



Maisel leads winners in 2013 FWAA Best Writing Awards



September 2013

Vol. 51, No. 3

Inside this issue:

President's column 2

Game writing winner:
Ivan Maisel, ESPN.com 3

Feature writing winner:
Adam Lucas, Tar Heel Monthly 4

Column writing winner:
Ben Frederickson,
Casper Star-Tribune 9

Enterprise writing
winner: Matt Hayes,
Sporting News 10

Veteran Ivan Maisel of espn.com claimed his fourth FWAA writing first-place during his career in the results just announced for the 21st annual FWAA Best Writing Contest. Matt Hayes of the *Sporting News* also won first place, picked up an honorable mention and was one of three writers to be recog-

nized in two different categories. *USA Today's* George Schroeder and Aaron Brenner, now with the *Charleston Post and Courier*, each received two honorable mentions. Ben Frederickson, now at *Fox Sports Midwest*, and Adam Lucas of *Tar Heel Monthly* captured the other first places in the contest.

Game

First place — Ivan Maisel, *ESPN.com*

Second place — Andrea Adelson, *ESPN.com*

Third place — Glenn Guilbeau, *Gannett Louisiana Newspapers*

Honorable mention — Matt Fortuna, *ESPN.com*;
George Schroeder, *USA Today*; Greg Barnes, *InsideCarolina.com*

Feature

First place — Adam Lucas, *Tar Heel Monthly*

Second place — Sanjay Kirpalani, *Bleacher Report*

Third place — Dave Guffey, *GoGriz.com*

Honorable mention — Matt Hayes, *Sporting News*;
Kevin Armstrong, *New York Daily News*

Column

First place — Ben Frederickson, *Casper Star-Tribune*

Second place — David Jones, *Harrisburg Patriot-News*

Third place — Gentry Estes, *Dawgs247.com*

Honorable mention — Aaron Brenner, *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*;
Peter Kerasotis, *HeyPeterK.com*;
George Schroeder, *The Register-Guard*;
Pete Thamel, *SI.com*

Enterprise

First place — Matt Hayes, *Sporting News*

Second place — Curtis Eichelberger and Charles Babcock, *Bloomberg News*

Third place — Scott Dochterman, *Cedar Rapids Gazette*

Honorable mention — Aaron Brenner, *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*;
Dennis Dodd, *CBSSports.com*;
Ryan McGee, *ESPN The Magazine*

President
Chris Dufresne
Los Angeles Times
First Vice President
Kirk Bohls
Austin American-Statesman
Second Vice President
Lee Barfknecht
Omaha World-Herald

Board of Directors
Mark Anderson
Las Vegas Review-Journal
Dave Jones
Harrisburg Patriot-News
George Schroeder
USA Today
Lee Feinswog
Sports 225
Malcolm Moran
NSJC

Mark Blaudschun
AJerseyGuy.com
John Wagner
Toledo Blade
Phil Steele
Phil Steele Magazine
Tony Barnhart
CBS Sports
Matt Sign
National Football Foundation
Mike Griffith
MLive.com
Vahe Gregorian
Kansas City Star
Jimmy Burch
Fort Worth Star-Telegram
Wally Hall
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Tom Kensler
Denver Post
Steve Wieberg
Freelance

Ex-Officio
Joe Hornstein
Florida International (CoSIDA)
Gina Lehe
BCS-Rose Bowl
Scott Chipman
Big Ten (ConSIDA)

President's column



CHRIS DUFRESNE

We here at FWAA are thrilled the season has started because at least now the daily Johnny Manziel stories will be offset by a few actual football games.

This figures to be one of the most exciting falls in recent FWAA history as we count down the final year of the BCS on our way to the celebration of the 100th Rose Bowl game.

The FWAA and Rose Bowl have united for what I think is a very special project — the naming of the All Century Rose Bowl class.

Gina (Chappin) Lehe (her new married name, pronounced “Leahy” like the Notre Dame coach) brought the idea to FWAA at our pre-BCS title game meeting in South Florida last January and we basically said, as Johnny Football has said so often, “Where do we sign?”

The idea was to compile a list of prominent writers, historians and broadcast types and have them vote on an all-time Rose Bowl team by decade.

The team would then be released, decade by decade, every Sunday during the season with a final unveiling and tribute to the entire squad in early December.

There will be one player and one coach named per decade and then one top overall coach and player for the bowl's entire history.

Gina sent me an early version of the voter list in late August, and I must say it sort of blew me away.

This has to be one of the most impressive panel assembled since “What’s My Line.”

You can start with longtime Bay Area scribe Art Spander, who covered the first Rose Bowl in 1902 and wrote in his next-day column that the game was so dangerous they should switch to chariot races, which they did.

Ok, that’s a fib, Spander didn’t cover the first game, but he’s attended every Rose Bowl since 1954 or something. If you want to know more, ask him in the press box next January and then pull up a chair.

The list was still being finalized as I write this, but what’s not to like?

You have Bud Withers out of the Pacific Northwest and Dick Weiss out of Philly and the esteemed Phil Steele. Phil has been told his ballot must be submitted in larger type than he uses for his pre-season magazine or his vote will be discarded.

I could go on and on so I will. Mark Blaudschun, Dave Sittler and Ivan Maisel are on the list. Ivan grew up in Alabama and attended Stanford, so expect a heavy voting dose of Pop Warner, Bear Bryant and Jim Plunkett.

Former Pac 10 Commissioner Tom Hansen is lending his expertise as well as my former *LA Times* colleague Mike Downey.

Downey boasts complete geographical Rose Bowl open-field coverage as he grew up in Big Ten shoulders town Chicago, worked in Big Ten town Detroit and then moved to Pac 10 town Los Angeles.

Downey is also married to Dean Martin’s daughter. Dean, of course, was a great crooner and associate commissioner of the old “Rat Pac 8.”

Anyway, this should be fun, which is why we got into this business ... remember?

Game writing: Ivan Maisel

Comment by the judge, Gene Duffey: Good lead that quickly told the story of Baylor football. Story captured the mood of the game and Baylor's dominance. Liked the reference to Baylor knowing what a Heisman winner is like compared with Collin Klein. Nice quotes from Snyder and Klein.

By Ivan Maisel
ESPN.com

WACO, Texas -- Floyd Casey Stadium will never be confused with Death Valley or the Horseshoe or any of the college football palaces where road teams get mugged. It seats 50,000 in theory, if rarely in reality, because Baylor just doesn't fill it up. It's old and unloved and five miles from campus, and Baylor can't wait to tell you about the new stadium it will open in two years.

But don't tell any of that to Kansas State. The Wildcats brought their brand new No. 1 BCS rating to Floyd Casey and looked like an impostor. Quarterback Collin Klein came to Waco as the Heisman Trophy favorite and fooled no one. After all, Baylor knows what a Heisman winner looks like.

RG III may be gone, but on a cool, crisp Saturday night, Baylor beat unbeaten Kansas State 52-24 and ended the Wildcats' short-lived hopes of playing for the BCS championship. The Bears resembled their 10-win team of a year ago, not the team with a 4-5 record that stood last in the FBS in total defense (520 yards per game).

The Baylor offense treated Kansas State as it has every other defense. The Bears gained 580 yards, including 342 rushing yards against a defense that had allowed only 98.9 yards per game on the ground. This was no fluke. Baylor's four first-half touchdown drives went 82, 75, 55 and 64 yards.

The Bears closed out a 24-point third quarter -- and, essentially, the game -- when sophomore Lache Seastrunk rumbled 80 yards for a touchdown. The sophomore transfer from Oregon rushed for 185 yards on only 19 carries.

But the real stars of the game played on the Baylor defense, which harassed Klein into throwing three interceptions, half as many giveaways as the Wildcats had all season.

Bill Snyder emerged from the Kansas State locker room, purple windbreaker unzipped, nursing a Styrofoam cup of coffee and looking as unruffled as usual. Snyder prides himself and his team on maintaining an even keel. But when he opened his mouth, you could see his keel hadn't been even all night.

"I don't think we handled the situation as well as we should have been able to," Snyder said. "It had nothing

IVAN MAISEL

ESPN.com

Age: 53

College: Stanford

Maisel has won first place in the FWAA Best Writing Contest for the fourth time in his 26 seasons covering national college football, a batting average that will surprise no one in Spring Hill (Ala.) Little League. Ivan also won for an enterprise story in 1994 while at *The Dallas Morning News*, for an *ESPN.com* column in 2003 and an *ESPN.com* feature in 2006. Ivan covered college football for the *DMN* from 1987 to 1994, for *Newsday* from 1995 to 1997, *Sports Illustrated* from 1997 to 2002. Having taken some grief for job-hopping, he is delighted to have worked at *ESPN.com* since 2002. Given the rapid change of how people use the Internet, he feels like he has job-hopped a few times without leaving ESPN. What starting out as a writing job with a little TV on the side has morphed into writing, web video and, of course, podcasting. Ivan has hosted the ESPNU College Football Podcast for several seasons, and this season was joined by co-host Matt Barrie. Ivan also has written two books about the sport. Ivan and his wife, Meg Murray, live in Fairfield, Conn., and have three children: Sarah, a senior at Stanford, Max, a sophomore at RIT, and Elizabeth, a high school junior.



to do with young guys wanting to be successful. They wanted to play well. They wanted to play hard. They wanted to win. We just couldn't handle the environment as well as we could."

By "environment," Snyder didn't mean global warming, and he didn't mean the noise in Floyd Casey. He meant, in part, Kansas State's first-ever No. 1 rating in the BCS.

"I've wanted to think not but I can't assure you that wasn't the case," Snyder said, employing a sentence that, like Klein's interceptions, turned into a triple negative. "I think it has to do with how we handled the overall recognition that we were confronted with."

That recognition will recede into the background now, even as Kansas State remains a defeat of Texas away from the Big 12 title and a berth in the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl.

"We knew that No. 1 only matters at the end," Klein said. "It's very fickle and we knew that. We knew Baylor was a very good team coming in, and we just didn't get it done."

(Continued on page 14)

Feature writing: Adam Lucas

Comment by the judge, Alan Abrahamson: A great feature should be a journey of discovery. This story is just that. It is full of not just connections but a series of incredible moments of revealing truths, each one taking the reader along through the story of one family's incredible journey to and through the American dream. The cast of characters is rich and diverse. The action pieces are well-told and the back stories riveting. Finally, this piece also serves as compelling evidence that even in a world increasingly turning to bursts of 140 or fewer characters there thankfully remains a place for long-form journalism and the art of the well-told narrative.

By Adam Lucas
Tar Heel Monthly

On the most famous play in modern Carolina football history, it looked like Gio Bernard was finally going to be caught by his history.

He'd spent twenty years outrunning it. He'd lived in Haiti with no running water. He'd sat in a tiny bathroom with his brother and father, all three men in tears over the loss of Gio's mother. He'd shared an apartment in Ft. Lauderdale with rats.

Any one of those events could change a life. They all changed Gio Bernard's, but they didn't stop him. Finally, though, here came his past across the Kenan Stadium field, and it had bad intentions.

He was running back a punt against NC State—that's not quite right, he was running back *the* punt against NC State. He was on the right sideline, and he couldn't hear anything even though 62,000 people were slowly coming to the same realization shouted by Jones Angell on the Tar Heel Sports Network:

"No he's not..."

"YES HE IS!"

He couldn't hear them, couldn't hear the roar that began to build as they all realized, together, that this was happening. But he could see the end zone. And he could see something else, too.

"It gave me chills," he says.

Yven Bernard arrived in America with nothing.

I know you hear that and it sounds like the start to every immigrant story you've ever heard, but I want you to take a minute and think about it: On that night in 1980, Yven Bernard arrived in America with nothing. He had a shirt, and he had some pants. "I think I had shoes, but I can't remember for sure," he says. "I might not have had shoes."

Here is what he definitely did not have: he didn't have any money. He didn't have a firm grasp of the language, because in his native country of Haiti, they spoke mostly Creole with a dash of French. He didn't have a place to

ADAM LUCAS

Tar Heel Monthly

Age: 36

College: Guilford

Adam Lucas is the editor of *Carolina Digital Magazine* and *GoHeels Season Preview*. He is also a featured columnist for *GoHeels.com*, a site he joined for the fall 2001 football season as one of the first columnists on any official college site, thanks largely to the foresight of director of athletic communications Steve Kirschner. As a UNC Law School student in 2001, Adam enjoyed catching up on his sleep in torts class after the much-loathed 9 p.m. ACC basketball starts. As those naps became more regular and more ill-received by his professors, he dropped out of Carolina in February 2001, which allowed him to go to many more late games with no concerns about 8 a.m. classes. Sadly, going to games as a ticket holder did not pay very well. He started *Tar Heel Monthly* in the summer of 2001 and published that magazine until the summer of 2013, when it switched to an electronic format and converted into *Carolina Digital*. He has written six books about Tar Heel sports and lives in Chapel Hill with his wife, son and daughter. His favorite teams are the undefeated and Southeast regional champion West Raleigh Baseball 8U Blue All-Stars and the Carolina Ballet Nutcracker cast. His daughter insists that he specify he is simply a proud parent of a cast member and — to her eternal appreciation — not an actual cast member, since no one who refers to intermission as "halftime" is allowed on stage. He blames his parents, who regularly let him miss school on the Friday of the ACC Tournament, for his passion for sports.



live. He didn't have a car, or an idea of where his next meal might come from, or a job.

He had nothing.

Today, according to an American Community Survey, there are more than half a million Haitian-born immigrants living in America. In 1980, the United States Census counted less than 100,000. When Yven Bernard made his journey from Haiti, there were two ways to get to America—by plane or by boat. Plane was the relatively easy way. Boat was the hard way.

He came by boat, and spent three nights crammed into the small vessel with 15 other Haitians. He remembers that the wind and the water were vicious, and they crashed into the boat, throwing the 16 hopeful souls from side to side. They landed near Delray Beach, Florida,

(Continued on page 5)

Features (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

and once they'd endured the wind and the ocean and the cold, they suddenly realized they had another problem: now what?

Yven Bernard lived in an apartment with several other Haitians. He got a job working as a janitor. He found a way to get enough food to survive.

Now, when he looks back through the lens of 30 years, he's incredulous that two life-changing events happened within days of each other:

He came to America. And he met Jossette. She lived next door to Yven's building, and it happened instantly.

"It was like she was waiting for me," he says now, and you can hear the joy in his voice. "Somehow she knew what was supposed to happen."

What happened was, well, a life. First they worked, day and night. Soon they were married, and Yven had moved from working as a janitor to working in a dry cleaners.

Wouldn't this be good enough? He'd started with nothing and now he was most definitely something. But he wasn't done. In 1985, the couple had a son, Yvenson (EVAN-son). Soon, Yven wasn't just working at the dry cleaner. He owned the dry cleaner. Seven years after Yvenson, Gio was born.

Their father had been a soccer player in Haiti, but they were Americans now, and with their father's influence and the influence of their uncle, Paul, the boys became football players. There was too much of an age distance for them to be competitive. The strange thing was, they didn't seem to want to be competitive. Not with each other. How could you compete with your very best friend?

If you saw Yvenson, you probably saw Gio. Their parents worked—Jossette ran the front of the dry cleaner, and Yven was usually busy in the back. "She was the backbone of the entire operation," says Paul Bernard, Yven's brother, who came to America in 1982. "The way they worked together, she really was his right hand," says Gio.

They had done it. They had the American dream, or maybe even more than that.

"When you decide to come to America from Haiti, you're doing it because of an opportunity," says Paul. "You don't know exactly what is going to happen, but in America you know that there is a chance. You can try to get a better education, and you can try to get a better education for your kids. And if you get that education, then you can set goals. In America, you can achieve those goals."

Really, though, this was more than even the goals Yven had imagined when he was spending three nights

in a boat. Who could imagine this? He had a loving wife, and they were running a business that was becoming a success, and their two sons were sports stars.

Yvenson was the first to show talent on the football field. He was a running back, and his teammates told him he was like Tony Dorsett, because he liked to run people over. Gio played football because Yvenson played football. If Yvenson had been a chess grand master, Gio would have been a chess grand master. If Yvenson had been a professional ballet dancer, Gio would have been a professional ballet dancer. Why would he want to do anything other than what his brother was doing?

Gio would sometimes tag along when Paul took Yvenson to the beach to work out. Paul had seized on every nuance of the game of football. He called the bag of tricks needed by every successful running back a "toolbox." He told Yvenson—and Gio absorbed it almost by osmosis—to carry the ball in the outside hand when running along the sideline. "Have your free arm on the wide side with the tacklers," he'd tell them. "You have to have that stiff arm ready. Have your toolbox ready to go."

Jossette and Yven didn't get to see all the boys' football games, because they were trying to run their business. On the occasions Jossette did attend, however, everyone knew it.

"She would sit in the stands, and she'd tell everyone, 'My boys are going to be superstars,'" Yvenson remembers. "We'd have to grab her and tell her, 'You can't say that.'"

But she could say that, because Jossette knew.

The family was thriving. They had fancy cars and for the very first time, they had money. What more could an American success story need?

It changed the way so many American families change: cancer. Jossette had thyroid cancer, and suddenly the cars didn't seem important anymore. The cancer moved quickly and it moved insidiously. She died in the summer of 1999, in Yvenson's arms on the floor of a home that had once seemed to be so important. Gio was seven years old.

It is 13 years later, and Yven Bernard doesn't just sniffle when he talks about his wife. He sobs—big, gasping sobs.

"I still remember the last words she ever said to Yvenson," he says. "She told him, 'Keep the family together.'"

"My main memory is my dad crying in the bathroom and he couldn't stop," Gio says. "First, my brother went in there. Then, I went in there. And the three of us just

(Continued on page 6)

Features (continued)

(Continued from page 5)

sat there and cried. That's when I really realized my mother wasn't coming back. I was pretty young, and that's the first time I realized that things don't always work out. When some things are gone, they are gone forever."

You may find this hard to believe: Gio Bernard used to be big. Big for his age, and maybe even a little stocky. For most of his youth football career, he was a linebacker, because he was one of the biggest kids on the team. He was too big—here, "big" is a nice way of saying "heavy"—to play with his own age group, because his weight class put him a year or even two years ahead.

Players have to weigh in to make sure a team isn't trying to sneak through a bigger, stronger player with the little kids. Sometimes, Gio's weigh-in came with some drama, because making weight wasn't exactly a priority in his house. Eventually, one of his coaches decided he was going to keep the talented linebacker close by to make sure he qualified. That coach was Cris Carter, who had a Hall of Fame career for the Minnesota Vikings and whose son, Duron, was a year older than Gio but in the same weight class.

These are not your typical Saturday afternoon Pop Warner games where mom brings orange slices and dad coaches the defensive line. Youth football in Florida, and especially in South Florida, is serious. ESPN recently ran a special on gambling in youth football, where fathers and brothers and uncles of seven- and eight-year old players would wager on plays or games. When this is mentioned to Yvenson, he just nods.

"That's how important youth football is in that area," he says. "It is everything. It is the means of every inner city kid. You can get out of that area by playing football, and if you don't play football, you're a little weird."

"You're dealing with kids who have a lot of ability," says Cris Carter. "In every park, you've got kids playing who are going to be Division I football players, and you can see them at an early age and say, 'He's going to play at the highest level.' There is such a pool of talent. It's not an urban legend. The parents understand the system and what football can do for them and for their children."

When Gio was in seventh grade, he played on a team coached by Bart Bishop. That was the first time that a coach ever tried Bernard at running back instead of linebacker. It was, as you might have heard, quite a successful move. Word even spread all the way across the country, where Yvenson had enrolled at Oregon State and played running back for the Beavers.

One afternoon, he received a package from a friend back in Florida that contained a newspaper clipping

about Gio. The story raved about the younger Bernard's ability, and Yvenson taped it to the inside of his locker (it was a mutual admiration society; when Gio played the NCAA football video game, he only played as Oregon State and his game plan consisted of 50 handoffs to the character in the game wearing Yvenson's number).

"Is your brother in high school?" a teammate asked Yvenson.

"No, he's in seventh grade," he replied.

"They write newspaper articles about Pop Warner players?" the stunned teammate asked.

Yvenson smiled. That's just football in south Florida.

Carter planned for his son to attend St. Thomas Aquinas, a private school in Ft. Lauderdale with one of the most successful NFL pipelines of any prep program in the country. He thought Bernard could play at that level, too. But after Josette's death, the Bernard family was struggling, and Yven was having trouble running his business without her. He would eventually lose the dry cleaner. He did not have the money to send Gio to St. Thomas Aquinas.

But Carter knew what he had seen on those youth football fields of south Florida, and he knew Bernard could play at St. Thomas. He lobbied the ultra-successful head coach, George Smith, for an opportunity for the linebacker-turned-running back.

"I knew Gio had played in the league in Boca Raton," Smith says. "I never saw him play in person. He passed the entrance exam, and when we started practice, he reported with the older players. You could see right away what was going on. He was a phenomenal talent and a very smart kid. He was a smart football player, but he was also a smart kid. He understood what we were doing, and even then he had great communicative skills and was very powerful."

Gio and his father were living in Boynton Beach, so their morning routine on school days went this way: first, Yven Bernard would drive Gio to Carter's house. Then, the Carter family would get Gio to school. Total, it took about 80 minutes of travel time—every morning—before he walked through the doors of St. Thomas.

To ease the commute, they eventually secured an apartment in Ft. Lauderdale. It was closer to school, but it was not home. That was when Gio grew up, because he had no choice. Yvenson was all the way across the country, and Gio didn't want to worry him. He kept the problems to himself, but that doesn't mean he was oblivious to them.

"I knew every single thing that was going on," he said. "We didn't have money, and there were times my dad didn't have a job. There were times we didn't have

(Continued on page 7)

Features (continued)

(Continued from page 6)

anything to eat at night. We'd go through the drive-through at McDonald's, and Dad would let me pick one thing off the 99 cent menu, and that would be my dinner, and he wouldn't get anything. I knew he wasn't eating, but he would try to make sure I got something.

"You see those little things that a father does for his son, and you mature quickly. I saw things that not many kids my age saw. When you're a kid, you don't think you're going to see your dad struggle, or see him cry. It shaped me into the person that I am. If you can fight through to that next day, you've made it. Get the next day. Get the next yard. Tough things are going to happen in life."

The Bernard men were so hesitant to worry Yvenson that he was completely unaware of their situation. He came home from Oregon State and went to visit Gio.

"They had moved to a really rough area of Ft. Lauderdale," Yvenson says. "I got there, and I was like, 'Gio, what is going on?' And he told me, 'Ev, this is where we're staying.' There were drug dealers outside, and when you opened the door it smelled dirty. I could smell rat feces. The only thing my brother asked me was if we could go to Best Buy to get a cord for his Xbox. A rat had eaten through the other cord. I had no idea all of that was going on."

Gio never mentioned it to Yvenson. Matter of fact, Gio never mentioned it to anyone. This was just life. Why would he complain? He had seen the other side. As a small child, he'd spent some of his summers in Haiti, because his parents were working and Yvenson was busy with travel baseball teams and football practices. Gio can still speak Creole, and even a little bit of rusty French. The images, though, have stuck with him even longer than the languages.

"It's a completely different culture," he says. "Some people don't have running water. Having clothes is not something that is taken for granted. Food is important. It's not something you easily forget. To this day, if I don't finish my food, I don't throw it away. I find a way to save it. That's my roots. That's where I come from."

Now, when Yven sends Gio money, Gio tears up the check. He hasn't taken money from his father since middle school. On November 23, his father tried to give him money for his 21st birthday. Gio sent it back to him. "I know what he has done for us," Gio says. "He has been there for me every time I have needed him. It's not right for me to take money from him after everything he has done."

Even during the deepest struggles, the football field was the refuge. Within the confines of those 120 yards, there was no concern about where the next meal would

be found. There were no money problems. There was no father bouncing from job to job, eventually losing even his home and spending a few nights sleeping in his car under a bridge.

There was just Gio, and the field, and his sanctuary. St. Thomas was the very highest level of high school football, but he found that it wasn't all that much different from those beach workouts with Paul and Yvenson.

Watching him, you're seeing his family's influence. The way he waits just an extra half-second at the line of scrimmage, seemingly caught in traffic but then bursting through a hole that wasn't there before, that's part of the toolbox.

"My uncle always told me to try and slow the game down," Gio says. "And if you do that, you can make the defenders in front of you do what you want them to do. Each time I moved from one level to the next, he would tell me that the game was going to be faster, and I had to find a way to slow down the game. I've always tried to set up my blocks. If I can make the defender go a little further than he wants to go, I can cut off my lineman a little sharper and try to make a play."

Those plays earned him national recruiting attention, even in a backfield that included future Wisconsin Badgers standout James White. The combination could've been toxic, but instead, they found a way to play together. Bernard even lived with White's family for part of his high school career. The White family was so smitten with Gio that they celebrated his birthday just like they celebrated those of the family members.

With the Carters and Whites providing a more stable home environment, Bernard was a national recruit. He initially committed to Notre Dame, but a coaching change in South Bend changed his plans. Looking for advice on his next move, he turned to Carter.

It just so happened that Carter was a longtime friend of Michael Jordan (you have to think that by this point, the number of players across every sport that Jordan has played some role in recruiting to North Carolina is in the upper triple digits), and he also knew then-head coach Butch Davis. Carter's son, Duron, had pledged to attend his father's alma mater, Ohio State. But Carter thought Carolina was the right fit for Bernard, and he placed a call to Davis to gauge the possibilities.

"I told Coach Davis, 'This person is like my son,'" Carter says. "Do you realize what you would be getting? We've had a lot of kids in our home over the last six to eight years. None is more memorable than Gio. It's not because of how he plays football. It's about his heart."

Davis, who was already convinced of Bernard's on-field talent, pledged to nurture Carter's protégé. In the

(Continued on page 8)

Features (continued)

(Continued from page 7)

wacky world of college football recruiting, an Ohio State graduate had just helped North Carolina land one of the most exciting players in the program's history.

Because this was the life of Gio Bernard, there had to be turmoil. There had to be an NCAA investigation, and a torn ACL in his very first Tar Heel training camp, and Davis never actually getting to coach Bernard in a game.

"The way I look at it is that everything I have been through has made me a stronger person," Gio says. "My mother dying taught me about life. Being hurt taught me about life. Not playing football for almost two years taught me about life. I know what it's like to struggle, and I know how to treat something like a speed bump and keep pushing."

So he became Carolina's first 1,000-yard rusher since 1997, and then Carolina's first back-to-back 1,000-yard rusher since 1980. He made first-team All-ACC and missed out on the 2012 Player of the Year award by one vote—an honor he seems certain to have received if he hadn't been injured for two games this season.

But no matter what trophies or accolades he received, there is one single play that will forever be his legacy in Chapel Hill. The last time Carolina had beaten State, Gio Bernard was still wondering where his next meal might come from. Now, he was on the sidelines late in a 35-35 game, and Roy Smith was ready to return a Wolfpack punt with 30 seconds left.

Bernard heard offensive line coach Chris Kapilovic talking to another Carolina coach. "Should we put Gio back there?" Kapilovic asked. Bernard was on the bench nursing an ankle injury that had occurred earlier in the game.

"When I heard Coach Kap say that," Bernard says, "I just said to myself, 'Let's go do it.'"

So he did. He put on his chrome-plated helmet, walked out to Smith, and said, "Let's see what I can do with this." Smith offered no resistance.

The punt forced Bernard back a couple of steps. He thought about fair catching it only briefly. Once he fielded the ball and sprinted to his right, he had a glorious realization: "All I saw," he says, "was blue."

He made it to the sideline with a convoy of blockers. At the Wolfpack 40-yard-line, he saw the only defender who had a chance to keep him out of the end zone. Everyone else saw only red pants and a white jersey, the last possible man between Bernard and a legendary play.

Not Yvenson Bernard. He knew instantly who it was. It was Brandan Bishop, who a few weeks earlier had become Yvenson Bernard's Facebook friend because of their shared Florida football ties.

Not Gio Bernard. He knew instantly who it was. It was Brandan Bishop, his former seventh grade football teammate. The one player who could stop him? He was the son of Bart Bishop—Bernard's seventh-grade football coach, the first person to move Bernard from defense to offense.

"I was running, and at the same time, I was thinking, 'This is crazy,'" Bernard says. "I grew up with that guy. This is the guy whose dad put me in the position to play running back. I can't believe all of us are here right now."

Bishop didn't have enough speed to catch Bernard, the player whom his dad turned from a linebacker into a running back. Bernard scored, Kenan Stadium thundered and Carolina won the game.

In Ft. Lauderdale, Yven Bernard didn't see the play live. He was working. On August 1, he'd taken over a dry cleaner from an older friend who could no longer run the business. A regular workday now meant being at the office no later than 7 a.m. and leaving no earlier than 7 p.m. There were no days off, not even on Gio's game days.

Soon enough, though, he heard about the play. Customers were telling him about it. Phones were ringing. Highlights were playing.

Yven Bernard is asked what this means, that he does not remember if he arrived in the United States with shoes and now his son is a one-name-only legend in Chapel Hill. He has made a play that will live in Kenan Stadium history forever. Carolina football fans who aren't born yet will hear stories about Giovanni Bernard.

"Why not?" Yven says. "It should tell everyone out there, 'Why not?' If I can make it, if we can make it, everyone else can make it. Life is a risk. You take a risk, and you go far. My strength and my risk make me who I am."

Yven Bernard is at work, of course, on this November day as he recounts his son's incredible plays. He asks if you might talk to Gio later in the day, and you tell him that you will.

"Tell him hello for me," he says. "And tell him that I love him, and I am so proud of him."

Column writing: Ben Frederickson

Comment by the judge, Gene Duffey: Touching story of young boy and his enthusiasm for Wyoming football. Well researched with good quotes from Wyoming coach and a player.

By Ben Frederickson
Casper Star-Tribune

The chubby-cheeked, brown-eyed boy from Rock Springs beamed on game days.

He loved to watch the University of Wyoming football team play in War Memorial Stadium, especially when his dad let him go down, close to the field, to be near the players.

Phillip and Cherilyn Hansen had taken their son, Hunter, and his older brother, Phillip Jr., to Laramie three times to join the crowd of brown and gold. Together, the family had cheered for their Pokes.

But things changed after July 29, 2011. Instead of trips to Laramie to watch his favorite team, Hunter made trips to Primary Children's Medical Center in Salt Lake City.

Hunter was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, a white-blood-cell attacking cancer that starts in bone marrow — and then spreads.

Four rounds of chemotherapy took eight months. There was the hope of recovery — a period of remission that started in January of 2012 allowed Hunter to return to school. But then came the resurgence of the disease last March — a grim discovery that led to more chemotherapy, and a decision by doctors to try a bone-marrow transplant.

Then came more heartbreak for the Hansens.

On Sept. 18, Cherilyn Hansen died of sudden and unexpected respiratory failure as she sat with her son at a Ronald McDonald House in Salt Lake City. Nine days later, doctors determined Hunter's transplant — his final shot at beating the cancer — had failed.

"I know that my mom will be there to get me but not until I have had my fun here first," the 9-year old wrote in a journal after his cancer had been declared terminal. "I have so many things I want to do with my brother and dad."

That included another Wyoming football game.

Phillip Hansen knew his employer, BP, had connections with UW football. He sent an email inquiring about tickets. He received a surprise.

A video of Wyoming football coach Dave Christensen appeared in Phillip Hansen's inbox. Hunter's face glowed when Christensen said he needed an honorary coach for Wyoming's Border War game against Colorado State on Nov. 3.

"We wanted to make it more than just him coming to

BEN FREDERICKSON

Casper Star-Tribune

Age: 23

College: Missouri

Frederickson is a first-time award winner in the FWAA writing contest. He joined the organization as a University of Wyoming beat writer at the *Casper Star-Tribune*. Now a regional writer for *FOXSportsMidwest.com*, he helps cover the St. Louis professional sports scene and the Missouri Tigers. After graduating from the Missouri School of Journalism in May 2012, Frederickson interned at the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, where he covered cops, breaking news and the Mongols Motorcycle Club. He covered Missouri men's basketball for the *Columbia Missourian* as a student at Mizzou, and was a Rick Hummel intern at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 2011. His work has been recognized by the Associated Press Sports Editors, the Missouri Press Association and the Wyoming Press Association.



a game," Christensen said in his office Thursday afternoon. "We wanted to make it special."

What transpired was sports at its best.

See, people who hear about Hunter can't help but learn something. When Wyoming players heard, young men who had been on the wrong side of four-straight football games received a dose of perspective. Suddenly, their issues didn't seem so insurmountable.

"We play this sport, football," former Wyoming center and co-captain Nick Carlson said. "But life goes far beyond touchdowns, extra points and all that. Hunter's story was pretty moving. It sure opened a lot of eyes for guys, as far as what is really important."

And as for Hunter?

"He got to do things I've never let anyone else do," Christensen, who has a reputation for treating team secrets like matters of national security, said with a smile.

Hunter, dressed in a Wyoming jersey with his name on the back, met the team at its hotel the morning of the game. He toured the UW training facility and equipment room, where he got a sneak peak at the new football helmets Wyoming didn't unveil until its final game of the season.

UW equipment manager Michael Aanonsen gave him a steamboat helmet decal to take home. He added it to his other gifts from that Saturday: a signed football from the players and another ball the athletic department had provided.

That last football read, "Hunter Hansen, Cowboy For

(Continued on page 14)

Enterprise writing: Matt Hayes

Comment by the judge, Alan Abrahamson: In this era of 24/7, instant-access, always-on journalism, the enterprise story offers something different. It takes us behind the curtain -- tells us something we didn't already know, couldn't possibly have known without the diligence and the purpose of the reporters' craft. Often, these stories rely on years of experience or a network of sources. When you finish reading such a story, a complex subject has been made simple or what was once hidden has been revealed. Even when, as was the case with Florida's championship football team during the Urban Meyer years, it was hiding in plain sight. As the years go by, and the headlines about who was on that team continue to vie for attention, this story may prove to be even all the more illuminating.

By Matt Hayes
Sporting News

The uproar and controversy of Urban Meyer's stunning recruiting coup at Ohio State settled in and Stefon Diggs, still on the Buckeyes' wish list, was debating his future.

Diggs, the second-highest rated wide receiver in the country, had narrowed his list of potential schools to Maryland, Florida and Ohio State. For more than a week following National Signing Day on Feb. 1, and before Diggs eventually signed with Maryland, Meyer relentlessly pursued Diggs.

Multiple sources told *Sporting News* that Meyer—who won two national championships in six years at Florida and cemented his legacy as one of the game's greatest coaches—told the Diggs family that he wouldn't let his son go to Florida because of significant character issues in the locker room.

Character issues that we now know were fueled by a culture Meyer created. Character issues that gutted what was four years earlier the most powerful program in college football.

It was Meyer who declared the Florida program "broken" at the end of his last regular season game in Gainesville in November of 2010. But why was it broken?

"Over the last two years he was there," one former player said, "the players had taken complete control of the team."

Only now, through interviews with multiple sources during a three-month *Sporting News* investigation, do we see just how damaged the infrastructure really was and how much repair work second-year coach Will Muschamp has had to undertake in replacing Meyer—who has moved on to Ohio State less than a year after resigning from Florida for health reasons.

MATT HAYES

Sporting News

Age: 47

College: Florida



Hayes has covered college football for two decades, the last 13 years for *Sporting News*. And while awards and acknowledgment are nice, while they're an affirmation of the process of finding and telling stories, nothing compares to his nephew's explanation of sports writing: "Our dad says you don't really go to work." Funny how a 10-year-old can nail it with so much innocence. Matt lives in Orlando with his wife, three daughters and three dogs, and where his job title is simple: play free safety and keep everything in

Meyer denies allegations that he cast Florida and its players in a dark light when he spoke to the Diggs family, and said, "I love Florida; I'll always be a Gator. My motives were pure as gold when I left. We left Florida because I was dealing with health issues that I've since learned how to control."

But multiple former players and others close to the program say the timing of his departure was also tied to the roster he left behind. Remember it was Meyer who hinted the program that won 13 games in 2006, 2008 and 2009—and lost only 10 games from 2005-09—was flawed beyond the unsuspecting eye.

Now those issues have surfaced for all to see. Left in the wake of Meyer's resignation were problems that can destroy a coaching career: drug use among players, a philosophy of preferential treatment for certain players, a sense of entitlement among all players and roster management by scholarship manipulation.

The coach who holds himself above the seedy underbelly of the game, who as an ESPN television analyst in 2011 publicly berated the ills of college football, left a program mired in the very things he has criticized.

"The program," former Florida safety Bryan Thomas said, "was out of control."

Circle game

Ironically, Florida's downfall began at the height of Meyer's success—the 2008 national championship season. Three seasons of enabling and pandering to elite players—what Meyer's players called his "Circle of Trust"—began to tear away at what he'd put together.

"I've never heard of Circle of Trust before in my life," Meyer said.

Former players, though, contend it was the founda-

Enterprise (continued)

tion of Florida's culture under Meyer. In the season opener against Hawaii, Meyer said a few elite players (including wideout Percy Harvin, linebacker Brandon Spikes and tight end Aaron Hernandez) would miss the game with injuries. According to multiple sources, the three players—all critical factors in Florida's rise under Meyer—failed drug tests for marijuana and were sitting out as part of standard university punishment.

By publicly stating the three were injured and not being disciplined, former players say, Meyer was creating a divide between the haves and have-nots on the team.

"They were running with us on the first team all week in practice," one former player said. "The next thing you know, they're on the sidelines with a (walking) boot for the season opener like they were injured. Of course players see that and respond to it."

It was Harvin, more than anyone, who epitomized the climate Meyer created. While former players say Harvin always was treated differently as a member of Meyer's Circle of Trust, it was the beginning of his sophomore season—after he helped lead the Gators to the 2006 national title—that it became blatant. That's also when it began to contribute negatively toward team chemistry.

During offseason conditioning before the 2007 season, the team was running stadium steps and at one point, Harvin, according to sources, sat down and refused to run. When confronted by strength and conditioning coaches, Harvin—who failed to return calls and texts to his cell phone to comment on this story—said, "This (expletive) ends now."

"The next day," a former player said, "we were playing basketball as conditioning."

It only got worse as Harvin's career progressed. At one point during the 2008 season, multiple sources confirmed that Harvin, now a prominent member of the Minnesota Vikings, physically attacked wide receivers coach Billy Gonzales, grabbing him by the neck and throwing him to the ground. Harvin had to be pulled off Gonzales by two assistant coaches—but was never disciplined.

When asked about the Harvin incident, Gonzales—now offensive coordinator at Illinois—said, "I think it's a little overblown. I mean, every great player wants his voice to be heard."

Said Meyer: "Something did happen and something was handled. I don't think it's fair to Percy Harvin or Billy Gonzales to talk about it."

Gonzales left Florida for LSU—a lateral move—after the 2009 season, and did so by placing his keys, cell phone and resignation letter on Meyer's desk. There were rumors that Gonzales resigned with a Post-it note on Meyer's desk.

"I never left a Post-it note," Gonzales said. "Urban

and I have talked since. He'll do great things at Ohio State."

That is, unless he hasn't learned from his time at Florida.

Maelstrom in Gainesville

Even as the unprecedented success at Florida continued, a mounting number of players were dragging the Gators' name down a path of drugs and destruction. At least 30 players were arrested in Meyer's six seasons. Instances of substance abuse were often linked to his most prized athletes. NFL teams took notice.

Hernandez admitted to failing a drug test at Florida, a problem that cut his draft stock from first-round grade to fourth-round selection by the New England Patriots. Harvin, according to multiple reports, failed a drug test at the NFL Scouting Combine and slipped from a top-10 pick to the latter half of the first round.

Spikes, sources said, failed a drug test at Florida and was suspended four games during his rookie season with the Patriots for using performance enhancing drugs. Offensive lineman Maurice Hurt, according to multiple reports, last year tested positive for marijuana at the Combine. He fell to the Washington Redskins in the seventh round—and later developed into a starting guard in his rookie season.

Just how prevalent was the drug use among Meyer's players? A source told Sporting News that Patriots coach Bill Belichick spoke to the current Florida team this offseason, and addressed the issue and how it impacts NFL careers.

"His message was, in essence, don't be like those guys," a source said.

But none of those aforementioned drug problems was as prominent as All-American cornerback Janoris Jenkins', who, like Harvin, former players say, was protected by Meyer's Circle of Trust. Jenkins failed a drug test at Florida under Meyer and was arrested for his part in a bar fight. He was later arrested twice for possession of marijuana within the first few months Muschamp was on the job.

In fact, in the first month of Muschamp's tenure, three players—Jenkins, linebacker Chris Martin and defensive end Kedric Johnson—were arrested in separate incidents for possession of marijuana.

When he was dismissed from the team by Muschamp, Jenkins told the Orlando Sentinel: "If (Meyer) was still the coach at Florida, I'd still be there."

This is the same Jenkins who, according to sources, walked out on Meyer's postgame speech after the 2008 season opener and threatened to quit. Meyer not only

Enterprise (continued)

brought Jenkins back without punishment, Jenkins eventually developed into a freshman All-American and played a big role in the team's championship run.

Meyer says Jenkins "is a good kid who made a bad mistake," and contends he was dealing with issues at Florida that occur at "every program in the country." Every coach, he says, has his own way of dealing with them.

"I am very proud of our guys that played at Florida," Meyer said. "Are there issues? Yes there are with 18-22-year-olds. I have been criticized that I have been too lenient on players; that doesn't concern me. We are going to go out of our way to mentor, educate and discipline guys the way we see fit to make sure they're headed in the right direction. Are we perfect? I never said that. We do the best we can and I think our record has been really positive in the impact we've made on those people."

The biggest impact, former players say, was for those in the Circle of Trust. It wasn't so much a focus on trust as it was a revelation of talent. If you could play and contribute, you were part of the chosen few.

"(Meyer) lost the team's respect," Thomas said. "That kind of stuff spreads through the players. They see what they can get away with, and they push it. Even the star players; they liked him because they were in the Circle of Trust. But it backfired on him. They didn't respect him."

Said Meyer: "Was I dealing with entitlement issues? Yes. But they were great kids. If they weren't, I would've gotten rid of them."

Recruiting and reaction

One way of ridding a program of undesirables is roster management. Recruiting is the lifeblood of all programs. A direct correlation exists between winning at recruiting and winning on fall Saturdays.

Few do it better than Meyer. Few are as ruthless when it comes to recruiting—and when it comes to making room for recruits. Thomas was a four-star recruit from Zephyrhills, Fla., and had a series of knee injuries hinder his development.

After the 2008 season, Thomas says he was told he had to "move on" because he wasn't in the team's plans for 2009.

"I told (Meyer) I was on track to graduate, I wasn't a problem and I did everything I was supposed to do—I just had a knee injury," Thomas said. "I told them I wasn't leaving, and if they tried to force me to leave, I was going to tell everyone everything."

The next day, Thomas says he was given a medical hardship letter by position coach Chuck Heater stating

Thomas had an injury that would prohibit him from playing football. The medical hardship scholarship doesn't count against the NCAA limit of 85, and allows the affected player to stay on academic scholarship.

It also made room for another recruit. Meyer denied this tactic of roster management.

"As a coach, I don't have any say in the medical decisions," Meyer said. "If the doctors say a player can't play any longer, he can't play."

Thomas signed the medical hardship, stayed at Florida for the 2009 season and graduated before transferring to then-Division II North Alabama. With eligibility remaining, he played in 23 games over the next two seasons and was an All-Gulf South Conference selection. He recently worked out for NFL scouts at North Alabama's Pro Day, and was in Gainesville for Florida's Pro Day.

Thomas may be the only player who will publicly speak out against Meyer. Many others are fearful of Meyer's ability to hurt their NFL prospects. Every other player contacted for this story asked to be unidentified.

"As far as coaching, there's no one else like (Meyer); he's a great coach," Thomas said. "He gets players to do things you never thought you could do. But he's a bad person. He'll win at Ohio State. But if he doesn't change, they're going to have the same problems."

Will Columbus discover trouble?

Before he walked on the field this spring to coach his first practice at Ohio State, Meyer ran into two more significant problems.

According to sources, Wisconsin accused Meyer and his staff of using former Ohio State NFL players to call high school recruits. Wisconsin also accused Meyer and his staff of bumping into offensive lineman Kyle Dodson, who was committed to the Badgers but eventually flipped and signed with the Buckeyes. The practice of "bumping" occurs when coaches accidentally "bump" into players during recruiting dead periods.

Both the alleged phone calls and bumping are NCAA violations.

When asked about the specific charges, Wisconsin coach Bret Bielema declined comment but told *Sporting News* a day after National Signing Day that, "I wasn't upset with Urban because of a gentlemen's agreement. It was something else that I don't want to get into. I told him what I knew, and he said he would take care of it and he did."

Meyer said the alleged incidents happened "before I was hired—in December, but I can't remember the exact timeline." Meyer was hired at Ohio State on Nov. 28,

Enterprise (continued)

2011.

He said when he heard of the allegations, he asked the coaches involved and they denied any wrongdoing. Meyer said Ohio State hasn't self-reported anything to the NCAA regarding those allegations, "because they're not true."

"Let me make one thing very clear," Meyer said. "There are no issues with Urban Meyer and the NCAA."

Ohio State is serving the first of two years of NCAA probation for several violations committed under former coach Jim Tressel, including multiple players receiving impermissible benefits. The football program could be a repeat violator if charged with an NCAA violation over the next two years, where additional severe penalties could be handed down.

During the heat of recruiting season, another dust-up arose in Columbus. It was the "gentlemen's agreement"—a loosely held ideal among Big Ten coaches about backing off verbally committed high school players—that got Meyer into a dicey moment.

Meyer and his staff got eight players to back off verbal commitments and sign with the Buckeyes, and a few Big Ten coaches—including Bielema and Michigan State coach Mark Dantonio—spoke about the understanding among league coaches at press conferences.

A few days later, during a speech to the state of Ohio's high school coaches clinic, Meyer scoffed at the notion of the "gentlemen's agreement" proclaiming, "You're pissed because we went after a committed guy? Guess what? We got nine (coaches) who better go do it again. Do it a little harder next time."

But less than two weeks earlier, sources say Ohio State running backs coach Stan Drayton called a Florida assistant coach to discuss the recruitment of Lakeland, Fla., wideout Ricquan Southward, who was committed to Ohio State but was still being recruited by Florida. Drayton, sources say, told Gators wide receivers coach Aubrey Hill that Meyer and Muschamp had a "gentlemen's agreement" about committed players—and that Hill should back off recruiting Southward.

Southward eventually signed with Ohio State.

"I did not tell Stan Drayton that we had a gentleman's agreement with Will," Meyer said. "Now, I don't know what Stan said to (Hill) in their conversation."

Hill declined comment. Muschamp also declined and said: "I'm focusing on our team getting better—not anyone or anything else."

It's a still fragile program demanding no less.

Coming off the bottom

By the end of Muschamp's first season, Florida failed

to have a first-team All-SEC selection for the first time in 40 years. For the first time since 2004, Florida failed to have an underclassman in the NFL Draft. The Gators had only two players at the NFL Combine, the lowest number since the event moved to Indianapolis in 1985. Fifteen true freshmen—players Muschamp recruited—played for the Gators in 2011.

By the time Florida beat Ohio State in the Gator Bowl (while Meyer was recruiting for the Buckeyes), Muschamp's weeding out process of players who wouldn't buy into his philosophy had whittled the roster to 72 scholarship players—13 under the NCAA limit.

The 6-6 regular season record was Florida's worst since 1987. The "broken" program—Meyer's words—had hit rock bottom.

"To put it all on a sense of entitlement or a few other things that happened, I disagree," Meyer said. "It comes down to players."

When asked how such a dysfunctional team won the national title in 2008, one former player said, "We had better players than everyone else. It's that's simple. We had (Tim) Tebow. We played without our next-best player (Harvin), who was injured for the SEC (Championship Game), and still beat an Alabama team that would've beaten Oklahoma, too."

Meyer points to the loss of five juniors to the NFL after the 2009 season as the reason for Florida's regression in 2010. There was also a new quarterback, a factor contributing to the loss of five games. While he says he left Florida with talent—the Gators had a top-10 defense in 2011—last year's team also struggled to overcome quarterback injuries, among other problems.

Florida last month began Year 2 under Muschamp. Spring practice featured several young players battling for starting spots and a high-profile quarterback competition between sophomores Jeff Driskel and Jacoby Brissett.

Meyer, having replaced the ousted and beloved Tressel a year after Luke Fickell served as interim, began his first spring in Columbus trying to install a new offense, and getting players "to do the right things and be good people on and off the field—like I have done everywhere I have coached." Both coaches are rebuilding while dealing with significant baggage.

Only one is connected to both.

Muschamp declined to be interviewed for this story, but in an interview with Sporting News last month he hinted that things aren't always what they seem.

"This team is 15-11 over the last two years," Muschamp said. "I always look at the difference between reality and perception. Sometimes perception isn't always what reality is."

Game (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

Klein completed 27 of 50 passes for 286 yards and two touchdowns. But the three interceptions matched his season total. More important, at the critical juncture of the opening of the second half, Klein and the offense went colder than a Snyder glare.

The Wildcats, who hadn't trailed by more than seven points at any time this season, trailed Baylor 28-7 late in the second quarter. But a flurry of 10 points in the final 1:47 of the half gave Kansas State a boost as it went into the locker room at halftime, especially given that the Wildcats would receive the second-half kickoff.

But on the first two possessions of the second half, Klein went 0-for-6 and threw an interception that the Bears converted into a touchdown. In fact, by the time Klein completed a pass in the third quarter, Baylor had

extended its lead to 45-24.

Klein is a senior and the rock of a team that may have overachieved in racing to a 10-0 start. But unlike his coach, he allowed his feelings to show. He looked upset, and his voice caught a time or two.

"It hurts, and it should hurt," Klein said. "Even Coach (Snyder) said it should really hurt, because that means you've invested something. It means there is loss. There is pain. But again, like he also says, it's going to test our mettle. We'll see what kind of team we are."

If it were easy to go 12-0, or win the Heisman, more people would do it. Kansas State gets two weeks to study for its mettle test against Texas. Until then, the Wildcats are stuck with the knowledge of what kind of team they aren't.

Columns (continued)

(Continued from page 9)

Life."

"They spoiled him pretty good," Phillip Hansen said.

Hunter rode next to Christensen on a golf cart during the Cowboy Walk and then joined the team for its pregame prep inside the locker room. When the Cowboys took the field, the honorary coach led the charge, walking hand-in-hand with Christensen onto Jonah Field.

He retired to Wyoming athletic director Tom Burman's suite for some much-needed rest after kickoff. But first, he talked with star Wyoming quarterback Brett Smith.

"He tried to have conversation with all of the players," Phillip Hansen said. "His message was to just do your best. And to never give up. He told the quarterback that."

Smith gave the boy a promise.

"He came up to him before the game started and said, 'We're going to score over 40 points for you,'" Hunter's father said. "And they did."

Players passed the Bronze Boot around after the 45-31 win. But the trophy ended with Hunter. He wrapped both arms around the boot and shuffled his feet, carrying the prize all the way to its resting place.

"Come on," Christensen said after all the players had filed inside the locker room. "Get up here."

The Cowboys, circled around the boy, helped him stand on a chair.

"How about one big cheer for my man, Hunter?" Christensen said.

For 25 seconds, they cheered and stomped.

"What do you want to say to these guys?" Christensen asked when the locker room finally quieted.

"Thank you," Hunter said.

On Jan. 1, two months and four days before his 10th birthday, Hunter died at his home. He had fought the cancer for 18 months.

"He wasn't afraid of it," Phillip Hansen said. "He tried to make every minute he had count."

He planned his own funeral. He picked the speaker and selected his pallbearers. He chose his own casket. It was one just like his mom's.

Photographs of that November afternoon at War Memorial Stadium scrolled through a digital picture frame. His Wyoming jersey was draped over a table.

"He just loved that day," Phillip Hansen said. "It was one of the biggest highlights of his life."