

# BRONCOS BASK in National Spotlight

BY JANELLE BROWN

Everybody loves a winner – especially, it would seem, one from an out-of-the-way state with a blue football field, a Gandhi-quoting coach, top players who grew up on potato farms, and a red-hot offense that at one point in the season threatened to spoil the Bowl Championship Series' insiders party.

As the Bronco football season heated up, national and regional media took notice. *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *Sports Illustrated* and *The Sporting News* were among the major players that ran stories on the little team from Idaho (not Iowa) that could. ESPN and ESPN2 provided national television coverage for an unprecedented seven Bronco games. The national sports network also sent separate film crews to Boise to produce features on Coach Dan Hawkins and quarterback Jared Zabransky, and visited engineering professor Michelle Sabick in the biomechanics lab for a



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segment using high-speed, infrared cameras to analyze the throwing motions of the team's quarterbacks.

Even legendary syndicated radio broadcaster Jim Rome got in on the action, extolling the Broncos' virtues on airwaves across the nation.

"It was overwhelming. We've never had this kind of attention before," says Max Corbet, Boise State's assistant director of athletics for media



relations. Corbet's office fielded "dozens and dozens" of calls from major media outlets across the country. "It never ended, all the way through the Liberty Bowl game," Corbet adds. "We sent out I don't know how many Fed-Ex packages with clips and background. We had more requests for interviews than we could handle. We were inundated."

The national reporters who flew in to Boise pressed for an inside look at the Broncos and Boise State that went far beyond perfunctory sports reporting. *USA Today's* Kelly Whiteside spent three days with the team for her cover story "A real hot potato." The lengthy article, which garnered the Broncos worldwide coverage, chronicled the team's rise to success. *New York Times* reporter Pete Thames described the Broncos as "the most unlikely juggernaut in Division

## Nobel Prize Winner Sees Blue

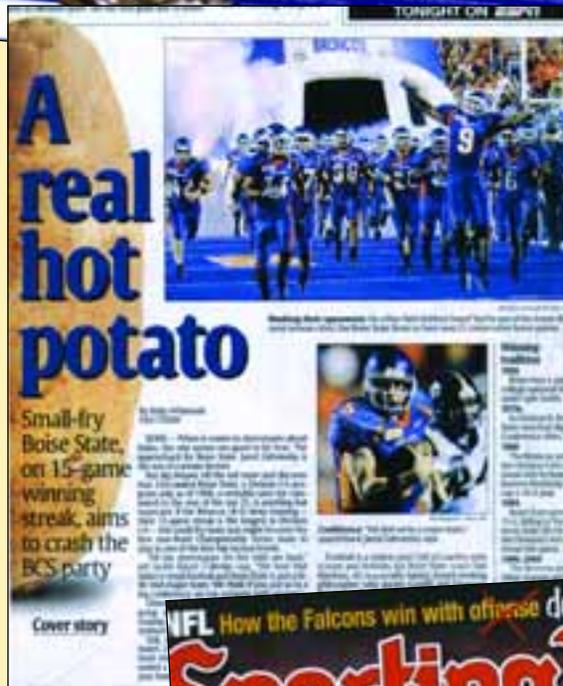
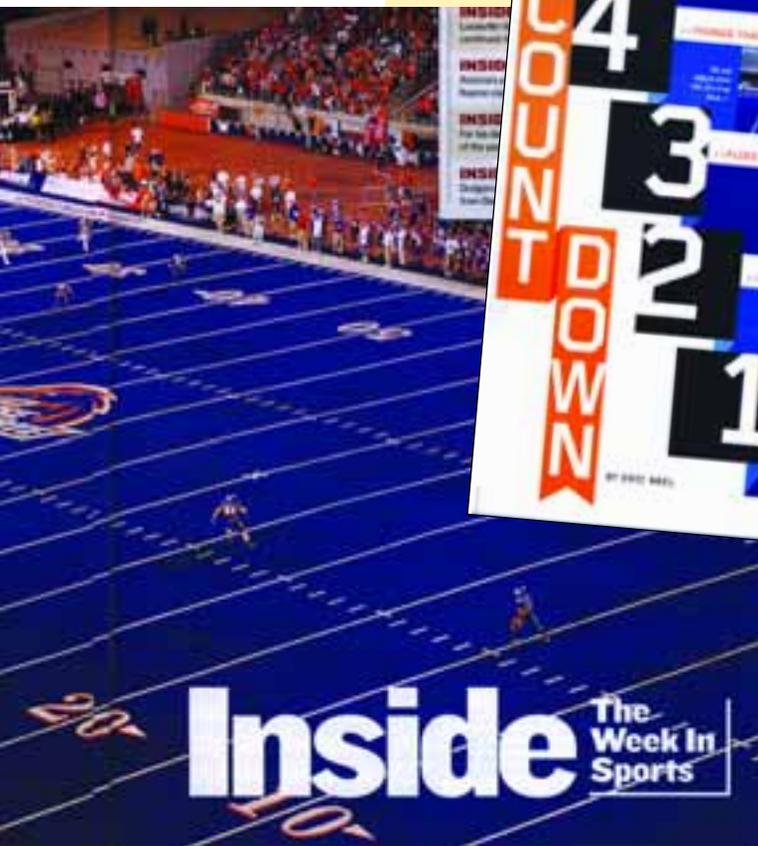
The television images and newspaper and magazine photos of Bronco Stadium's unique blue turf captured the attention of a nationwide audience this past football season. They even caught the eye of 85-year-old Nobel Prize-winning economist James Buchanan.

When Buchanan visited Boise State to give a lecture last November, he admitted even he was a little curious about the blue field, and about Boise State in general.

Although more of an NFL fan than a follower of the college game, Buchanan was pulled in this season by the success of his local Virginia Tech team.

"I was familiar with Boise State as a football up-and-comer," he says. "The blue field is well known to anyone who watches the occasional game on TV."

Buchanan, who earned the Nobel Prize in 1986 for his theory of public choice economics, was the inaugural speaker in the John and Oran Brandt Foundation lecture series Nov. 10, organized through Boise State's Department of Economics.



Corbet (far left) was flooded with media requests from the likes of *Sports Illustrated*, which featured the blue turf on its "Inside The Week In Sports" section (center), ESPN.com (above), USA Today (left) and *The Sporting News* (below).

1-A." *Sports Illustrated's* John Walters used a take on Boise – "boy, see" – to spin off such one-liners as "Boy, see the Broncos, a true-blue gang of studs in the land of spuds."

OK, so maybe some of the coverage was a tad over the top. But even as the national press paid homage to such standbys as the blue turf, potatoes, the Idaho-Iowa mix-ups, and Boise's location "as one of the most remote cities in the lower 48 states," they also offered glimpses of Boise State University and the Treasure Valley as a progressive and attractive place to live, work and go to school.

"Boise, the state capital, isn't some snow-covered outpost," Whiteside wrote in *USA Today*. "With sunny weather just about year-round, a trendy downtown and a stadium near the Boise River, with the Rocky Mountains as a backdrop, the campus rivals college football's most picturesque spots."

That positive vision of the Broncos – and Boise State – won't entirely fade from national consciousness, even as their storied year slips into the record books. Next season, the Broncos will head out on the field with folks outside of the West knowing who they are and what they can do. They'll carry the season, and the coverage, with them. Spuds, blue turf and all.

