 last fall.

So under Neuheisel, Colorado lost 10 games in two consecutive seasons for the first time since 1986-87. But the dude still looked good.

Evidently, that's what the University of Washington saw when it inked Neuheisel to a seven-year deal worth somewhere in the ballpark of \$1.5 million per year. Husky Athletic Director Barbara Hedges must have dug his image.

Jim Lambright, who was fired from the position last month, knew his football, but was old and wrinkly. Neuheisel is just the opposite.

Neuheisel is someone players and fans can rally around. And they've already begun in Seattle.

Somehow, cameras were rolling when Neuheisel thrust his hand in the air and proclaimed, "We're going back to gold!" referring to the gold helmets Washington wore three years ago. The Husky players went nuts.

Maybe, Neuheisel just wants to hang onto some of those gold sweater vests he snagged from Colorado. Either way, he knows what to say, and he has the look — the look of a guy who knows how to coach — whether he really does or not.

I never said anything to Neuheisel that February day in Boulder. I just sat and pondered his presence. Of course, I did get the old head nod as he left — fashionably early.

Wilson is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan staff writer.

# RARIFIED AIR

Jordan's legend will live on after expected retirement

Story by Adam Klinker

For a generation of post-Modern era sports fans, he almost seemed timeless — he would always just be there in the papers, the pictures and the posters.

There's the 6-foot-6 cardboard cutout of him for kids to chart their height.

There's the poster of him at the 1987 All-Star Game Slam Dunk Contest — tongue hanging out — the one that gave him the signature.

There's the elegant, yet strong, portrait in black and white that reads simply "Wings."

His Airness.

Jumpman.

Michael Jordan.

For Larry Florence, a senior forward on the Nebraska basketball team, there is no doubt about who has the poster space on his wall.

"They're all over," Florence said about his share of Jordan posters and pictures.

"I've been watching Michael ever since I can remember. He's just somebody I've looked up to, like millions of people have."

And with Jordan expected to announce his retirement today after 13 seasons in the NBA with the Chicago Bulls, the story came as a surprise to many.

"I was thinking, with the 52-game season, that he'd jump at the opportunity to come back for another championship," Florence said. "But I think it was just time for him: time to step down."

Also surprised at Jordan's decision to retire was Cornhusker forward Troy Piatkowski, younger brother of former NU

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## His Airness to finally land Wednesday

CHICAGO (AP) — For six months, Michael Jordan teased, taunted and tantalized a nation awaiting his answer.

At last, he appears to have one.

The greatest player in NBA history and the most popular athlete since Muhammad Ali is expected to announce his retirement Wednesday at a news conference in Chicago, a source with close ties to the NBA told The Associated Press on Monday night.

If so, it would be the second time in five years that Jordan has walked away from the game.

"This is a man who truly, as far as I'm concerned, is the modern-day Babe Ruth," former NBA great and current Lakers Vice President Jerry West said recently.

Just as with Jordan's first retirement, a number of factors — his age, a picture-perfect ending to last season, a fractured beginning for this one — appear to have influenced his decision. And just like last time, Jordan could change his mind and return.

But for now, he is expected to once again leave

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