



# Honoring the Past to Inspire the Future

Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation  
Newsletter — Summer 2011

## Prep sports in NU coach's roots

### Ross Els joins Hall of Fame's second golf scramble

Nebraska Cornhuskers linebackers coach Ross Els didn't hesitate to give the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation an assist.

Getting in a round of golf at Cambridge's Cross Creek Golf Course as part of the deal came as an added bonus.

Els, and his father Bob, a long-time coach at Lincoln Northeast High School, joined the festivities at the Hall of Fame's golf scramble on June 25.

"Nebraska high school athletics was the lifeblood of our family when we were growing up," Els said. "We grew up with watching the scores roll down the screen on channel whatever, down the screen, and looking at all the small towns around the state of Nebraska and all the great athletes that were a part of that."

Els grew up to play at UNO, then entered the coaching ranks. His coaching path has included a stop at Hastings College where he was an assistant to Barney Cotton. He also was the Broncos' head coach in 2001 and 2002.

Now that he has returned to Nebraska, he is again an interested observer of Nebraska's high school scene.

"Nebraska high school athletics are good," Els said. "We travel around the country – whether it's Texas, Florida, California or wherever – there's not as



Golfers tee off at Cross Creek Golf Course in Cambridge during the Hall of Fame's second golf fund-raiser. This year's tournament was underwritten by Pinnacle Bank. Nine teams competed in the tournament.

many people obviously in this state but there are very good athletes in the state of Nebraska. ... A top-of-the-line Nebraska kid can compete with the top of the line anywhere in the country."

Nebraska prep athletes face some challenges, but have some advantages, too.

"Probably the biggest difference, in Nebraska, as far as football is concerned, is there's no spring football here. When you go to those state's that produce more Division I football players, they're doing football all year around," Els said. "Personally, I like the three-sport athlete. He has a lot of room to grow."

The Hall of Fame, Els said, honors "the best of the best" in Nebraska high school sports history. The people who have proven throughout their high school careers that "they can go up against anybody."

Nine four- and five-player teams competed in the golf scramble for cash and merchandise. The event,



Nebraska linebackers coach Ross Els provides a Husker update prior to playing in the Hall of Fame's golf scramble.

underwritten by Pinnacle Bank, is a fund-raiser for the Hall of Fame. It was the second scramble held for the Hall of Fame. Last year's event was also at Cross Creek Golf Links in Cambridge.

# Hall names 2011 induction class

The Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame will induct 13 athletes, five coaches, two contributors and two officials at its Sept. 25 induction ceremony at the Lied Center in Lincoln.

Athletes slated for induction include:

—**Dennis Albers**, Hastings High School (1960): Won 13 of a possible 16 gold medals in leading Hastings to state gymnastics titles in 1959 and 1960.

—**Joe Blahak**, Columbus Scotus (1969): A football and track standout, he won five gold medals at the state track meet including the 1969 long jump all-class gold medal. He was a two-time All-Big Eight defensive back at Nebraska.

—**Scott Bream**, Millard South (1989): The consensus athlete of the year in 1989 after earning all-state honors in football and baseball. The point guard on Nebraska's last undefeated Class A boys basketball team, he turned down numerous college scholarships and played eight years of professional baseball.

—**Dean Brittenham**, Brady (1949): A two-time state pentathlon champion, he was all-state in football and basketball and led Brady to six-man football and track state titles and a runner-up finish in basketball in 1949.

—**Randy Butts**, Grand Island (1969): Winner of seven all-class gold medals in hurdles and relays, he led Grand Island to back-to-back state track championships. All-state in football, he played for the Nebraska Cornhuskers for two years before transferring to Kearney State College where he was an NAIA All-American Honorable Mention.

—**Mike Dugan**, Creighton Prep (1955): A two-time all-state quarterback, "Magic Mike" was 20-0 as a starter for the Junior Jays. He made the All-Catholic All-America team as a senior. He also played basketball and baseball.

—**Rex Ekwall**, Holmesville (1953): An all-class all-state basketball player as a senior, he scored 1,984 points in his career. At Nebraska, he averaged double figures in scoring and rebounding.

—**Jessica Haynes**, Omaha Central (1985): A two-time all-state player who was a Parade All-American second-team

## Tickets on sale

Tickets for the 18th annual induction ceremony are \$25 for adults and \$10 for elementary and high school students and are available by contacting Tami McLaughlin, at Nebraska Sports Council, P.O. Box 29366, Lincoln, NE 68529, or by calling 402-471-2544 or by e-mail to tami@nebraskasports-council.com

pick as a senior, she helped Central to back-to-back state championships in 1983 and 1984. In track, she ran on three gold-medal relays helping Central to Class A titles in 1983 and 1984.

—**Jami (Kubik) Hagedorn**, Cambridge (1994): Nebraska's Miss Basketball in 1994, she earned all-state honors while leading the Trojans to two state volleyball and two state basketball championships. At Nebraska, she was a four-year letter winner in basketball.

—**John Parrella**, Grand Island Central Catholic (1988): He played in three Super Bowls during a 12-year NFL career. Before the NFL, he earned all-state honors at GICC and All-Big Eight his senior year at Nebraska.

—**Amy Paulsen**, Oakland-Craig (1990): A six-time all-class gold medalist in the shot put and discus while competing for Norfolk, Ralston and Oakland-Craig. She competed in college for Texas A&M, Missouri and Nebraska-Omaha.

—**Darcy Stracke**, Chambers (1996): The state's career scoring leader in girls basketball with 2,752 points, she played on four Class D state champion teams — at Stuart as a freshman and the next three years at Chambers. She also earned all-state honors in volleyball and won eight Class D titles at the state track meet in distance events.

—**Brad Vering**, Howells (1996): An Olympian in 2004, he was the 2000 NCAA wrestling champion while at Nebraska and was 148-2 in high school, winning 116 straight matches and three state titles.

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Coaches in the induction class are:

—**Tom Jaworski**: Retired in 2010 after 39 years and a 343-92 record at Omaha Creighton Prep. He has the most football coaching wins in Nebraska history. His teams won nine state championships and finished second five times.

—**Joanne Kappas**: Millard South's volleyball coach has 785 career wins. She spent five years at Bellevue East, 19 at Bellevue West and four at Omaha Bryan. At Bellevue West, her teams claimed 11 Class A titles.

—**Jim Miller**: In 34 years as Omaha Marian's girls basketball coach, he led the Crusaders to 619 wins, 25 state tournament appearances, three state titles and eight runner-up finishes. He also led Marian to the past four girls golf titles.

—**Charles Moore**: His 45-year coaching career included stints at Snyder, Butte and Fairbury. He coached the Jeffs to three Class B titles and 311 wins in boys basketball and the 1989 Class B girls state track championship.

—**Mark Russell**: Coached Broken Bow over 39 years to three consecutive Class B boys state track titles and had 11 teams finish in the Class B football rankings between 1947 and 1972.

\* \* \*

Contributors include:

—**Bill Conner**: At Scottsbluff, he coached for 17 years, 10 as football coach (1954-1963) and was athletic director for the next 17 years. The Bearcats were undefeated in 1958.

—**Bob Murray**: The 1947 Omaha North graduate had a 303-275 career record in 29 years of boys basketball with the Vikings, with eight state tournament teams a runner-up finish in 1976. He also coached at Fort Calhoun and Omaha South.

\* \* \*

Officials being inducted are:

—**Max Roper**, Lincoln: A long-time official who worked in football and basketball, he retired from the Big Seven Conference in 1950.

—**Mathias "Mutt" Volz**: An all-conference basketball player at Nebraska in 1925, he officiated football in high school and college for nearly 40 years.

## Bates resigns post as Hall's executive director

LINCOLN — Randy Bates has resigned as executive director of the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame.

Hall of Fame Board of Directors president Jack Guggenmos announced Bates' resignation at the board of directors' recent meeting in Omaha.

Guggenmos said a search for a new executive director is underway. A job description is available at [www.nebhalloffame.org](http://www.nebhalloffame.org). Interested applicants should forward a letter of interest, resume and references to the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation, P.O. Box 83972, Lincoln, NE, 68501. Applications will be accepted through Aug. 5.

## Honorees big part of Hall's annual induction ceremony

In conjunction with the induction ceremony on Sept. 25, the Hall of Fame also honors individuals and teams for their influence and accomplishments in high school athletics.

This year's honorees are:

—Fischer Family Award: Clarence and Helen Swanson family of Wakefield and Lincoln.

—Ron Gustafson Inspiration Award: Dr. Tom Heiser, Lincoln.

—Great Moments in Nebraska High School Sports: Omaha

Central/Creighton Prep football games at Rosenblatt Stadium, 1960 and 2010; Shannon Guy, Millard West swimming setting four state records at the state meet.

—Dominant Dynasty: Clearwater boys basketball, 1975-95.

—Silver Anniversary Teams (1986-87): Battle Creek football and girls basketball; Lincoln East girls basketball.

—Golden Anniversary Teams (1961-62): Omaha North football; Polk football and basketball.

## Our mission:

The purpose of the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation is to honor:

■ Athletes for outstanding high school careers.

■ Administrators, coaches, officials and community members who have made significant contributions to high school athletics.

■ Athletes who have had a significant impact on their chosen field or in our society following completion of their high school careers.

## Our Goals:

1. Establish a Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame facility that will preserve the rich heritage of Nebraska high school athletics and serve as a repository for all memorabilia acquired.

2. Develop and implement programs and services consistent with the intent and purpose of the Hall of Fame.

## DVDs of September induction available

Miss the Hall of Fame's induction ceremony in September, or would you like to see it again?

DVDs of the induction ceremony are available for \$20 and \$3 for shipping and handling by contacting the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation at P.O. Box 83972, Lincoln, NE, 68501-3972.

## Gone but not forgotten

### Homer Smith

Former Army head coach Homer Smith (2000 inductee), regarded as one of keenest offensive minds in the annals of college football, died April 10 at his home in Tuscaloosa, Ala., after a four-year battle with cancer.

Coach of the Black Knights from 1974-78, his career lasted 39 years and included stops at Stanford, Air Force, Alabama, Arizona and the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs. He served three stints as offensive coordinator at UCLA.

Smith was also head

coach at Davidson and Pacific.

Smith grew up in Omaha and played fullback at Princeton, earning All-Ivy League honors.

He was credited with perfecting the wishbone offense while at UCLA.

Smith spent his final two years as a coach at Arizona before retiring in 1997.

### Irv Thode

Irv Thode, age 80, of Stamford, Conn., died June 1, of heart failure.

Born in Loup City, Thode (2004 inductee) graduated from the University of

Nebraska.

Thode posted a national "schoolboy best" high jump of 6 feet, 3 inches in 1949. He also won gold medals at the state meet in the high jump and long jump. He was all-state in football and basketball.

### Dennis Logan

Dennis C. Logan, 80, passed away June 7, at North Platte.

A 1948, graduate of Keya Paha County High School and Nebraska Wesleyan University in 1952, Logan was inducted in 2007 as an official.

Visit our website: [www.nebhalloffame.org](http://www.nebhalloffame.org)

Current and previous Inductee capsules, nomination forms, news updates

## We Need Your Help

For the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation to continue to “Honor the Past to Inspire the Future” we need your financial support to reach our goal of a grand opening of the Hall of Fame exhibits in September 2011.

A monthly, tax-deductible contribution will go a long way toward meeting our goals. If you would please consider a monthly contribution by simply attaching a voided personal check indicating the amount you wish to have deducted from your personal checking account each month for a specified period, it would be greatly appreciated.

Please complete the following form and submit it with a voided check to get started as a monthly contributor to the Hall of Fame:

Name: _____	Contribution/Month:
Address: _____	\$10 _____
City, State, Zip Code: _____	\$20 _____
Phone Number: _____	\$50 _____
E-Mail Address: _____	\$100 _____
	\$200 _____

My contribution is for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month for \_\_\_\_\_ years.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame Foundation  
 P.O. Box 83927  
 Lincoln, NE 68501-3972

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