

# Idea of offering sports majors gains interest

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athletes can't handle the strenuous demands that come with excelling in sports, he said.

"You hear about these things all over," Sperber said. "And it will only get worse if the major changes aren't made."

Though Sperber is decidedly against it, a universal athletics major proposal would fit the bill of a major change.

It essentially works on this premise: Artists can major in art, dancers get to major in dance. Why can't athletes major in athletics?

Already, some of these classes are available at UNL, cross-listed under the Department of Health and Human Performance in the Teachers College. Golfers, for example, could take a one-credit class, 105P, in which they practice golf. Similar classes exist for other sports as well.

And the University of Nebraska-Lincoln offers other classes dealing in certain aspects of sports, such as Journalism 498 - Sports and Media Relations.

But none of these classes is in the same college, and none of them ties into an overall course of study for athletics.

Several Nebraska athletes see the possibility of an athletic major as a positive one. Right now, they said, some athletes continue in the field of athletics after college, whether it be playing professionally, coaching or in administration.

"There are so many different ways to go in athletics now," Nebraska quarterback Eric Crouch said. "The fields are getting bigger and bigger. If somebody wants to go into that, then I think they should have the classes to do it."

Nebraska volleyball player Mandy Monson agreed, saying athletics has been a burgeoning career field for women in the past decade and is worth developing.

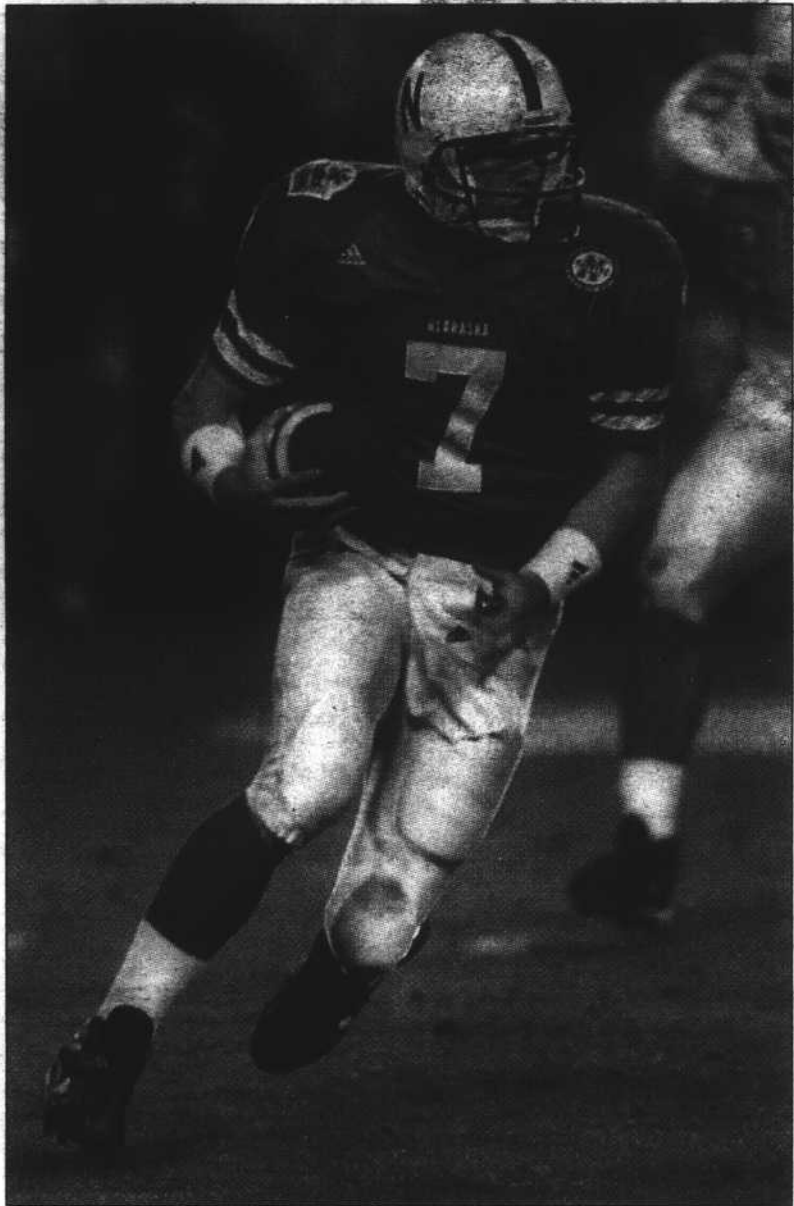
"There are so many more opportunities for women; more women are playing in sports," Monson said. "The thing about playing sports is that we love it. If somebody loves something, they ought to go back and contribute in it."

But Sperber said he has concerns. Already, he said, athletes in his classes suffer because of travel schedules and an "overemphasis" on sports. An athletics major, in Sperber's mind, would only enable athletes to slide in the field of academics even more.

It might also heighten the perception that athletes don't work hard at their universities, Sperber said. Although none of the athletes admits it directly, the adage of "there goes a dumb jock" is something they've all heard before.

"There's always going to be people," said Crouch, a junior exercise science major. "You don't think there's people that would say anything about anyone? There is."

"But most people, they respect other people for what they do. I think



Mike Warren/DN

**ERIC CROUCH doesn't think college athletes ought to be paid for their time in sports. "The scholarship is the payment," Crouch said. "They treat us well."**

people respect athletes for what they do. But there's always going to be some talk."

That talk can be heard surrounding the concept of jock classes. Around campus, the phrase "Rocks for Jocks," otherwise known as Geology 101, is widely recognized. Associate geosciences professor Richard Kettler has heard it as well.

"It's remarkably memorable," Kettler said. "There's no similar phrase to it. And let's face it - as a physical science, (geology) is a lot less intimidating to students than chemistry or physics."

Crouch followed the same line of thinking.

"For me, a biology class or major is going to be a lot harder than a psychology class or major," he said. "I like psychology more - it's a class I understand better. So I'm going to take the psychology class."

While geology may have the "easy" tag attached to it, Kettler said he doesn't see a great number of athletes in his classes. Of the 180 students he teaches now, he estimated that about 10 were athletes. Last semester,

Kettler taught an afternoon class, which conflicted with practice time, and therefore fewer athletes were in it.

With the athletes Kettler does have in class, he said his experiences have been mostly positive. Though he doesn't allow them to reschedule any missed tests, all students are allowed to drop their lowest test grades.

There are no preconceived notions of athletes in his classroom setting, Kettler said. Ninety percent of the athletes in his class, he said, come to him the first day of class, give him a letter describing their situations, then keep in touch with him by telling him when they will attend class.

Occasionally, members of the athletic department will call to inquire about an athlete's progress in his class, Kettler said.

It's an act that became a problem at the University of Minnesota, when academic officials pressured professors to give basketball players good grades to keep them eligible.

Kettler said he has encountered no such problems at UNL. More often than not, athletes are "virtually indistinguishable" from other students, he

said. "(The administrators) try very hard to make sure they're not pressuring you," Kettler said. "It's almost obsequious. Sometimes they'll say 'We're just looking for information.'"

"There is no way of predicting how (students) will perform in a class, whether or not they're athletes. My impression is that they have the same sort of distribution in grades as others - probably dispersed a little bit lower than other students."

Nebraska linebacker Brian Shaw serves as a prime argument for the idea that athletes make good students.

He graduated from UNL with a 4.0 grade point average in animal science and recently was named a second-team Academic All-American for his efforts.

Shaw said athletics helped him in his studies by teaching the values of "discipline, accountability and hard work ethic." And though he said he wouldn't have any interest in an athletics major, Shaw saw his experience with the Cornhuskers as strong on-the-job training.

"When I get into the business world, it's something I'm putting on my resume," Shaw said. "People see that, and they know that I can work well in a team environment and work well with others."

While Monson, a senior business major, refers to her future career as "my million-dollar question," she agreed with Shaw.

"You have so much confidence when you come out of athletics," Monson said. "You learn more there than you ever would in one of your classes in terms of how to deal with people."

Sperber said that is the mentality of most athletes until they actually enter the business world.

Because only about 1 percent of athletes actually play professional sports, many of them aren't ready for a completely different atmosphere. Under the current system, Sperber said, universities are turning out athletes who aren't adequately prepared for a life outside the game.

"The athletic departments use the athletes for profit, then discard them when their eligibility is up," he said.

Sperber's idea is to scrap the entire system, turn many athletes back into students, and keep the best athletes just athletes.

His solution: Pay them a salary. Don't make them go to school. And make the university more a center of learning than earning.

"Let's just cut through all the bullsh\*t," he said.

Sperber said college sports would diminish greatly under a plan like his. Many of the students who play sports now probably wouldn't in the future. Some Division I programs which couldn't keep up would drop to lower divisions. Only the top programs, such as Nebraska's football team, could stay in the upper echelon of college teams.

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DAY SEVEN	Isolation and Its Counterparts Athletes After Graduation The Social Scene for Athletes Athletes as Role Models A Day in the Life
DAY EIGHT	The Academic/Athletic Tradeoff
DAY NINE	Gameday

It wouldn't be much different from right now, Sperber said, as only a handful of teams compete for national titles on a regular basis, anyway.

"It'd get rid of all the crap, all the NCAA violations, all the things that these athletes shouldn't have to put up with," Sperber said.

Crouch disagreed. He likes his amateur status and considers his football scholarship as payment for playing. Plus, he said, Nebraska's program is clean and has nothing to worry about.

"This is what you come to college for," Crouch said. "I wouldn't want to choose between them."



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## Budget vote postponed

By Sara Salkeld

Staff writer

The vote on the ASUN budget scheduled for Thursday's Committee for Fees Allocation meeting was postponed until Tuesday.

CFA member Summer Spivey spoke on behalf of the subcommittee assigned to review ASUN's budget request, which was presented Tuesday.

"Our concern is that with every other budget proposal we've looked at, there has been a week to look over it," Spivey said.

Another concern relating to the ASUN budget is the increase of \$4,725 for health-care benefits.

This increase is reflected in individual categories of ASUN's budget where health-care benefits apply.

The subcommittee report would cut ASUN's total budget request by \$4,017. According to the report, this money would be taken from the NU on Wheels advertising budget.

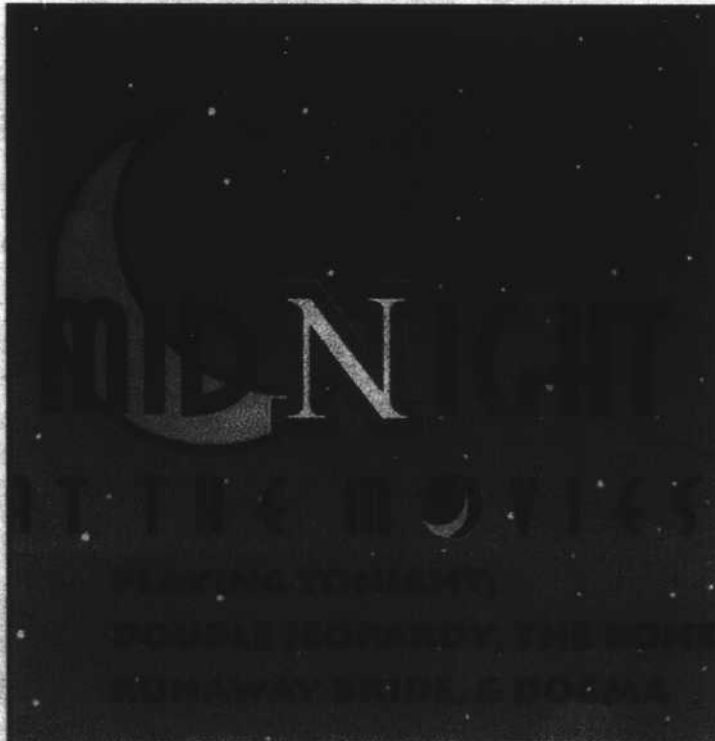
Subcommittee member Scott Peterson said the subcommittee might want to revise its recommendation for ASUN.

Peterson said the subcommittee did not have time to go over the budget with ASUN President Andy Schuerman and NU on Wheels Student Coordinator Molly Schmitz.

"We would like to understand more fully the advertising budget," Spivey said.

CFA member Nolan Gaskill did not feel the vote should have been postponed.

"I think we should just hash it out here," Gaskill said.



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