

Former Walk-ons Share Life Lessons Under Friday Night Lights

By Randy York

Andy Means once contracted bacterial meningitis and was on life support and in a coma for eight days. Matt Turman spent four years as a back-up quarterback, got a taste of what being a starter was all about and then saw someone else transfer in and bump him back to second string his senior year. Chip Bahe was another career back-up at split end, but like Turman, he wouldn't trade his experiences for anything.

Means, Turman and Bahe . . . three former Nebraska football walk-ons . . . three players who were strongly influenced by their own fathers . . . and now three coaches who are role models themselves because they excel under the "Friday Night Lights" of Nebraska high school football.

Means is the head coach at Class A power Millard South in Omaha. Turman has returned as head coach of Class B power Omaha Skutt after taking the last year off to care for his 5- and 2-year-old sons while his wife finished her fellowship in orthopaedic surgery at the University of Virginia. Bahe, the head basketball coach at Millard North, experiences his Friday Night Lights as an assistant football coach.

Andy's father is the late Dr. Arden Means, who lettered four times in football at Nebraska in the 1940s, then watched his son walk on and earn a scholarship at his alma mater. Andy was a starting cornerback on the 1978 Nebraska Big Eight championship team that upset top-ranked Oklahoma – Tom Osborne's first win against the Sooners. He was also the ABC Player of the Game when the Huskers beat OU again in 1979 and finished his career as an academic All-Big Eight selection in 1980.

Matt's father is Tim Turman, an NFL-drafted quarterback at Chadron State. Tim remains one of the state's most successful prep football coaches at Wahoo Bishop Neumann, and Matt has carved out some history of his own, leading Skutt to a 13-0 state championship season in 2005. He gave his state championship medal to his dad, "my biggest inspiration" with Turner Gill and Coach Osborne a close second.

With Tommie Frazier sidelined because of blood clots and Brook Berringer out with a collapsed lung, who can forget "The Turman-ator" starting Nebraska's 1994 nationally televised game at Kansas State? He contributed to a crucial win that paved the way for Osborne's first national championship team.

Chip's father is the late Al Bahe, longtime, legendary head basketball coach at Fremont High School. Chip walked on at Nebraska and earned letters on the 1987, 1988 and 1989 teams that won 31 games and lost only six. He followed in the footsteps of his brother, Ritch, who succeeded Johnny Rodgers as Nebraska's wingback in 1973. "Our family has really been blessed and inspired by Nebraska football," Chip said.

All three former Husker walk-ons were very good high school athletes. None were considered great. All beat the odds to play in the Big Eight. Means started as a 6-0, 160-pound sophomore. Turman was 5-11 and 160 as a redshirt sophomore. Bahe was still 5-9 and 170 as a senior.

Listen to all three explain how they met the challenge as a player and how that experience is helping each meet similar challenges as a coach:

Andy Means:

"I believe God has a plan for all of our lives, and I want to fulfill that plan to the best of my abilities. When I was on life support, in a coma and on the brink of death for eight days in 2000, I believe there is a reason why I lived. I want to finish the plan, and teach both in the classroom and on the field. I'm passionate about teaching behavioral sciences and psychology because behavior affects our lives every day, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Understanding behavior and motivation has helped me as a coach. My main job is to teach, and most people don't realize that football is 'extra' duty. I try to put all my efforts into being the best at both.

"When I played at Nebraska, I learned to be on time, work hard, be organized and stay positive. My goal as a coach is to teach the fundamentals and strategy of the game to the best of my ability and have a team that always works hard and gives great effort every game, regardless of the outcome. I also want to help develop young men into productive citizens by showing them that hard work, effort, loyalty, dedication and teamwork are the keys to success in any life endeavor."



Andy Means
1978-80

Matt Turman:

"I can empathize with kids when they don't get that starting spot, or they aren't playing as much as they want to play. I lived it. I spent four years as a back-up and got that little taste of what starting was like at K-State. Then Scott Frost transferred in from Stanford, and I ended up second string again my senior year. I understand the frustration, probably better than anyone can even guess. But I believe you always have to be ready for the opportunities that God puts in front of you. He gives them to you for a reason, and it's up to you to make the most of them.

"Hard work, dedication, perseverance and determination can get you a long way in life. I was definitely an underdog. I started my career as a defensive back, was switched to wide receiver and then, after some injuries, was asked to move to quarterback. There were multiple times when I thought I would never get on the field at all, let alone start. I learned the importance of values and stuck it out, earned a scholarship and was able to contribute to two national championship teams. I try to bring those same attributes to my family life, the classroom and the football field. I also try to get my own kids and my players to adopt that attitude and those values. Doing those things has certainly served me well."



Matt Turman
1994-96

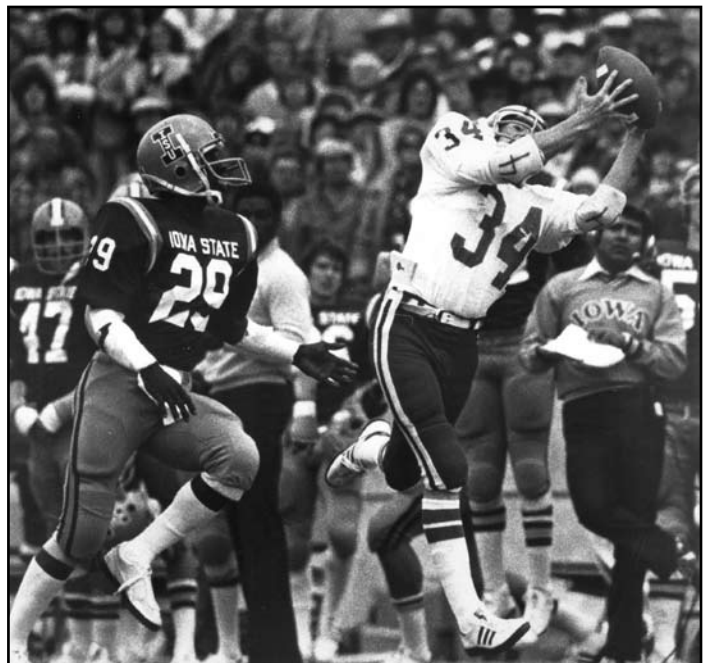
Chip Bahe:

"My dad and Coach Osborne made me appreciate both football and 'the game of life.' They helped me understand the ultimate rewards of coaching – seeing young men grow into great adults in their professions, as fathers or husbands. At Nebraska, we learned how to work hard and treat others fairly. My philosophy of coaching is to play hard, play together and understand the meaning of loyalty.

"Walking on as a freshman at Nebraska was an honor, and it became by far the best decision of my life. Nebraska football helped me become a better person, father, husband and friend. You learn about dedication and understand that achievement is not always based on accolades and trophies, but on respect and loyalty. The walk-on is a unique quality of Nebraska football. It helps us all trust and respect the tradition we built together and helps us learn that anything of value in life requires hard work. Like everyone else, I'm glad to see the walk-on program revitalized because it's as big a part of our tradition as anything."



Chip Bahe
1987-89



Andy Means lettered at Nebraska in 1978, 1979 and 1980.