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Committee puts off piercing bill

Responsibility issues of body modifications questioned

BY SHANE ANTHONY
Staff writer

A piercing issue raised enough sticking points to kill LB255 Thursday afternoon.

The Judiciary Committee voted to indefinitely postpone the bill, introduced by Bradshaw Sen. Elaine Stuhr, which would have made it a crime to tattoo or pierce anyone under the age of 18 without parental consent. No one spoke in opposition to the bill, but committee members had several questions.

"That should be a parental responsibility issue," Sen. Thomas Baker of Trenton said. He also said health problems — one of Stuhr's concerns — had not been a big issue.

Dr. Tom Safranek, state epidemiologist, testified as a neutral party. He said potential health risks exist, but they have been "inapparent" so far.

No cases of tattoos resulting in hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV have been reported in Nebraska, he said.

In her testimony, Stuhr said diseases and infections concerned her, but the bill had roots in real life.

In October 1997, without parental consent, six 13- and 14-year-old girls received tattoos from a man in York. Authorities told parents the man had broken no laws. At least one parent turned to Stuhr.

Thursday, Stuhr presented the committee a letter from Renee Steider, whose daughter was involved in the October 1997 incident.

"It appears to me if this man keyed my car, I can have him arrested for vandalism," Steider wrote. "But he can carve on my 13-year-old daughter and leave a mark that will be there for the rest of her life, and he has broken no laws."



J.J. KING CLEANS a belly ring he pierced for Nixie Eylar, 20, of Syracuse, at the O-Zone, 120 N. 14th, Tuesday afternoon. Eylar decided on her navel for the body piercing, she said, so she can pick and choose who will view it.

DANIEL LUEDERT/DN

Stuhr introduced a bill in response last year. It failed to pass general file because of time constraints, she said, which disappointed her constituents.

"There has been a great deal of concern from parents," she said.

At least one person who does piercings agreed with the bill.

"It's about time somebody does that," said J. King, who pierces in a small room on the second floor of The Ozone, 120 N. 14th St.

He said he insists on sterilizing his tools, and he will gladly explain the procedure to satisfy questions. With the exception of ear piercings, he said, he would not pierce someone younger than 18 without parental consent. But not everyone operates that way.

"Nobody's watching down on us to make sure we're clean," he said.

But during the hearing, Omaha Sen.

Ernie Chambers questioned who should be watching. He said cities have the authority to pass such laws.

Other senators thought the Legislature could look at different ideas.

"We need to do something about maybe licensing those people," said Sen. Dwite Pedersen of Elkhorn.

Stuhr said the Health and Human Services Department recommended criminal laws be established before licensing. License requirements would mean higher costs for the department, she said, but she might introduce such a bill next session.

Stuhr said the weather may have played a part Thursday. Some people who had hoped to testify could not make the hearing because of blowing snow, she said.

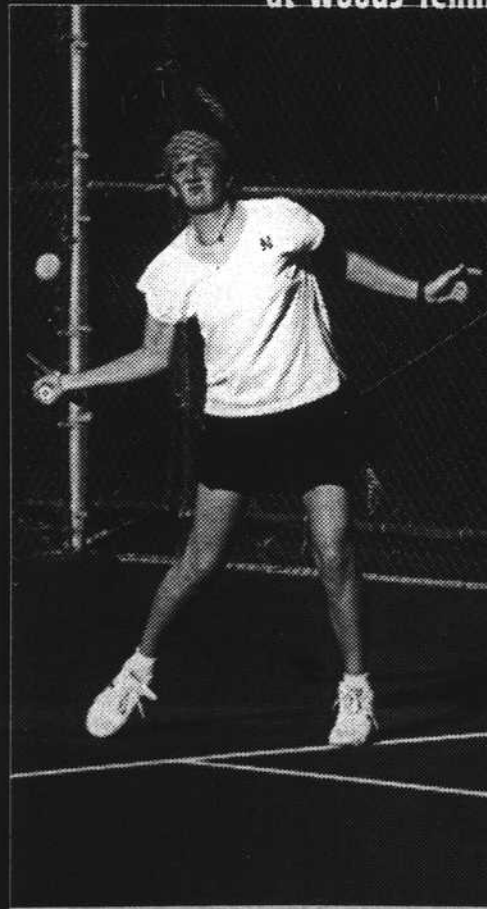
"They say timing is everything," she said.

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at Bob Devaney Sports Center



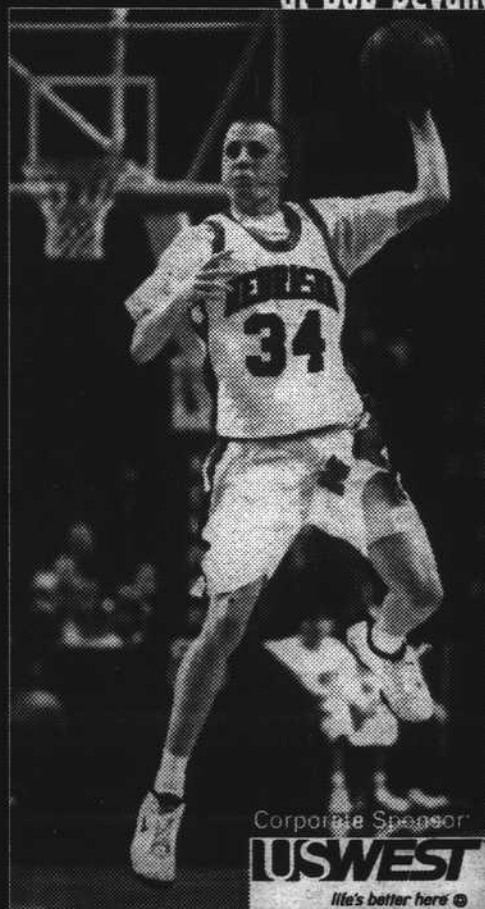
Women's Tennis

NU vs. Drake
Friday, Feb. 12 at 5 pm
NU vs. Wyoming
Sunday, Feb. 14 at 9 am



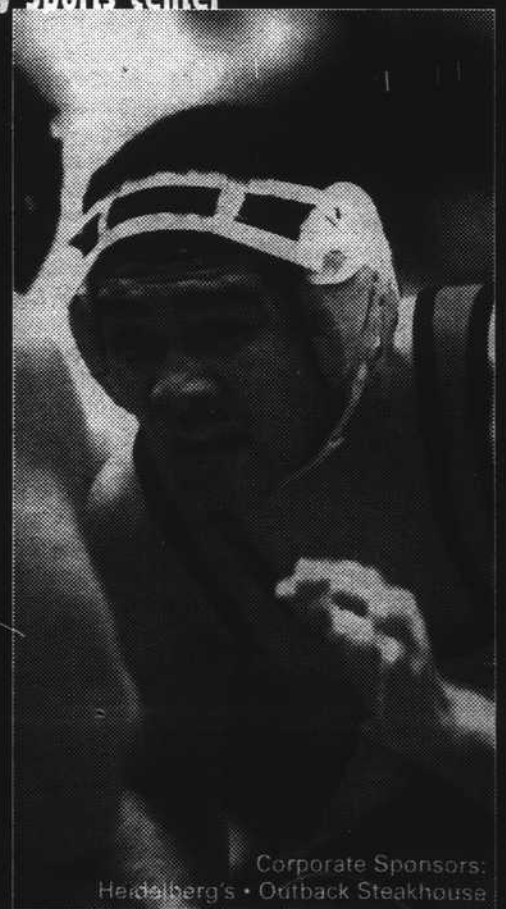
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