

Osborne Talks About Expanding Mem. Stadium

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — There could soon be room for more Cornhuskers fans in Memorial Stadium if Tom Osborne has his way.

The Nebraska athletic director and former football coach said he'd "feel comfortable" adding 5,000 seats to the 87-year-old stadium and has broached the subject with university administration.

Osborne said an expansion of the stadium's east side could include 1,500 to 2,000 club seats and 20 to 30 skyboxes.

No expansion plan has been approved by the regents, but Osborne said he's spoken to the university administration about a fan survey showing support for more seats. More than 75 percent of season-ticket holders and donors who responded to the survey said they supported the expansion. And, about 87 percent of the 2,700 people who completed an online survey expressed the same.

The stadium's current capacity is 81,067, but a Cornhuskers game can draw 86,000. And Nebraska has the longest sell-out streak in college football, dating back to 1962.

The last stadium expansion was in 2006.

When Osborne started as an assistant coach in 1964, the stadium could only hold 44,829 people.

"The stadium capacity has grown faster than the population of the state, so we feel like things have gone well," Osborne said. "Obviously, whatever success we've had is due largely to the loyalty and the faithfulness of the Nebraska fans. It's pretty remarkable."

SHOT

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Thoene's accomplishment elicited a roar from not only his fellow shooters, but from the watching crowd along the adjacent grass berm. What followed was a traditional march, around the field to a nearby stage, all the while with Thoene carrying the turkey.

Once at the stage, Thoene was officially crowned as Schuetzenfest King, and his wife, Karen, as Schuetzenfest Queen. Thoene's daughter Wendy and son-in-law Chris Krie were named to the 2010 court as well.

"I didn't think I'd be the one," Danny Thoene said after the ceremony. "I'm not much for publicity; I'm a quiet guy."

The day's festivities began with a morning 5K Fun Run, followed by Sunday Mass at St. Peter & Paul Church. A service honoring departed members came next, followed by the traditional parade through town.

With more than 90 entries, the parade surpassed expectations to the point that floats near the end were still being registered as the early floats finished the route, according to the Rev. Eric Olsen of St. Peter & Paul Church.

"It's really great to see families all together like this," said Olsen, who came to Bow Valley two years ago. "We live in such a fragmented world, and this is a wonderful experience."

Olsen, who also took part in the shooting competition, said the five-year buildup for Schuetzenfest was one thing, but actually experiencing the festival was a unique experience altogether.

"I'm just so glad to be part of something like this," he said, standing amidst all the booths and food stands.

Also among the crowd were a group of between 15-18 German folk dancers from Omaha, Neb., who attended their second Schuetzenfest. With the members wearing costumes called "Trachts," the group was planning to perform a dance Sunday afternoon.

The dancing group will celebrate its 40th anniversary this fall, but one member attended their first Schuetzenfest in 2005, the word was out.

"This is something definitely special, but it's even more authentic than you can imagine," group member Monika Langner said. "Everyone that had gone last time had been telling us about this for the past five years."

With members scattered across the festival wearing German lederhosen (knee-length breeches) and drinking out of German steins (beer mugs), the folk dancers were "definitely" looking the part, according to member Kevin Langel.

"Some of the guys here have more authentic outfits than others," Langel said. "You can get pretty fancy. It's just all about knowing your stuff."

Schuetzenfest ended Sunday night with a talent contest, a dance and the traditional flag lowering.



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Danny Thoene (right) is congratulated after winning the Schuetzenfest shooting competition, held Sunday in Bow Valley, Neb. It took 225 shots for the wooden turkey, located 75 yards away on a 40-foot wooden post, to fall.

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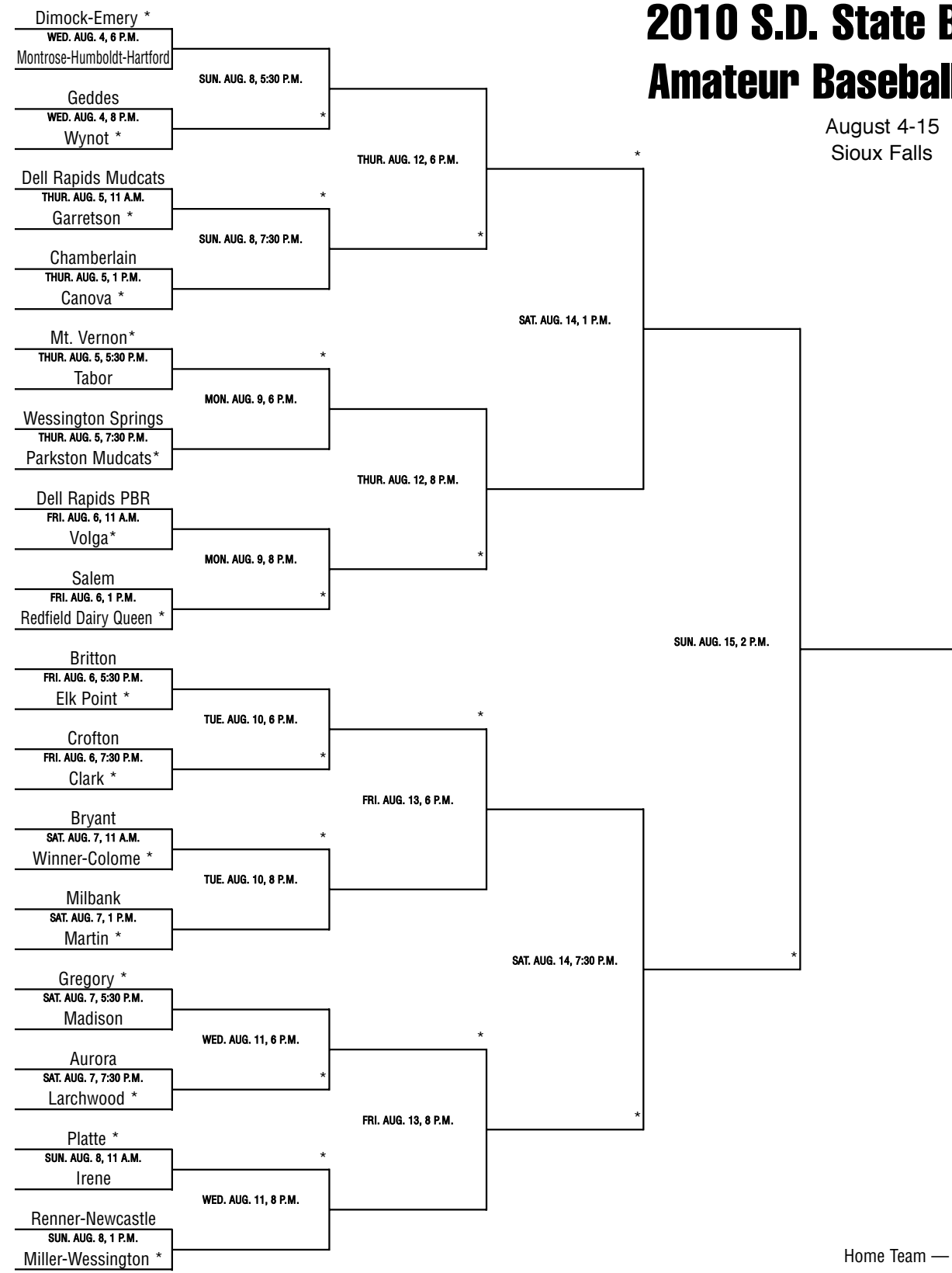
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