



# Buffalo Tales



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## **“Frank Lydic: One of Kearney’s Best”** By Jordan T. Kuck

*As the story has been told, Frank Lydic was always a runner. Even as a boy Lydic spent his days running through the rolling hills of the Farnam countryside. So much did he run, in fact, that he soon earned the nickname “horse” because he ran everywhere instead of riding a horse like everyone else. Before long that boy had grown into a man and Lydic decided to pursue a career in teaching. Hence, Lydic decided to stay close to home and attended the Nebraska State Teachers College at Kearney.*

*Soon after arriving in Kearney, Lydic joined Coach Fred Fulmer’s track team. After a successful freshmen year, the next fall Lydic convinced Fulmer, the athletic director and all-around coach, to let him organize and coach a cross country team. Although there was a shortage of competition, Lydic and Fulmer were able to organize a number of events, including races against Wesleyan and Hastings colleges. Ran during the half-time of the football games, Lydic finished the inaugural season undefeated. Despite this early success it was not until spring 1929 – his sophomore year – that Lydic began to show signs of greatness. After taking home the conference title in the mile and breaking the two mile record by more than a minute, Lydic was riding high as he entered the most prestigious race of his early career, the Drake Relays. Competing against some of the nation’s best runners, Lydic sprinted to the tape in a time good enough to win him third place. Then, just a month later, Coach*

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### Director's Report

Hello fellow BCHS members. On June 23, 2007, we had a dedication for the "The Road to Zion" Mormon Trail sign given to Trails & Rails Museum by the Nebraska Mormon Trails Association. We have pulled together all of our Mormon Trail signs and made a sharp display in the livery barn, adjacent to the Mormon handcart. Please come out and see our newest addition!

Well-over 30 people attended the Boyd Ranche House's gathering for our Genealogy Open House and "spotlight on our buildings." The stories that these generous people shared were truly amazing!

Also, check out NTV on Tuesday mornings to see what the Buffalo County Historical Society is up to. We will be on every-other Tuesday between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. with lots of fun facts and exciting stories.

Several of you have joined us at the free Nebraska State Historical Society's workshops to preserve history. If you missed these workshops, let me know, as we have some leftover handouts. All that attended learned a lot and enjoyed not having to travel outside the area to learn different techniques.

As always, my door is always open, so please let us know how we can assist you!

Sincerely,

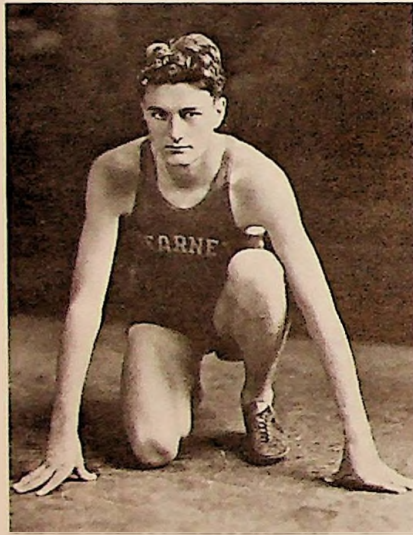
Jennifer Murrish  
Executive Director

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*Fulmer and Lydic traveled to Chicago where he competed in a national meet. Lydic finished seventh that day and ran an outstanding time of 9:46 in the two mile.*

*Yet, Lydic had more to achieve in 1929. Just a few weeks after running in Chicago, Lydic and Fulmer traveled to Denver, where the young harrier took fifth place in the national A.A.U. meet, a feat he achieved despite the fact that he was one of the few athletes who did not arrive far in advance to become acclimated to the elevation. As the Kearney countryside turned to*

vibrant reds, oranges, browns, and yellows, Lydic again donned the blue and gold for Kearney. Completing another successful cross country season, Lydic led his men to another undefeated season, including a Midwest A.A.U. championship, despite the fact that he lost the first race of his career to Hastings College's star runner, Dave Hamil.

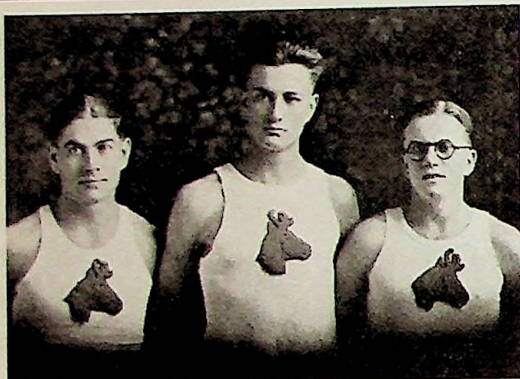


*Frank Lydic is arguably the finest runner in UNK history. He reached the finals of 1500 meter run in the 1932 Olympic Trials. In 1936 he reached the semi-finals in the 5,000 meter run at the Olympic trials*

*Not unlike many great athletes, Lydic was very competitive and was chomping at the bit to avenge his loss to Hamil. Lydic's sweet revenge did, in fact, come the following spring when he outpaced Hamil to the finish line of the two mile at the Hastings Relays. Besides another dominant performance at the conference meet, Lydic's highlights from his junior track season included a second place finish in the 3,000 meter run at the tough Kansas Relays. Also noteworthy was his ninth place finish at the national meet in Chicago; although perhaps the most memorable event of that trip was the misfortune of having their luggage stolen from their car while attending a White Sox's baseball game.*

Lydic's senior year at Kearney began with a bang. Following an undefeated regular season, both for himself and the team, Lydic led the Lopers to a victory at the Midwest A.A.U. meet by running the three and a half mile course in the record time of 19:50. Not wanting any time off during the winter months, Lydic continued to train and compete. For example, he traveled to Kansas City to compete in his first ever indoor event. Evidently, Lydic liked the indoor conditions just fine as he won the 880 yard run there. On top of his own personal achievements, during his senior year, for the first time in his career, he was surrounded by complimentary talent. This was never more evident than when his two mile relay team took home first place at the Colorado Relays in Boulder. Running with teammates Orlie Watts, William Patton, and Harold Gall, Lydic and his comrades won the event in a record-smashing time. The team success continued throughout the season and for the first time in school history the Kearney team won the N.I.A.A. track title. Lydic, too, did his fair share of work that day. Taking home the bacon in three events, Lydic ran a blazing 2:02 in the 880 before also winning the mile and two mile.

Lydic was a versatile runner, winning the 880, mile, and two mile events with regularity. And it was this versatility that wowed the crowd at the regional A.A.U. meet that summer. Deciding to run in the middle or back half of the back – a strategy which he surely would have rarely used in college – at the bell lap of the 1,500 meter run Lydic suddenly sprinted to the front. Thinking that his stamina wouldn't last, the crowd, according to newspaper reports, was visibly wowed by this move. Yet, any naysayers were put to shame as Lydic continued to cushion his lead. At the halfway point he was ahead by nearly fifteen yards and as he made his way down the homestretch he poured it on even more,



*Pictured here is the first Loper cross country squad. From left to right are Stewart Handley, Captain Frank Lydic, and Orlie Watts.*

*winning the race by a distance of nearly thirty yards. Mere weeks later he then bettered this 4:19 performance by running a 4:15, good enough for third, at the national A.A.U. meet. Coming off the best performance of his career, which placed him only five seconds off the world record, Lydic thereupon decided to compete in the Olympic trials.*

*After accepting a teaching job in California, Lydic began training with the Los Angeles Athletic Club in preparation for the Olympic trials. Winning the quarter-final and semi-final events in Taft and Berkeley, California, Lydic then ran in the 1500 meter finals at the Olympic Trials in Los Angeles. Sadly, Lydic came up just short of qualifying for the Olympics. Finishing in seventh place, Lydic wasn't able to run in the Olympics, though he did place high enough to receive an all-expenses paid trip to watch the Olympic Games. Lydic would try again four years later, but this time he only advanced to the semi-finals.*

*Without a doubt, Frank Lydic was one of the greatest runners in Kearney history. Besides all but making it to the 1932 Olympic Games, Lydic also held the school record in the mile for nearly thirty years (it was eventually broken by Larry Snell). He, too, was also responsible for starting cross country at Kearney. For these things, amongst others, Lydic was inducted into the UNK Athletic Hall of Fame.*

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Dr. Mark R. Ellis, Editor

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

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