

Filmmakers with BSU ties to document dream season

By Frank Zang

Boise State has turned to three of its own to chronicle on film the Bronco football team's storybook 2006 season.

The university is in negotiations with Boise-based filmmakers Michael Hoffman, Heather Rae and Russell Friedenberg for the official documentary and feature film rights for the story on the Broncos' perfect season that culminated in their 43-42 overtime victory over Oklahoma at the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl ("The Broncos' Epic Journey," *FOCUS*, Winter 2007).

The roles for the principals are director Hoffman, a Hollywood filmmaker and Boise State's first Rhodes Scholar; producer Rae, whose highly acclaimed documentary *Trudell* was accepted at more than 100 film festivals; and Rae's husband, writer/producer Friedenberg, who penned and executive-produced *Trudell*.

Initially, Boise-based production companies Iron Circle Pictures and Castellina Films will pursue a full-length documentary, tentatively called *Out of the Blue: A Film About Life and Football*, for completion this fall. The Broncos' undefeated 2006 campaign with its national coach of the year, Chris Petersen, and his underdog team captured the imagination of the public in what has been labeled the "greatest game in college football history."

"Boise State has been a huge part of my life; it's where I began my directing career," says Hoffman (BA, theatre arts, '78). "I'm excited to be back telling the story of a remarkable group of kids and coaches who made magic in a magical place."

Hoffman is one of Boise State's most decorated alums. He was a Top Ten Scholar in 1978, received a Silver Medallion award during the 1979 commencement ceremonies, and was awarded the university's first honorary doctorate in 2004.

"Boise State's story resonates with communities who have seen their sports heroes rise to the occasion and provide a platform for success," says Rae, who attended Boise State in the late 1980s before transferring to Evergreen State College in Washington state ("Filmmaker looks at Native issues," *FOCUS*, Spring 2004). "Their example is inspiring to all of us and we're thrilled to be a part of telling the story."

"We are very pleased that these individuals with their immense talent and career accomplishments are involved in telling the inspirational story of the Boise State Broncos," says Boise State President Bob Kustra. "Their interest in this project is from the heart as Boise

is home for their families, they watched the football season unfold firsthand, and they have ties to the university as alumni or adjunct faculty. This arrangement is a perfect fit."

Hoffman, who has been working in the film industry for 24 years as a director, producer, screenwriter and actor, produced his first film, featuring fellow student Hugh Grant, while a student at Oxford University. A former student body president at Boise State, Hoffman began his career in student productions and in semi-professional stage productions in Idaho.

In 1988, he directed *Promised Land*, a bleak coming-of-age story developed at the Sundance Institute and starring Kiefer Sutherland and Meg Ryan. Hollywood took notice and Hoffman was given a \$25 million budget for *Soapdish* (1991), featuring Sally Field, Kevin Kline, Whoopi Goldberg and Elisabeth Shue. Returning to British material, Hoffman then directed *Restoration* (1995), which won two Oscars. He next helmed the romantic comedy *One Fine Day* (1996), which paired Michelle Pfeiffer and George Clooney. He wrote the screenplay as well as directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1999. He directed *The Emperor's Club* in 2002 and *Game 6* in 2005.

Rae has worked in some producing capacity on about 20 documentaries and features during her 17 years in the film industry. Beginning in 1992, she worked 15 years on *Trudell* which focused on John Trudell, an American Indian activist and poet. *Trudell* was her directing debut and the film was critically acclaimed at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival. Rae grew up in Idaho and spent six years as the head of the Native Program at the Sundance Institute and as a programmer for the Sundance Film Festival. Recent work includes directing *Family: The First Circle*, a documentary about the foster care system with partners The Priddy Brothers. She is also currently producing *Frozen River* starring Melissa Leo. Rae teaches film studies at Boise State.

A screenwriter, actor and producer, Friedenberg is a co-founder and producing director of the Blue Sphere Alliance Theatre Company in Los Angeles and a charter founder and board of trustees member of the New York Performance Alliance in New York City. Friedenberg began his career as a stunt coordinator on the Touchstone Pictures football feature, *The Program*. His writing and producing credits include *Trudell*, *Ibid*, *Sawtooth* and *Family: The First Circle*. He teaches film studies at Boise State.



Hoffman received Boise State's first honorary doctorate during the 2004 commencement ceremonies.

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