

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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We're No. 1? Headless university should take lessons from Athletics

We're No. 1! And we're really, really not. It's so common that it no longer surprises us or even angers us. There is Nebraska, the all-encompassing athletic machine that churns out conference champions and occasionally a national championship.

There's its world-renowned facilities, its world-class athletes, some of whom will represent their countries in the coming 2000 Olympics, and there's football, the cash cow of them all, a living, breathing, multimedia-loving beast that casts a shadow upon the city, the state.

And then there is the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where, well, the athletes go to school.

We'd very much like to believe otherwise. We'd like to believe that UNL is an efficient machine like its athletic counterpart, independent and strong, drawing the finest students and the brightest teachers, its research impeccable, its arts a paragon of modern form and beauty.

... the learning community can take three lessons from the sports teams in how to continually produce nationally known programs.

This is what we'd like to believe. But it isn't what we know.

What we know is that Vice Chancellor for Research, Marsha Torr, left UNL last week for greener pastures, marking yet another administrator in a line of six to vacate a position within the hierarchy. Another departure, another step toward having a genuine "headless university."

Does it even matter what tier we end up in?

Putting athletics and academics side by side, it's reasonably clear who comes out the winner. And while playing

and learning are two different disciplines, the learning community can take three lessons from the sports teams in how to continually produce nationally known programs.

■ **Retention** – The Athletic Department keeps most of its coaches, office workers and administrators year after year, though those workers receive offers elsewhere. Why? Because the department has learned to promote from within in most cases.

Some academics argue they recruit the best talent possible, regardless of their connections to the state. A fair statement, but the Athletic Department has proven that loyalty pays off.

■ **Pay** – While Frank Solich is not among the highest paid football coaches in the country (He receives plenty of his cash through endorsements.), the coaches of smaller sports are well compensated. Consider this the idea that keeps most of the smaller sports strong, feeding into the notion of retention and continuity. When administrators and professors leave, it's the pay that they're leaving for.

■ **The money game** – The department, under Athletic Director Bill Byrne, has been strong in recruiting money from outside sources to infuse into the program. While business partnerships are limited in a city the size of Lincoln, the academic side has to be proactive in searching out alternative sources of funding. As much as we criticize a deal like Pepsi, we see it as a situation where losing the right to choose your cola drink is better than losing funding.

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Rot at this cold, cruel school

"What I need of you is for you to finger The Man – point out who's got your back against the wall and the knife point ready to draw a smile on your neck in crimson.

Think the university is screwing you or someone else over? Drop me a line; give me the 411. I'll take it from there.

I'm going to be the investigative columnist this university has been yearning for, and I'm going to stick up for the little guy. Think a teacher's no good? A department repressing people? A program mired in corruption and bathing in blood money? Whatever it takes, I'm going to go toe to toe for you folks. This is for your own good."

– Columnist Cliff Hicks on Aug. 23, 1999

I hate rusty apples. As we speak at 11:01 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 16, I am eating a rusty apple. It is neither red nor green but sort of this mashing of in-between hues. The juice is gone; the fruit's lost its spunk. Drop dead apple.

"What kind of idiotic, senseless waste my life has been so far, I can only hope to make you guess.

What kind of idiotic senseless life you have before you, I think I can predict as accurately as any Nostradamus of doom.

Slaving for The Man all of your days, by the sweat of your brow you shall eat your credit card debt.

Hating your job, feeling that it robs you of your kid's childhood, of even the simple daily pleasures, you'll be chained to it, nevertheless, by the car payment, the house payment, the day care bill, the insurance premium."

– Opinion Editor Mark Baldridge on Aug. 20, 1999

I imagine how it must be, stuck in the crisper. How the cold descends in waves to pluck tiny explosions on the apple's surface. How the apple stays clean and strong on the top, but how the cold begins to creep down the smooth ace of the beast, down toward that little hairy center at the bottom, where it sinks in, invites its friends, and now inside, creeps upward, rusting from the inside.

"Welcome back to the fabricated, sheltered, unrealistic and impossibly Wonder Bread that is the campus culture."

– Opinion Editor Joshua Gillin on Jan. 12, 1998

So here's this apple, OK, and see, there's the mini ripples on the bottom, where the skin's folded together so you know it's bad down there. And you just know you shouldn't eat it. You so know it is not good for you. So you eat all around it. But maybe ...

Just to see if it's not all a facade, you take those two front teeth and make a dive bomb into scary regions. In the immortal words of somebody who would say it: "Oh, it is so gross!"



Samuel McKewon

And you realize – my God! – everything they said, it's all true. We really do live in a senseless universe, fabricated like outdated white bread where the people are truly prepared to carve a smile in crimson – in your neck, for God sakes – and then bathe in the blood money, where they're all gonna laugh at you!

You remember what Carrie did when her mom told her they were all gonna laugh at her? She was carving the crimson smiles on their necks.

So let's mark it down, my contribution to the senseless, awful, sick and hasty world we live in:

"This university is rotting, and we are rotting with it, like an apple rots, not from the outside, but deep inside, in our souls, as the cold reality of lost love and failed promise begins to reveal as the certainty as we all knew it would be.

And in the end, we realize that if there is a God, he's a sadistic little jokester who likes to watch his experiments die in front of me, like the boy who scorches the spider on the sidewalk with a magnifying glass.

Now, like the apple, we realize that prolonged exposure to this cold, cruel world doesn't make anything better. It just rusts us up, until we die."

My cheap metaphor to you. God only hopes somebody quotes me someday.



Proving your worth takes more than just looks

Some people say looks can get you anywhere. I believe them.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I was flying back from London with a friend – a good-looking male friend at that.

Upon arrival at the airport, we were faced with a daunting line, roughly composed of about 500 people, suitcases, crying babies and screaming kids all waiting to get on the same flight we were flying home on.

To make a rather long story short, the concierge carrying our bags asked the man in the blue British Airways suit if my friend could walk past the line and up to the counter immediately.

The man said no.

Then, a few seconds later, the concierge asked the same man wearing the blue British Airways suit if another person could get past – that person being me.

The man in the suit took a look, saw my blonde, braided hair, tight T-shirt, three carts full of heavy luggage and sheepishly cute grin, smiled, and said "Right this way, love." (My friend snuck across the line to meet me at the counter.)

This isn't the first case of this happening and probably won't be the last. There have been times when I've blatantly used it to my advantage.

And although sometimes it makes things easier, I still wonder about it.

Like when I was in the running to become editor of the Daily Nebraskan, for instance.

I turned in a faceless application a few months before the actual, face-to-face interview where I had to sit at a table with 10 strangers and talk about myself and why I was good for the position.

I was nervous. Because I was running against someone I thought was a worthy opponent.

Also because I didn't know what I was getting myself into and I didn't know if it was really what I wanted. But mostly because I knew they wouldn't take me seriously.

When visualizing a person in a position of importance, most don't visualize me, but a man in a suit. A bore.

When I wear a suit, I still look like me.

I have ideas. I like art and film and theater and dancing to techno music.

I also read. Newspapers. And books.

Yet some still say that all this happened because of the blonde hair and the tight T-shirt.

In high school, I didn't know the answer, and I never even considered it because I didn't get anything.

Then when I got to college, I got things. I got internships and reporting jobs at the DN and attention. I got noticed by professors when no one had ever noticed me before.

I never thought it was because of any other reason than that I was good. And that I had talent.

Then people started to talk. They said I was just another one of "those girls." One guy took to calling me the "Golden Child."

Others never said it, but I knew they thought my achievements were unfair to everyone else.

Outside of the Daily Nebraskan office, this is the visible me. Inside the DN, things are different.

That's why the Daily Nebraskan looks different. The writing is different. The size is bigger. Different. The whole is a different thing than it was before I, before all of us, came.

Now the people outside have become the same as that man at the British Airways counter in the blue suit.

They all have the choice of viewing things the same way he did.

They can put me at the front of the line.

Or they can make me wait.



Sarah Baker

The man in the suit took a look, saw my blonde, braided hair, tight T-shirt, three carts full of heavy luggage and sheepishly cute grin, smiled, and said, 'Right this way, love.'