

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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Cutting corners

Athletic department woes may be just the beginning

It's just a \$250,000 deficit, not a big deal to the Nebraska athletic department, which has a budget closer to a multinational corporation than UNL's political science department.

And Athletic Director Bill Byrne and Co. are taking care of the shortfall, tightening belts a notch, trimming a little fat around the edges in what will be a successful attempt to erase the red ink.

But the quarter-million dollar bounced check is emblematic of a problem that could easily spiral out of control if Eric Crouch's spirals (or, in a better example, his option pitches) aren't crisp enough to send the Cornhuskers to victory Saturday after Saturday.

Simply put, the athletic department has continued to spend more and more money, banking on the fact that the football team will make larger and larger profits, filling the always growing athletic department coffers.

This is fine. Unless the cash cow starts squirting sour milk.

Then, the department is left with millions and millions of dollars invested in new state-of-the-art facilities for other sports that cannot possibly hope to recoup the money spent on them. It is left with state-of-the-art technology, which, if it is to stay fancy, must be continually maintained and improved.

It is left with a football team that will still have a large budget (which it should), secondary sports like basketball, volleyball and baseball that are relatively healthy as well, and little else. No swimming. No gymnastics.

Which, depending on your point of view, is either a travesty or just fine. We appreciate these smaller sports both for their success and personality, and both enjoy a cult following on campus.

But there's no denying the fact that, at some point sooner rather than later, the athletic department will reach a crossroads.

There's little wiggle room on the revenue side - the football boosters have to be nearly tapped out, as Byrne has successfully spearheaded drive after drive to get the state's affluent to open their wallets.

And it's very likely that the football team will begin to make less cash at some point, as it's hard to duplicate the success of 1993-1999. In those seven years the team went 81-8, garnered huge national attention (and licensing dollars) with three national championships and played in a major bowl game (with a large purse) six times.

Top that, 21st Century Huskers. If Frank Solich and NU don't, the ambitious spending of the '90s will have to be curtailed, possibly dramatically. And since the athletic department and the state are basically defined by football, it's doubtful that they would see any of these cuts.

So it's not much of a crossroads, after all. Faced with the decision, Byrne will bail on programs like swimming and gymnastics. This won't be a good thing - it also won't be a terrible thing.

It'll just be the way it is because the Nebraska athletic department has outspent itself.

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THE POPULARITY OF LIVE KARAOKE CARRIES OVER TO THIS YEAR'S ASUN DEBATES...



Winter wonder-land

As I slip-slided my way to class on my trusty bike, 100 people fell on their butts from the ice, and that's not counting car wreckage.

As I heard folks bitch left and right about the snow for the last time this long winter, something snapped inside of me. I would be the first person to not bitch about the snow. Eureka! I've found happiness.

Now, I plan to spread happiness like the venereal disease it was founded upon.

My first plan is to inform (or shall I say remind) people that it's winter, it's February, and we live in Nebraska. I feel for you and your sore butt, but in order to achieve happiness, one must first accept these icy streets for what they are - icy streets.

Oh, how North Dakota holds it sides when it laughs at our weakness.

Winter is my favorite season, but for some reason, I feel concretely alone in this acceptance. It is ingrained in our heads that winter is a stain upon humanity. Specifically, Nebraskan humanity.

Albeit the stain is ostensibly clear and perfect at first, it miraculously transforms into murky winter crud in the space of a couple of hours - at which point we rue the day that the Lord hath made.

Let me embark upon that notion for a moment. The Lord hath made the day. The Lord hath made the day snowy. Therefore, the Lord shall be yelled at. Somehow the anger is directed at snow removers - not God - and certainly not themselves.

As people clutch their heads at the snowy sight and ask "Why, why, why?" I humbly reply, "It's winter, duh."

Now I'm no eavesdropper (the pay is terrible), but I have stumbled upon a plethora of conversations about snow removal.

Folks, snow removal is not some untouchable entity that is an automatic human right; it is a complex amalgam of people, snow shovels, tractor plows and sand/salt.

When I hear phrases like, "That sidewalk is so icy. Somebody doesn't know how to do their job," or "I had a cow because that snow plow would not get out of my way, and I arrived to work 1.006 minutes late," I cry.

The worst insult to snow removers has got to be, "What do they pay those people for?"

If you haven't figured it out by now, not only do I love winter, but I work for it. I remove snow on East Campus, and for those of you who think everything is done easily in an hour with tractors, come talk to me.

As for the pay ... getting to work with Jeff, Jerome, Mark, Renee, Floyd and, of course, my main man Rich (to name a few) is pay enough.

Heck, I'm going to tell the university tomorrow that I'll work for free.

I just went crazy.



Give us your opinion

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Temptation now, now and forever

I hit the wall last week, and I hit it hard.

My Valentine's Day was more pathetic than usual. I awoke Thursday morning, nude and in the fetal position, clutching "my Valentine": a bottle of Johnnie Walker.



Tony Bock

The week ended with me stranded on a country road in the bitter cold, many miles from home. Cars of old ladies drove by pointing and laughing at me.

I was in the middle of the Heartland, supposedly home of the nicest people in this country, and not one person stopped to offer assistance. I felt like the biggest fool. Man had created a way to travel long distances in a short amount of time, with just one responsibility on the part of the human, and I had failed at that simple task.

I ran out of gas.

What was the cause of this nightmare of a week? Looking back, I can only blame one thing: Instead of a new "Temptation Island" last week, Fox aired a Barbara Streisand concert. What a slap in the face.

For millions across the country, Wednesday night had turned into the high point of the week. At my house, watching "Temptation Island" has become a social event. A group of friends come over to watch each titillating new episode.

We looked on in disgust as Mandy cheated on Billy with Johnny. We hung on the edge of our seats to see how Billy, the most popular of the males, would respond when he saw videotape of the infidelity.

For our generation, asking where someone was when they found out Ytossie and Tahed had a kid is like asking someone older where they were when man landed on the moon.

Wednesday night is the thrilling conclusion of the couples' time on the island. I know, I know, there's actually two more episodes, but Fox added on the last episode when the series became a hit. The new final episode is all of the couples watching parts of the show together after they've been off the island.

For those of you who haven't watched an episode, I'll break it down for you. Four couples, all unmarried, are brought to a tropical island, put on separate parts of the island and tested with sexy singles on various dates. Fox throws in numerous mind games to make it interesting to the home viewer.

Why anyone would want to go on "Temptation Island" is beyond me. The couples say they wanted to use their time on the show as a test of their love. I can't believe they were surprised when it turned into their own personal hell. But that's what makes it great TV.

Good news, fans, Fox is planning a sequel called "Temptation Mountain." I hope Fox reads this because I'm going to tell them how they can make "Temptation Mountain" bigger than "Survivor," the Holy Grail of television ratings. "Temptation Island" was good - good enough that I faithfully watched each episode.

But there were no likeable couples. There wasn't a couple that viewers were really hoping would stay together. If they can get just one couple that the country is rooting for and put them in peril every week (milking it for all it's worth along the way), it will be huge.

The bad news is that not everyone likes our favorite program. In fact, it's made a lot of people mad.

So mad, in fact, that there is a national effort to get it off the air for good. The Parents Television Council, a group of 650,000 members, is working vigorously to end our fun. A mass letter, titled "PTC Members' Action Alert!" has been sent across the country encouraging recipients to "register our disgust with local Fox TV stations and their sponsors."

Their cause has gotten national media attention, and many corporations have dropped their sponsorship of the show.

Of course, this kind of action is nothing new. Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman (you remember him, the VP candidate from the "liberal" party) is trying to get the show "Jackass" taken off the air because some kid hurt himself trying to do one of the dangerous stunts.

When I was a kid and I saw sexual, dangerous or violent things on television, it didn't have a significant impact on me. You know why? I was brought up by responsible parents. Instead of focusing all the attention on TV shows, why don't these groups target parents and the impact their actions have on kids?

I understand that we need a scapegoat, but the prospect of "Temptation Island" being the end of the series is almost too much for me to bear.

So please, contact your local Fox affiliate and tell them to continue on with "Temptation Island."