

Writing & Editing Portfolio

Brandon Vogel

There were two things I cared most about growing up—sports and reading. Eventually, reading led to writing. Reaching the limits of my athletic ability in college helped with that transition, as covering sports gave me a way to stay connected to the games I used to play.



Opening spread of my feature story tracking down the origins of Nebraska's Blackshirts logo for Hail Varsity magazine.

Over nearly 20 years as a sportswriter, I've been fortunate to write for The Guardian, Fox Sports and CBS Sports. I also helped start and run what I believe was one of the best regional sports magazines around. Thank you for taking a look at my work.

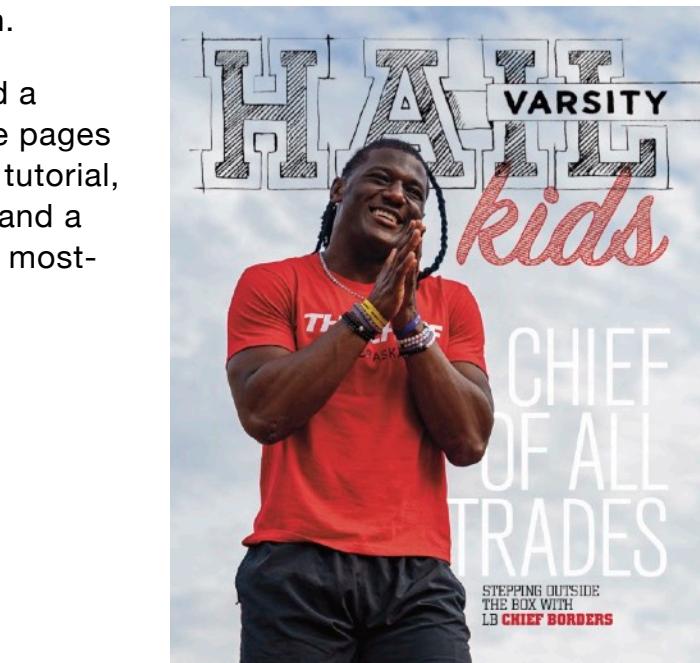
Editing - Hail Varsity Kids

I was able to bring a passion project of mine to life in June of 2023, packaging a special kids supplement as a gift for subscribers with our annual football yearbook. My memory of reading SI for Kids growing up served as the inspiration.

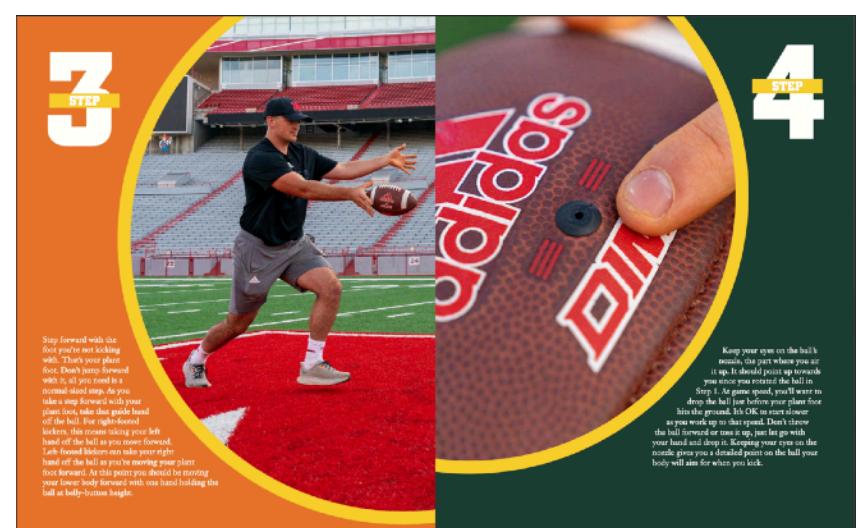
We only had 28 pages available, and a smaller format, but we packed those pages with a mix of games, a how-to-punt tutorial, quick Q&As with Nebraska athletes and a feature on Chief Borders, one of the most-followed Huskers on TikTok.



My Letter from the Editor



The June 2023 cover of Hail Varsity Kids



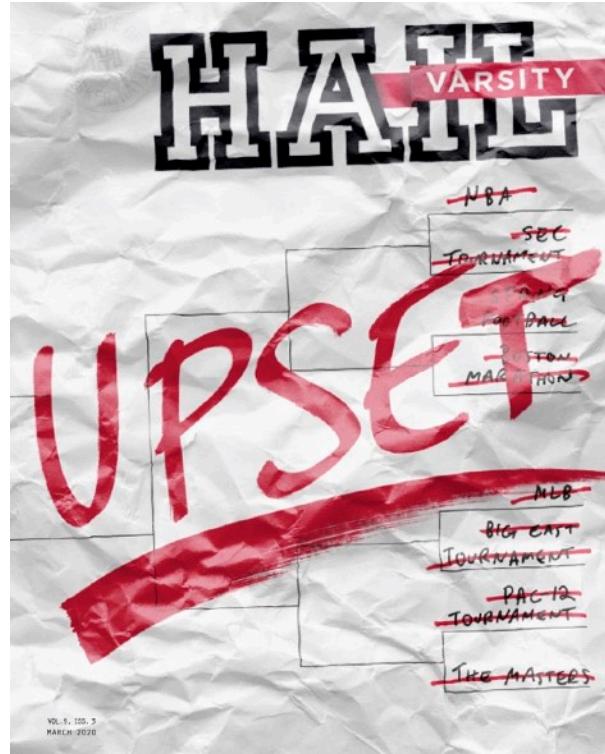
Two-page spread with a punting tutorial from Nebraska punter Brian Buschini.

Editing - Hail Varsity March 2020

Nebraska men's basketball was beaten in the first round of the Big Ten Tournament on March 11. It would be one of the last sporting events in the country as Covid shutdowns rolled in the next day. Our March issue was going to print in three days.

We reworked 60% of the magazine over those three days, doing our best to report what we knew about a very uncertain time.

The strange circumstances resulted in a cover I'm still proud of today. I came up with the concept, and the design team did an excellent job executing it.



Spread from the March 2020 issue



The March 2020 cover of Hail Varsity



**HUSKER SEASONS END
STEPS AWAY FROM NCAA
CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Nebraska wrestling was about 42% done with its regular-season schedule when the Big Ten announced all remaining spring and winter sports were canceled. Husker baseball had played just 28% of its schedule. This was the new reality for thousands of college athletes in spring sports throughout the country in March. *

*As a former college football player and a parent of college student-athletes, Nebraska Athletic Director Bill Moos said, "I have great empathy for our young men and women who had their seasons cut short, particularly our seniors."

On the other end of spectrum were the winter sports cut short on the brink of championships, those seasons that were 90% finished. The NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships were scheduled to

begin on March 11, one day after the end of its best season since joining the Big Ten. The Huskers finished second at the Big Ten Championships in Piscataway, New Jersey, to the University of Illinois. Qualifying for the NCAA Wrestling Championships scheduled for March 19-21 in Minneapolis: No. 3 seed Eric Schultz (197 pounds), No. 5 Isaiah White (165), No. 6 Chad Red Jr. (141), No. 7 Taylor Varnes (132), No. 8 Collin Thornton (149), No. 10 Mikay Labeles (174), No. 13 Payton Robs (157), No. 14 Ridge Lovett (133), No. 21 David Jensen (285) and No. 29 Alex Thomsen (125).

Merely listing their names means a lot of context. Unfortunately, it's all there is in a time unlike anything many of us have ever experienced.

Editing - Hail Varsity Dec. 2017

Husker fans received everything they wanted for Christmas in 2017 with the hiring of native son Scott Frost. Our issue that month reflected the warm feelings among the fan base.

I worked with the design team on the cover. We actually bought a WWE wrestling figure, repainted him so he was Frost-ified, then put him under an actual tree for the photo.

The issue would turn out to be more popular than Frost's 16-31 tenure at his alma mater. I assigned and edited the main feature in this issue, a close look at the small town where the Frost legend began.



The Dec. 2017 cover of Hail Varsity

Feature story from the Dec. 2017 issue

CARVED IN WOOD RIVER

STORY BY DEREK PETERSON • PHOTOS BY JAMES WOOLDRIDGE

On Fridays and Saturdays, Scott Frost and his closest friends on his Wood River (Neb.) High School varsity football team would meet up in the basement of his house and play cards. In a town as small as Wood River, with fewer than 1,500 people, there's not a lot to do anyway, but Frost and friends wanted to stay out as much as possible. And if possible, everyone would round up all the dimes and quarters they could find, jam them into a piece of Tupperware and head over to the Frost's for poker.

"Best memories I ever had was sitting around his house at night playing poker," Mack Codner, one of Frost's high school buddies and his go-to right end, said. "We'd get together and play poker for three or four hours every night."

No one ever ran the table. One night Codner would leave with \$10 in earnings. The next night, Frost would leave the big winner and someone else the night after that. It all just kind of passed around. The boys didn't really play for money though – even though it was nice for a bunch of high school kids – as much as being around each other and having a good time.

In the 20 years since those nights spent around a fold up table, Frost has won a national championship at Nebraska, played in the NFL, been a finalist for the Broyles Award as the top assistant coach in the country, become a head coach, led an undefeated season and the national coach of the year and returned home to the place where he began his journey.

No one really knew what Frost was going to do until he signed a seven-year, \$35-million contract with Nebraska on Nov. 27. Or maybe some did.

"He has a good poker face," Codner said. "He really does."

Not much has changed from his Wood River days.

Writing

- **FEATURE:** The origin of Nebraska's tradition of handing out black jerseys to the starting defense is well-known, but when I started asking university sources about where the Blackshirts logo came from, nobody knew. It took me about two years to track down the Omaha screenprinter-turned-psychologist who created the logo that has become a key part of Nebraska football's visual identity. [\[FULL STORY\]](#)
- **PROFILE:** A visit to Homewood, Alabama, for a profile of then-Nebraska running back Ameer Abdullah. [\[FULL STORY\]](#)
- **FEATURE:** A data-based search for the center of the college football recruiting universe. [\[FULL STORY\]](#)



- **COLUMN:** On deadline from Dublin, Ireland, where Nebraska lost its 2022 season-opener to Northwestern. [\[FULL STORY\]](#)
- More clips available at brandonvogel.com/writing