

## Federal cases reveal rotten underbelly of sports

The sad spectacle of the Barton County Community College sports program has spilled out across the front page and into the court record, revealing the dark underbelly of college sports.

While cheating surfaces now and then in college athletics — and seems to be particularly rampant in recruiting young athletes — we like to maintain the fiction that our modern-day gladiators are “amateurs.”

While the Barton County case is extreme — seven coaches and the athletic director indicted, the college president out of a job — it’s nothing new.

What’s new — and welcome — is the willingness of federal prosecutors to go to court in a case that must send shivers down the spine of many on-the-edge operators in college locker rooms and athletic offices.

It’s not that we think college sports are bad. We all follow our favorite teams. We go to the occasional game. We like sports.

And college sports can be an avenue to success for kids whose families otherwise might not be able to get them an education. Sports can be wholesome, honorable, entertaining, enlightening, educational. Competition teaches us much about ourselves — and about life.

But one of the things we need to learn in school is to play by the rules. At Barton County, apparently, they made their own.

Junior colleges generally don’t offer full scholarships to their athletes. You’re doing well to get tuition and books.

At the Great Bend college, athletes were hooked up to make-work jobs paid for with federal work-study money. Coaches were accused of fraud and embezzlement for signing false time cards.

They also, allegedly, had helpers take correspondence courses to help sophomores graduate, then mailed falsified transcripts to four-year colleges. That brought mail fraud charges.

Maybe there is nothing new here. In big-time college sports, a coach can be caught cheating by the NCAA one year and get a bigger contract with a more prestigious school the next. Kansas universities have been known to hire some of these win-by-any-means characters.

But sports, like academics, is supposed to be about honor, about winning yes, but winning within the rules.

As in real life, the athlete who leaves the field with honor should be the one we admire, not the guy who cheated at every turn and broke all the rules.

It’s as in business, we admire billionaire Warren Buffett, but not so the late Enron chief Ken Lay.

It’s good to see the feds taking after the nest of crooked coaches at Barton County. We hope their behavior is just an example of a few bad apples, not the tip of an ugly and embarrassing iceberg.

But if it is, we should clean it up.

— Steve Haynes

## ‘Only 14 days,’ but Dad sad

The house is quiet. Jim left for work a little after 6 a.m. and Taylor is still sleeping.

This is my favorite time of day. I don’t get a chance to do it much anymore, but in the mornings, I love to just sit outside with a cup of coffee and watch the day wake up.

Because of the heat, I’ve been doing my watering in the early morning, and I usually see some of my neighbors taking their morning walk. I watch the birds grubbing in the lawn for bits and pieces to add to their nests. It’s a beautiful time of day.

The quiet will end soon enough. I need to wake Taylor, and then my day, officially, starts.

Her father called and I could tell he was missing his little girl. I heard her side of the conversation as she kept reassuring him, “But, Dad, it’s only 14 more days.”

I have to give Adam and Kara credit, though. Taylor is their only child and they are pretty wrapped up in her life. They have natural fears for her safety as any parent would.

In Taylor’s absence, I think Kara’s imagination runs away with her. We were talking on the phone one day and I told Kara for the umpteenth time that I would watch Taylor closely.

“I know you will,” she said, “but death lurks around every corner out there.”

Now, I always thought rural Kansas was a pretty safe place. It’s the city you had to watch out for. I guess it all depends on your perspective.

—ob—  
This heat has been absolutely op-



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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pressive. Like I said, Jim left for work shortly after 6 this morning. He said he’s going to knock off about 2 p.m. when it gets really hot. I think the Mexicans have it right: A siesta is the smart thing to do on these dog-day afternoons.

—ob—

A long phone conversation with our expectant daughter in San Antonio informed us that she is confident the baby will come this week. She said everything is ready and waiting. I know we are ready and waiting.

—ob—

Have you heard about Red Fridays? My brother Bill sent me an e-mail about an American movement

called Red Friday. To show support for our troops overseas, and to remind us of the blood they’ve shed, everyone is asked to wear red on Fridays.

You don’t think twice about wearing school colors or your favorite pro team’s colors. Join me, won’t you? And, let’s turn America red this Friday.

### From the Bible

Can the blind lead the blind?  
shall they not both fall into the ditch?

Luke 6: 39b

### Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

I am humbled by the response and support of everyone since I lost my home and my dreams in the fire.

Through it all, I have truly realized that material things are really nothing, compared to the blessings God has provided through friends

and family.

This has truly made me love Oberlin and its people more than ever. Most importantly, I have grown in my faith. God bless you all!

Phillip Erickson  
Oberlin

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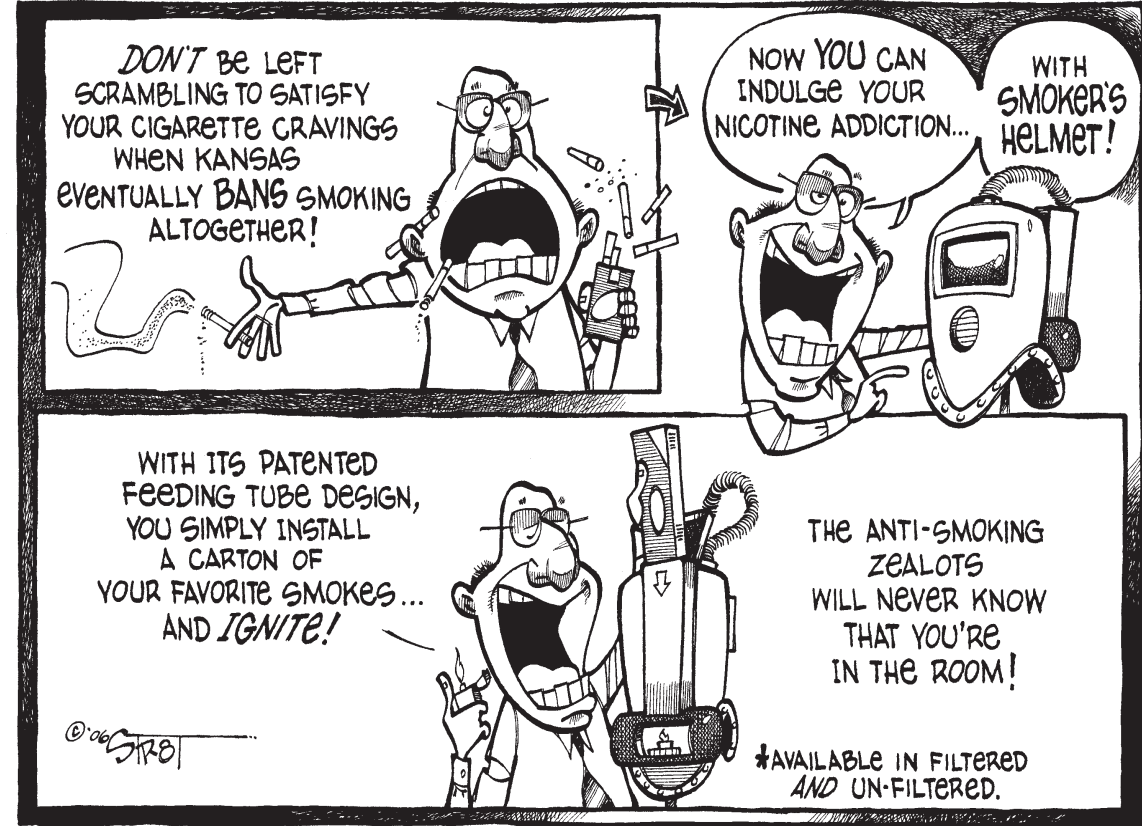
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## Wild Kingdom right in Colorado

Lions and foxes and yaks, oh my. Sorry, I couldn't help myself. It's been a *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* for me this last week.

We spent the week in Colorado and kept our eyes out for wild critters — including the pair of deer browsing a couple of houses down from us on the neighbor's front lawn.

One day Steve and I, his sister, brother-in-law and nephew took a scenic train trip from Alamosa to La Veta, going through wild country and over a mountain pass. On the way, we saw antelope, deer and elk. These are all fun to watch, but it was the trip home that left us with the best photos.

After getting off the train, we ate supper and climbed back in the car for the hour-long trip back to our house. Steve was driving and he never takes the four-lane when a two-lane beckons, or a paved road when there's a gravel back track to explore.

So as we wove through the late afternoon past ditches and fields, he pointed out the local sights, including an old adobe potato shed, which had seen better days and was falling in. Suddenly his sister pointed to the top of the shed and asked what was up there.

At first we thought it was a cat. We were within sight of a farmhouse, so that seemed logical. We soon figured out that it was a fox and slowed to watch. However, Mr. Fox slipped



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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off the ruined roof and disappeared. As we started on past the falling-down shed, we spotted two more foxes on the other side. These were more photogenic and one hung around long enough for us to get out our camera and snap a few shots.

A little farther down the road, we saw a young goat standing on its hind legs to eat from the lower branches of a tree and we all smiled. My sharp-eyed sister-in-law, however, saw more than a cute goat.

“Yak,” she said. “There were yaks back there.”

Huh? We turned around, and sure, enough there were two yaks and five paint horses in the pasture with the goats.

Now there are a lot of llamas out in Colorado these days. They're supposed to be good at guarding sheep, but most of those I've seen are just standing around by themselves in fields, so I don't know what they're for except to admire. They do make good pack animals, I'm told.

Here was a farmer who was trying for a different look. Of course, I'm not sure what you would do with one yak in Colorado, let alone a pair. They're funny little creatures, no more than three foot tall.

It was a few days later that we encountered the mountain lion.

I have friends who hunt these magnificent cats with bows and arrows and hound dogs. One friend told me how a lion knocked her favorite dog over a cliff during a hunt. That lion now decorates their living room, one of the few homes you'll visit with a mountain lion guarding the sofa.

Sit softly, my friend.

Steve spotted the live cat on the trail — thankfully on the other side of the creek. All I got to see were the hind quarters and the tail. But it's a tail you recognize — long and sinewy, like a big, fur-covered snake with a black tip.

We stared in awe and returned home quickly to sit softly on our sofa — the one that isn't guarded by a really big cat.

## Was big cat looking for lunch?

In my 58 years of tramping the outdoors in Kansas and Colorado, I've seen nearly every animal and bird afield.

I've hunted quail and pheasant, trout, crappie and bass.

I've always been an observer, or the hunter, never the prey.

Until last week. I jumped up one of the few animals I'd never seen and, after he was gone, got to wondering who was stalking whom.

We spent the week in southern Colorado, hiking, fishing, riding scenic trains, entertaining relatives.

One night we were late getting to the trail, starting up just before sunset. We had a busy day, so we agreed to walk just a couple of miles uphill, 20 minutes instead of the usual half hour.

I had just stopped to wait for Cynthia, and call the dog back, and I turned and faced east across the creek. After a couple of minutes of idle thought, I was startled when the cat jumped up out of the bush and headed up the mountain away from me.

I've always wanted to see a bobcat in the field, and I was excited.

I've seen deer, elk, moose, mountain sheep and beaver on the trail. I've nearly tripped over sleeping white tail, and an antelope buck once challenged us to shoulder him off the trail. He stood his ground and we



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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left the path to him.

I've seen birds, lots of them, ducks, geese, quail, pheasant, song birds, huge cranes, even a whooping crane once, you name it. Nearly every huntable species in this land.

Never a cat, not in the wild. But as this cat rose on up out of the brush, his tail flowed out behind him, dark tip flying.

He was big. Not a bobcat. “Panther,” I yelled to Cynthia, and I thought that odd. Ninety-nine times out of 100, I'd call it a lion. Or puma. Funny the things that go through your mind.

The cat stopped and turned to look at me over his shoulder, then bounded on up the side of the canyon.

Wow. I know guys who hunt lions with hounds. Sometimes the lion wins.

I know hardly anyone who's just seen one on the trail, and sometimes that's not such a good experience.

Colorado has lost a couple of joggers. Biologists say the cats may

confuse them with deer, their usual prey. They also snap up suburban poodles and house cats.

No one argues with a lion.

This lion was hiding motionless in the brush across the creek, and I got to thinking about what might have been.

Was he stalking the dog? Or me? Or just waiting to cross the trail unseen?

What would have happened had we been going on up the trail? What if I hadn't stopped to wait and been watching his hiding spot? Guess we'll never know.

I've always worried about meeting up with momma bear on the trail, but the danger there is an inadvertent encounter. Brown bears aren't known to stalk man.

Lions, that's a different subject. He was regal, beautiful, lithe — and big.

It may have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but at least it was a life experience.

## Contractor apologizes for boiler

To the Editor:

I would like to start by apologizing for the boiler at the Oberlin pool not running.

One of the reasons that I have not been able to make it run is that every time I have been down to troubleshoot and repair the boiler, it will run for me. I have been relying on the factory rep to advise me on what may be wrong. They have been blaming the installation, which was correct and by the book from the start.

However, in the interest of customer service for the people of Oberlin, I have spent upwards of \$800 out of my own pocket trying to make it run.

Now that I have diagnosed it, I am having trouble getting the right part,

### Letter to the Editor

which takes a week each time because the manufacturer is in Canada. They have sent me the wrong part twice.

The reason I went with this boiler manufacturer is it was substantially less expensive than the competitor. However, I think I am learning the lesson now of getting what I paid for.

I am also very frustrated with the customer service I am getting from the manufacturer because it makes me unable to offer you the best service available, which is my policy.

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