

Bronco Pride Goes Worldwide

BY KATHLEEN CRAVEN

When Kent Briggs stopped to grab a copy of *USA Today International* at the airport in London this past fall, the last thing he expected to see on the cover was a photo of Boise State quarterback Jared Zabransky. But there he was, as big as life in his Bronco blue and orange.

"I thought it was cool to pick up a newspaper in London and be able to read about BSU," says Briggs (BBA, economics, '96), an alum who now works for LORENZ Life Sciences Group in Frankfurt, Germany. "There were a total of three headlines covering the Broncos and their tradition of winning and competing with the best."



Members of the Idaho Army National Guard's 116th Brigade in Iraq celebrate a big play by the Broncos during the Liberty Bowl. Brig. Gen. Alan Gayhart (inset) cuts a cake adorned with the BSU logo.

Briggs isn't the only one who's pleased with the increased buzz around the Boise State football team, which finished the 2004 season 11-1 and ranked No. 12 in the nation. Students, faculty, community members, alumni, soldiers and others are proudly wearing the orange that just a few seasons ago was about as hip as an accordion at a heavy metal concert. Bronco fans worldwide are throwing off the underdog role and basking in the national and interna-

tional attention only a top-notch team can engender.

For Andy Enrico and his wife, Linda (known for her orange outfits and the blue hair caught on camera during the Broncos' New Year's Eve showdown against Louisville in the Liberty Bowl), football games have been a fall staple for decades, whether the team was winning or not.

Asserting that he's not a "fair-weather fan," Andy Enrico is nonetheless tickled by the team's outstanding season. "I knew they would do well, but I didn't expect this," he says. "This was supposed to be a rebuilding year."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF STAFF SGT. JACK WHITE, 148TH BCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS NCO

That unexpected success was not only a boost to football fans, but it also created good public relations for the university as a whole.

When the team's success is reported in the national media, it helps build credibility on a big-picture

level, Enrico says. "A lot of people don't even know where Idaho is, let alone BSU. This helped bring attention to the university."

Even those new to Boise and the university were caught up in the excitement. Lynda Ransdell, chair of the kinesiology department, arrived in July from a stint at the University of Utah.

Thanks to outreach efforts by the athletic department (including a Football 101 course for women) and

the team's winning ways, Ransdell became an instant fan. Her only disappointment was that a Utah vs. Boise State matchup in the Fiesta Bowl didn't materialize.

Even the loss of a friendly wager with her brother, a University of Louisville dental school graduate, didn't dampen her spirits. "We had a nice little bet on the game," she says. "If Louisville won, I had to wear a Louisville sweatshirt and have my photo taken with the [Boise State] president and provost."

Despite their season-ending loss to the Cardinals, the Broncos' games throughout the fall of 2004, seven of which were picked up on ESPN, served to unite alums in areas all around and outside of Idaho. When Matthew Broomhead (BA, communication, '95) moved to Seattle in 2000, he didn't have any Boise State buddies to watch the game with. But thanks to the team's high profile, he soon found the televised games provided common ground for conversations with co-workers, and he even discovered other alums when watching the games at a sports bar.

Broomhead says those chance encounters gave him a sense of pride. "I remember feeling good being around fellow alumni and ... feeling a bit of solace and joy in finding 'friends' with a common bond."

Even Uncle Sam got in on the fun — more or less. Thanks to a number of corporate donations, a large contingent from the 1,600 members of the Idaho Army National Guard's 116th Cavalry Brigade stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, were on hand to cheer BSU to victory when the Broncos traveled to El Paso to meet UTEP in mid-September. After their deployment to Iraq a few weeks later, many

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The Great Indoors

One of the by-products of Boise State's winning ways on the football field could be an indoor training facility next to Bronco Stadium.

At its January meeting the State Board of Education gave Boise State permission to hire a design consultant for the project, which would cost in the neighborhood of \$8 million.

University officials are expected to return to the board this spring to seek final approval. If approved, the facility will include a full-size football field with artificial turf, offices and dressing rooms. The tentative site is between Bronco Stadium's north end zone and the Boise River, where the athletic department's grass practice field currently exists.

If everything goes according to plan, construction would begin this summer and the facility could be ready by the end of the year.

Gene Bleymaier, BSU's athletic director, told the board that the university has already raised \$3.27 million and will use ticket sur-

charges, reserved parking sales and pregame parties to pay the remaining cost.

Preliminary plans call for the facility to be used for other varsity sports such as women's soccer, along with the university's marching band and cheer squad, intramural sports and Bronco Athletic Association functions as well as community use.

At the same state board meeting, Boise State unveiled results of a feasibility analysis of its proposal to add luxury suites, a new press box and up to 10,000 seats to Bronco Stadium.

The proposed facility (shown below in an architect's rendering) will include a full-size football field.



GILF-BICK & ASSOCIATES

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of those same soldiers enjoyed a specially made Boise State Bronco cake and watched ESPN's coverage of the Liberty Bowl late into the night on New Year's Eve. Die-hard fans among the citizen-soldiers were still glued to the TV screen for the game's final play at around 3 a.m. Iraq time.

To show their support for the troops, Boise State players received permission to wear the 116th's "Snake Patch" logo (right) on their helmets, right next to their American flag decals. For many soldiers the gesture was a big part of their long-distance pride and reciprocal support.

Despite the Broncos' 44-40 loss in the bowl game, 2004 will long stand as *the* season to remember. From athletics to academics, the Broncos have opened the door to a new level of excellence and achievement. Fans hope the season never ends. "The blue field gets people's attention," says Briggs. The team and the university keep them watching.



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The campaign, says Boise State President Bob Kustra, is already beginning to pay dividends.

"I could not afford to assemble a public relations and advertising budget for this year that would give us the coverage the football team has given us," he says. "If I assembled that budget, the university would go broke trying to pay for it. The football program, and the athletic program in general, is a window through which we can invite people from around the country to look at our academic programs and learn more about us. That's absolutely invaluable."

The newfound attention has raised the profile of the university and helped people discover there is more to cheer about than touchdowns. Newcomers are learning about Boise State's dynamic academics, research programs, economic impact and campus life. Just by looking beyond the blue.

Tell us what you think of "Beyond The Blue" as well as your favorite color of Boise State by e-mail at afritz@boisestate.edu.