

Buffalo Tales

November/December 2011

The Zikmund Era (1955-1972: The Golden Age of Blue and Gold Football (part II))

By Ross Huxoll

With the Antelope's 1955 roster being completed by adding freshmen and transfer students, Coach Zikmund instructed the team's trainer, Chuck Bolton, to send out training schedules at the beginning of July in order to help prepare the gridders for fall preseason practices. With no formal weightlifting programs established in these off-season the summer greatly lopes in the fall during players soon found out they began their official workouts were nothing "Zikmund Concentration used by the players to mund's grueling three-a- were held at 8:30, 1:30, day. In addition to the practices, Coach Zik- would hold lectures in As a testament to just practices were, one of had transferred to Junior College stated, hard in my life. After was so stiff lying in bed. pee, but I just couldn't bed."



Photo property of the Donald K. Briggs Collection, Calvin T. Ryan Library, University of Nebraska, Kearney.

schools or universities, workouts conducted in benefited the Ante- their season. As the in late August when practices, their summer compared to the Camp." This term was describe Coach Zik- day practices. Practices and 7:00 every single three-and-a-half hour mund and his staff between each practice. how arduous these Zikmund's players who Kearney from McCook "I've never worked so those first three days I I had to get up and move, so I just wet the

Coach Zikmund also implemented the "two-platoon system" into the Antelope football program just prior to the start of the season. Under this system, Zikmund fielded a separate offensive and defensive unit. The offense and defense was comprised of two different "teams." This allowed each player to concentrate and focus on one objective and prevented them from tiring out. Coach Zikmund was able to utilize this system because he always had between 125 and 140 players out for football and "never cut anyone from the football team except for disciplinary reasons." He also established a "B" team from which he could bring the inexperienced players up to the varsity level after they had developed their skills from competing against other "B" teams. Also, Zikmund's "apprentice system," where an upper classman would take a freshman or sophomore of the same position as his apprentice, allowed these veteran juniors and seniors to step into the role of a teacher while they were on the field. As Coach Zikmund stated, the apprentice system, along with the other innovative ideas he used to better the football program at Kearney, "paid dividends." With their roster full, demanding practices completed, and an experienced coach to lead them, the Antelopes were ready to begin their 1955 season.

The 1955 season, Coach Zikmund's first with the Antelopes, proved to be one

of the most successful in school history. Zikmund's gridders lost only one conference game as Tom Osborne and the Hastings Broncos narrowly defeated the Antelopes by a score of 21-7. Regardless of the loss, the Blue and Gold were crowned cham-

lege Conference (NCC) conference was tinction allowed the undefeated College of Aberdeen,

ny Bowl held in Shen-

this invitation reached

clared the rest of the

all classes. A dance

dent Union that night

er in the hat of the



Photo property of the Donald K. Briggs Collection, Calvin T. Ryan Library, University of Nebraska, Kearney.

play of All-American Merlin Bachman and two-time All-American junior college transfer Ray Adams, the Antelopes snapped the Northern Teachers' 16-game winning streak giving Kearney its first-ever bowl game win. Coach Zikmund's inaugural season was capped off with him being named Coach of the Year by the *Lincoln Journal and Star*.

pions of the Nebraska Col-
for the first time since the
formed in 1946. This dis-
Zikmund's squad to play
Northern State Teachers
South Dakota, in the Bota-
andoah, Iowa. As news of
President Cushing, he de-
day a holiday and cancelled
was also held in the Stu-
in honor of this "new feath-
college." With the talented

It was the successful 1955 season that first sparked a tremendous amount of school spirit and community support. After the game with the Doane Tigers, *The Antelope* reported that "it was indeed a thrilling sight to see a truly organized pep rally, complete with drums, school yells, and all the trimmings. This is the beginning of a new era for school spirit for Kearney State." The Student Council also congratulated the student body on their "allegiance to the school" and the Buck and Doe Pep Club was reorganized after it "had once been active on campus" years ago. As Coach Zikmund stated, "that season woke people up."

Coach Zikmund's Antelope squads continued to dominate their opponents as they were crowned NCC champions in 1956 and ranked second in 1957. With an undefeated season in 1956, Coach Zikmund was once again recognized as Coach of the Year by the *Omaha World-Herald*. Ten Antelope gridders were named to the 1957 NCC all-star team as the *Blue & Gold* reported that "school spirits soared to new heights this year." That year's Antelope defense held Midland Lutheran College to a mere 21 yards of total offense, which still remains a school record to this day. The only loss of the season came at the hands of the NCC champion Hastings Broncos, which snapped the Antelopes' 15-game winning streak—the longest in school history. At the end of the season, Coach Zikmund was asked to speak in front of 500 people about his innovative pro-style spread offense at the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics' (NAIA) meeting held in Kansas City, Missouri. Although the Nebraska State Teachers College had had unlimited success in the NCC since 1955, the 1958 team achieved impressive feats that surpassed even those of the previous three years.

Zikmund's 1958 squad amassed an impressive 9-0 record as they were crowned NCC co-champions along with the Chadron Eagles. The NAIA rated the Blue and Gold as high as fourth in their national poll out of more than 350 teams. "Zik's" gridders outscored their opponents 389-42, a modern-day scoring record, and were led by University of Nebraska transfer Claire Boroff. The first-team All-American running back repeated as NCC scoring champion and was named to the first team of the NAIA all-star team. In addition to these accomplishments, the "Comet," as he was known, also still holds the school

record for his 97-yard touchdown run against Dana College. The 1958 football team chose to turn down an offer to play in the Mineral Water Bowl hoping they would be invited to play in the NAIA Holiday Bowl in Florida. Unfortunately, the invitation never came. However, the season ended on a good note when Coach Zikmund was honored as Coach of the Year, for the third time in his career, by the *Lincoln Journal and Star*. Also, at the end of the season President Cushing announced the college would be installing new steel bleachers to replace the twenty-year-old wooden ones due to increased worries that they may collapse in the future. This was a legitimate concern because during this past season, as *The Antelope* reported, "The stands had been jam-packed with spectators."

The Blue and Gold continued to roll through their opponents as they played their way to the top of the NCC for the next four years. The team won the NCC championship in 1959 and in 1962, while they were runners-up in 1960 and 1961. These four

years were filled with exciting performances as cobsen, the "Homer Thun-in rushing and set the reer yards per carry in the top of the school's rec-Jacobsen, an All-American also a major contributor to of the Hastings Broncos at Hastings where the Blue down the goal posts after "Bronco Days" celebration pep rallies, and undoubtedly contributed of loyal fans to the game took part in the destruction of almost 6,000 Antelopes annihilate the Chadron Eagles 51-0 in 1961. The very next year rumors began circulating that Coach Zikmund was going to replace Bill Jennings as the head football coach at the University of Nebraska. Fortunately for the Antelopes, these rumors never came to fruition, for Zikmund would field what could arguably be called his very best team in 1963.



Photo property of the Donald K. Briggs Collection, Calvin T. Ryan Library, University of Nebraska, Kearney.

Sources

The Antelope, September 1955, November-December 1955, February 1956, January 1957, November 1958, February 1959, September-October 1959, September 1960, November 1961, December 1962, September 1969, July 1970

Blue & Gold Yearbooks, 1946-1955

Mark R. Ellis and Jordan T. Kuck, *A Century of Sports at the University of Nebraska at Kearney* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 85-86.

Philip S. Holmgren, *Kearney State College 1905-1980: A History of the First Seventy-Five Years* (Kearney: Kearney State College Press, 1980), 103.

Dale Poore, interviewed by Sarah J. Gress, September 24, 2007.

Allen Zikmund, interviewed by Ross Huxoll, September 18, 2007.

A Note from the Editor

It has been a very successful year at Trails & Rails Museum. I wanted to take a moment to share with you some of the highlights in case you missed them.

-The Trails & Rails Museum will be hosting another Smithsonian traveling exhibit, "Journey Stories" from June 1 through July 15, 2012. This exhibit is brought to Nebraska through the Museum on Main Street program and the Nebraska Humanities Council.

- This was the second year partnered with the Edgerton Explorit Center from Aurora for 'Wild Science Thursdays' that helped young people keep learning through the summer while having fun doing it. The weekly science themes were tied in with history lessons.

-BCHS continued the partnership with the Midwest Paranormal Investigators to hold monthly ghost hunts at the Trails & Rails Museum. Each monthly session was sold out and we opened for eight straight nights of ghost hunting around Halloween. A couple of these nights were purchased by area businesses that brought in their management and staff. This is a unique way to bring in a new market of folks that are asking for history of each building. -The Society had a 'Don't Come Event' which was highly successful and fun.

-The Trails & Rails Museum is currently at a 28% increase over last year's attendance numbers.

I am always accepting more stories for Buffalo Tales, so if you have any stories, memories or pictures about Buffalo County that you would like to share, please e-mail it to me at bchs.buffalotales@hotmail.com or send it to the BCHS, PO Box 523, Kearney, NE 68848.

Thank you again for your patience and your support of BCHS and Trails & Rails Museum.

-Katherine

CHRISTMAS TREE WALK



Come celebrate a time-honored Christmas tradition at Trails & Rails Museum! Come vote for you favorite area businesses and organization's trees during the Penny War, all proceeds go to help support BCHS/Trails & Rails Museum. Join us December 3rd from 12-1 pm for Member's Only or December 3rd-4th and 10th-11th from 1-5 pm for the public.

BUFFALO TALES is the official publication of the Buffalo County Historical Society, a non-profit organization, whose address is P.O. Box 523, Kearney, NE 68848-0523.

Phone: 308.234.3041 Email: bchs.us@hotmail.com

Katherine Wielechowski, Editor

2010 Annual dues, payable January 1, are:

Individual.....	\$35.00
Family.....	\$40.00
Institutional Membership.....	\$50.00
Supporting Membership.....	\$75.00

We have replaced the word 'Basic' to 'Family'.

Directors

Term expiring June 1, 2012: Bernie Hascall, Janice Martin, Dan Speirs, Gary Straalmann

Term expiring June 1, 2013: Vicki Bissell, Chad Henning, Lynn Rauner, Jim Cudaback

Term expiring June 1, 2014: Mary Beth Lowe, Sharon Martin, Duane Muhlback, Mike Peak

Officers (1 year term)

President.....	Dan Speirs
Vice-President.....	Sharon Martin
Secretary.....	Mary Beth Lowe
Treasurer.....	Lynn Rauner

2011 Calendar of Events

Saturday, December 3rd from 12-1pm: Members Only Preview of the 24th Annual Christmas Tree Walk

The first two weekends in December (3rd/4th and 10th/11th) from 1-5 pm: Open to the public: 24th Annual Christmas Tree Walk

Volunteers and sponsors are still needed for these events. Please contact any staff or board member to help!

Education notes:

March hours: Monday-Saturday 1-5 pm daily (crane season)

Wild Science Thursdays will return in the summer!

Ghost Hunting classes-check the web site for more info!

Kearney Public Schools have the museum reserved for two weeks: May 2-14, 2011

Volunteers, chairpersons, and sponsors are still needed. Please contact the office for more information on supporting your Buffalo County Historical Society!

PO Box 523, 710 W. 11th St., Kearney, NE 68848

(308) 234-3041 www.bchs.us bchs.us@hotmail.com

We hope you enjoy these stories about Buffalo County. We would love to have a stock pile of Buffalo Tales ready so they can go out in a more timely manner. Please submit your memories and stories to us by e-mailing them to bchs.buffalotales@hotmail.com or sending them to the post office box: BCHS, PO Box 523, Kearney, NE 68848.

We appreciate your support!

Director's Report

-Sharon Mason attended the Smithsonian traveling exhibit workshop on Nov. 7 in Lincoln. This was a meeting about the basics, but I came away with several ideas that I will be sharing with you.

*****Help will definitely be needed to prepare for this event: marketing, maintenance, extra displays and additional mini-events. I have tried to break the ideas down and list them under certain committees to help make this event successful.

-Duane and I met and did a short walk-through of the museum facilities. The tractor on the flatbed is too heavy for the wood it is sitting on and it is starting to sink. Duane has ideas to fix that. He is also working on loose railings, loose wooden steps, loose door latches, replacing high light bulbs, and preparing to re-install the handicap ramp for to the church for the Smithsonian event .

-I met with Bill and Jacob, of the Midwest Paranormal Investigators (MPI), on Friday, Nov. 11, MPI would like to feature Trails & Rails in their Haunted Neb. 2 movie and they have some questions for the board: 1)Are we ready for this marriage of our current mission (which will not change) to be joined with hauntings? 2)Would the board like a free board retreat to learn about this and experience it, so they have a better understanding?

Be sure to join the Buffalo County Historical Society group or the Buffalo County Historical Society/Trains & Rails Museum fan page on Facebook!



Trails & Rails Museum

Buffalo County Historical Society

710 West 11th St. P.O. Box 523

Kearney, NE 68818-0523

Visit us at

www.bchs.us

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization

U.S. Postage

PAID

Kearney, NE

Permit No. 7