



COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREVIEW:
EXCLUSIVE » BRENT MUSBURGER ON WHICH
TEAMS ARE THE ONES TO WATCH

WINNER
 8TH ANNUAL MAGNUM
 OPUS AWARDS ▶
Gold Medal
 BEST TRANSPORTATION
 PUBLICATION



(See 12/01/2010 Issue)

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AMERICAN WAY

AMERICAN AIRLINES + AMERICAN EAGLE

A Nebraska Story

Lonely Interstate 80 connects **OMAHA** and **LINCOLN**, but there's nothing lonesome about these towns

+

A hidden gem in
JERSEY
 p.24



CLOWN COLLEGE

See where your team's mascot goes to get schooled

THE LIFE AQUATIC

How one organization is saving the world's coral reefs



TWICE MONTHLY

LAST CHANCE!
 Enter our 2011
 Road Warrior contest
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Big Red

ONE OF THE QUIETEST MOMENTS IN MY LIFE occurred while I was part of a crowd of 67,000. The irony was, though, that only a few minutes earlier, those same 67,000 people produced one of the loudest moments in my life. But the quiet ...

Forget about it being so quiet that you could hear a pin drop; it was so quiet that I could hear the traffic on Interstate 70 from two miles away. And the walk back? Even after my buddies and I split off from the other 67,000 people, we ambled straight home. Our silence was broken only by the occasional expletive avowed aloud, but to oneself.

It was one of those days that you just knew was going to be special. November afternoons in Columbia, Mo., are usually frigid. That one, however, was pleasant. University of Missouri home football games at Faurot Field were rarely sold out while I was a student. That game, however, saw a body occupying every seat; the lawn seats became standing room only. And nobody — and I mean *nobody* — gave the Tigers a chance to beat the No. 1-ranked, undefeated University of Nebraska Cornhuskers. Maybe it was because the year before, Nebraska had trounced us 51-7; it was a 57-0 loss the year before that.

But on Nov. 8, 1997, the Missouri Tigers were on top of the best team in the land, 38-31. Only seven seconds remained on the game clock. Nebraska and quarterback Scott Frost were on the Missouri 12-yard line and down to their final play.

I stood in front of my seat, along with everyone else in that stadium. While we awaited the Huskers' last-ditch attempt to send the game into overtime, over the airwaves on ABC Sports, Brent Musburger was audibly excited. "This is the stuff of fairy tales. You're a 29-point underdog and you're back ahead again and you're trading shots with the No. 1 team in the country."

Then the snap. All 67,000 of us watched Frost drop step, release the ball, and all 67,000 of us saw it bounce off the chest of Nebraska wingback Shevin Wiggins — with help from Missouri safety Julian Jones. Then we saw the ball go down, spring up and fall on the ground, giving the Tigers the win.

At least, that's what we thought we saw.

The students stormed the end zone and immediately seized the goalpost: That thing, we thought, was coming down and being walked to Harpo's Bar, where it would be hacksawed and the pieces distributed as souvenirs. But the officials on the field signaled that the game wasn't over. Wiggins had kicked the ball up as he was falling down, and Nebraska freshman wide receiver Matt Davison came out of nowhere and made a diving catch. Touchdown, Nebraska.

But the students were already tearing down the goalpost.

Police and security tried to clear the end zone so the Huskers could attempt the extra point and send the game into overtime. When that didn't work, the University of Missouri grounds crew turned on the sprinklers. That worked.

The Tigers' spirits were too crushed to finish the Huskers off. Nebraska won in overtime, 45-38. They'd finish up their season undefeated, smashing the University of Tennessee in the Orange Bowl to become the NCAA National Champions.

If you go anywhere in Nebraska these days — especially in Omaha and neighboring Lincoln — all you have to say is "the kick," and they'll know exactly what you're talking about. And when you go anywhere in Omaha and Lincoln these days, you'll be utterly surprised by how beautiful the cities are: You'll be amazed by the commerce being plied, by the friendliness of the people, by their commitment to sports and by the brightness of their futures (page 40).

Back in Columbia, Mo., the Missouri Tigers are training for what should be a successful football season. Even Brent Musburger is optimistic (page 32), and he shares his preseason football picks in an *American Way* exclusive. Me, I'm upset that I may never see a Missouri vs. Nebraska football game again, since Nebraska's about to kick off their first season in the Big Ten conference. But then again, I might: There's always the national championship ...

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