

Athletes, agents are equal

As a child, I idolized Ryne Sandberg, the great second baseman for the Chicago Cubs. Second base became my favorite position, and 23 was the number I wanted to wear on the back of my jersey.



Jason Merrihew

As each year passed by, I realized I had no athletic ability. My dream of being the next Sandberg faded away, yet my ambition of making a major impact in sports still remained.

That same type of idolization led a promising young attorney to the sporting scene in 1975.

Without a single statistic in any athletic record book, Leigh Steinberg continues to be a very influential figure in today's professional sports scene.

You may never have heard of Steinberg, but he has influenced sports behind the scenes as the industry's premier agent.

As a dorm counselor during his last year of law school at the University of California-Berkeley, Leigh Steinberg met Steve Bartkowski, a freshman quarterback for the Cal Bears.

In 1975, Bartkowski asked if Steinberg would represent him. Shortly after, Bartkowski became the first overall draft pick in the NFL by the Atlanta Falcons.

When Bartkowski and Steinberg reached the Atlanta airport, they stepped into a media frenzy.

At that time there was no sports law. Steinberg had to write the how-to book on being a sports agent.

"Agents weren't guaranteed rights to represent their players," Steinberg said.

Because of the competition between the NFL and the old USFL to sign the top talent, Steinberg was able to negotiate the largest rookie salary in history at that time.

"We flew into Atlanta to sign the contract, there were these lights flashing in the sky at the airport like for a movie premiere, a huge crowd was pressed up against the police line," Steinberg said.

"That is when I saw the tremendous idol worshipping and veneration athletes were held in and it was then I saw the opportunity that existed in terms of role modeling."

Steinberg's sporting career snowballed from there. His clientele began to expand rapidly. His agency now represents 150 athletes in a variety of sports including baseball, basketball, boxing and even hockey. But Steinberg's real niche is in football, especially quarterbacks.

Among his most noticeable quarterbacks are Troy Aikman, Drew Bledsoe, Mark Brunell, Kerry Collins and Ryan Leaf to name a few.

With his success, followed fame. When writer and director Cameron Crowe did research for Jerry Maguire, he used Steinberg as inspiration. Actors Tom Cruise and Cuba Gooding Jr. shadowed Steinberg to help aid them in their Oscar-nominated performances.

"Sports-theme movies started using me as technical advisor," Steinberg said. "Then I started acting in some of them."

HBO uses ideas given from Steinberg for its hit series *Arli\$S*, a comedy about the daily life of a super agent.

"With *Arli\$S*, I give them the worst idea I have that I can never practice in real life," Steinberg said.

The sports representing field will continue to grow with the formation of teams, leagues and sports.

"A really good set of ethics and values will help a person make it in this field," Steinberg said.

Although I will never wear a jersey, a jersey with the number 23 on my back and roam around Wrigley Field as the second baseman for the Cubs, my dreams of making it to the big leagues haven't been shattered.

I can now sit in front of my television set on football Saturday and Sunday, wear my suit and tie and daydream about being an agent. Leigh Steinberg proves that.

Tigers game may mirror Iowa's

■ The Cornhuskers look to improve their special teams and defensive attack against Mizzou.

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

Nebraska players may be feeling a little bit of déjà vu this weekend.

The Huskers play host to Missouri on Saturday night for a 6 p.m. matchup. The game, according to NU Coach Frank Solich, could be very similar to last week's 42-13 win over Iowa, especially for the Husker offense.

"Their scheme (defensively) is very much like Iowa's," Solich said of the 1-2 Tigers. "They will have a lot of movement up front and bring the linebackers and blitz you more than the old Missouri teams would do."

"The game against Iowa gave us a good degree of preparation."

Solich also compared the physical play of both teams, say-

ing Saturday's matchup with Mizzou will be as hard-fought as last Saturday's Iowa game, a game in which the Hawkeyes were down only two touchdowns until late in the fourth quarter.

The Tiger defenders do sport one advantage over the Hawkeyes. His name - Justin Smith.

Smith gives Mizzou the presence of a star defender that was lacking for Iowa. The senior defensive end, who was tabbed as a pre-season All American, has 20 tackles - five for losses.

Despite Smith's being one of the top defenders in the country, Mizzou is still giving up 343 yards per game and lost to Clemson 62-0.

Stats like those and NU's new-look passing attack against Iowa does not bode well for Tiger Coach Larry Smith.

"The best way to defend their offense is to keep them off the field with your own offense," said Smith, whose Tigers lost 13-10 to Michigan State two weeks ago.

While the Tigers may be dreading NU's offense, the Mizzou offense will give the Blackshirts a different and sometimes wacky look under first-year offensive coordinator Bill Cubit.

"They run all different kinds of formations and split people all over the field," Solich said.

Solich said many of the Tigers' formations may seem unconventional, but when they executed them well, they were effective.

Tigers Quarterback Kirk Farmer said MU's offense would try to keep NU's defense on its toes with a no-huddle offense.

"I like it because it's up-tempo and not really a way to catch them off-guard but a simple way of calling plays," he said.

Husker defensive coordinator Craig Bohl is wary of Farmer and hopes his defense will make strides against Mizzou after not meeting his standards last week.

"The bar is pretty high for us," said Bohl, who sees his defense at this point as a leaking dam, where

"The game against Iowa gave us a good degree of preparation."

Frank Solich
NU football coach

one hole gets plugged and another springs loose.

Bohl also wants improvement from the Blackshirts at the start of the game - a point where opposing offenses have had their way with NU up to this point.

"We made improvement from the first half to the second half (against Iowa)," he said. "That is somewhat indicative of where our football team is at. We did that in the first game and so we are just in hopes that trend continues."

Solich also is looking for sharper play from the special teams - an area that has plagued NU in its three games this season.

GAMEDAY

Nebraska vs. Missouri

When: 6 p.m.

Where: Memorial Stadium

T.V.: Fox Sports Network (57)

Radio: Pinnacle Sports Network (1400-AM KLIN)

And the coach is holding nothing back now. Solich said some starters would be put back on special teams, including middle linebacker Carlos Polk.

"We are looking at getting it done special teams-wise at all costs," said Solich, whose patience is running out on this matter. "It's taken us way too long to get there."



Scott McClurg/DN

Four Huskers describe most important plays of their careers

BY JOHN GASKINS

Being Missouri week, it is awfully hard to resist making Matt Davison take his thousandth stroll down memory lane. To remember the miraculous diving catch he made on the last play of regulation to preserve NU's fifth national title three years ago.

We'll spare you the one-thousand-first rehashing of Davison's catch.

We all know what happened, and we've all heard Davison talk about it over and over and over again.

But in light of the great "Miracle in Missouri" week, the Daily Nebraskan offers a collection of four other unforgettable, game-making plays made by current Huskers in the past three years since that game.

Joe Walker - punt return, Oklahoma State, 1998.

Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City became a huge Big Red Party in this "neutral" setting. Lucky for Walker, a sophomore from Arlington, Texas, he had several relatives - including precious Aunt Mamie - in the area to stop by and watch him play for the first time.

How convenient.

Before a slew of injuries and heartbreaks that led to a "disappointing" four-loss campaign in Frank Solich's debut season, the Huskers were coming off a national title, ranked No. 2 and 4-0.

For some reason, harmless Oklahoma State crashed the party and had the Huskers on their heels. The NU offense was downright dismal, and the game was tied at 17 with under eight minutes left. Upset city lurked. NU needed a spark.

Then the Cowboys punted to Walker, who had already busted a 99-yarder in an earlier win over Louisiana Tech.

Walker said he didn't feel much pressure from coaches and players to make a huge play, even though it was desperately needed.

"It was more of a pressure that I had on myself. I knew it was a close game. In games like that, you have to step up to the play and make big plays. At any given time, I'm capable of breaking one. I was kind of anticipating it. Thank God it came at the right moment."

"It was a quick kick - not high, not low, but right at me. Anytime you get kicks like that, it allows you to catch the ball clean and get up the field without a lot of confusion."

"We had some good blocks that allowed me to find a crease up the middle, and I kind of broke it

"I just remember her saying to me after the game, 'Boy you sure can run.' It kind of made me feel like a little kid again."

Joe Walker
Husker defensive back

toward the left, broke a couple tackles, and then I saw daylight and ran on from there."

The 73-yard score turned out to be the game winner, as NU barely held on, 24-17. It felt like a game winner to Walker once he was in the end zone.

"It kind of felt like a dream. You get stuck in the moment. You see everything going on, but you kind of end up in a twilight zone. It was more like a zone where you were in the center of everything. It's a great feeling, a sense that makes

you feel proud of yourself." And your Aunt Mamie even prouder.

"I just remember her saying to me after the game, 'Boy you sure can run.' It kind of made me feel like a little kid again."

Keyou Craver - interception at the 1-yard-line against Southern Miss., 1999.

Craver had been the whipping

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Canadians such as goalie Karina LeBlanc come to U.S. colleges because of better programs and more scholarships. Canadian colleges have little support for women's soccer, adhering to a stricter view of the "student-athlete."

Soccer players flow by Canadian pipeline

BY SAMUEL MCKEWIN

So she had her visit.

Nebraska soccer forward Christine Latham had a look around the megalith that is the Nebraska Athletic Department, toured the Abbott Sports Complex, surely marveled at its support system and concluded yes, here is where I'll be.

"Everything was awesome," she said.

Not that the sophomore had considered otherwise. This was Nebraska, where Athletic Department dollars flowed like red wine (and occasionally overflow the glass).

And Latham was from Calgary, Alberta - you know, Canada - where support wits in comparison to the boost soccer -

specifically women's soccer - receives in the United States. Club programs, the new one-way ticket to athletic stardom, had neither the monetary commitment nor the year-round scheduling America affords its athletes.

Canadian colleges give sports only a passing glance; they don't offer full-ride scholarships, adhering to a stricter view of "student-athlete."

"(Canadian players) are looking for the type of emphasis that the U.S. has on its sports," Nebraska Coach John Walker said of the six current Canadian Huskers. "There's more equipment, more coaching, better training facilities. All of that."

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