



1983

Athletics

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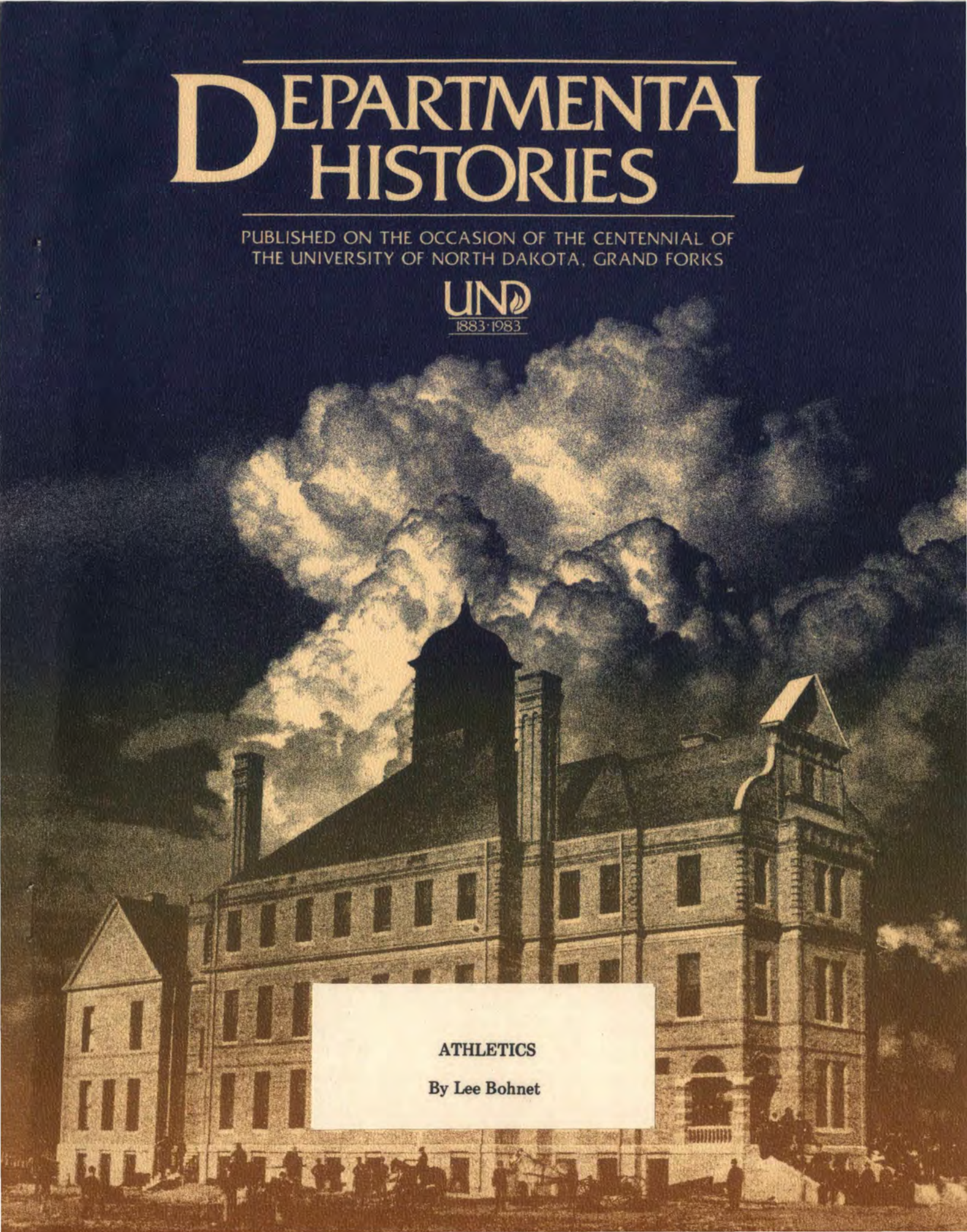
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ATHLETICS

By Lee Bohnet

ATHLETICS
(1976-1982)

THE MILLER ERA IN U.N.D. ATHLETICS
by Lee Bohnet

The object of any athletic contest is to win. And if winning starts at the top with the athletic director, the University has a winner in Dr. Carl R. Miller, a success-oriented man with wide experience and knowledge in the field.

Dr. Miller came to the University April 1, 1976 to replace retiring Leonard R. Marti and the log of his successes far outweighs any slight setbacks he may have suffered during his regime. A native of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, Miller graduated from high school there in 1952 and received a Bachelor of Science degree from University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse in 1960, earned a Master of Science from Winona State University in 1964 and a Doctorate of Education in Educational Administration from North Texas State University in 1969. He also has served as teacher-coach at Huron State College, worked in the Winona, Minnesota Y.M.C.A. and coached at the high school level at Mazomanie, Wisconsin, and LaCrosse, Wisconsin. After receiving his doctorate he served as Chairman of the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at North Dakota State University 1969-71. From NDSU he went to the University of South Dakota and served there until being appointed at U.N.D. in 1976. Prior to working on his Master's Degree he served in the United States Navy.

Dr. Miller's tenure at U.S.D. was marked by improvement in all areas: winning, program improvement, facility upgrading and funding. He was the prime mover and catalyst for the construction of the domed, ari-supported DakotaDome, a multi-purpose athletic and recreational facility which brought that institution form turn-of-the-century facilities to a few steps ahead of the rest of the country and into the eighth decade of the 20th century.

After he arrived at U.N.D. Miller closely watched and analyzed the U.N.D. athletic operation for a year before he began making subtle changes that lifted a successful, strong program to new heights of success, service and stability.

One of the first problems he had to resolve was athletic grant-in-aid and individual sport operational funding. While those two areas had been built farily solid by Marti, inflation and increasing costs in all areas necessitated a new management scheme and fund-raising approach. He went after providing adequate grant-in-aid scholarship funding through a new approach, which he named the V.I.P. program. This program provides season tickets in the three highly-visible sports of football, basketball and hockey to V.I.P. donors, who now pay \$660.00 annually. Increased attendance and other fund-raising ventures provided operational costs which partially negated the problem of increasing costs and inflation.

His arrival also marked the beginning of the expansion of women's sports as mandated by Federal Title IX legislation, which means, simply, that women must have the sam opportunities in athletics and funding, as male programs. When he occupied the athletic director's chair U.N.D. had budgeted \$25,000.00 for women's sports. Today that figure is one-quarter million dollars.

Early on in his U.N.D. career he also had to name a new head football coach after Jerry Olson resigned in February of 1978. He had observed the work of offensive coordinator Eugene Murphy and named the U.N.D. graduate as soon as the law allowed. In the spring of 1978 he was faced with another knotty problem after the resignation of Ruben Bjorkman as head hockey coach. The Grand Forks Herald boldly predicted Miller would appoint Ned Harkness, a successful eastern collegiate and pro coach, but Miller opted for John (Gino) Gasparini, an assistant under Bjorkman and U.N.D. graduate and former Sioux player. Gasparini's successful tenure speaks eloquently of Miller's decision to stay in-house with this important appointment. After only two seasons, Murphy decided to resign to take the position at NCAA Division I California State at Fullerton, a Los Angeles suburb. To fill that position he named Patrick Behrns, the team's defensive coordinator who had been on the staff five seasons. Behrn's won-lost record hasn't been as successful (19-11-0 in three seasons) as the other in-house appointments, however, there are strong indicators that Behrns soon will have a very successful football team.

Since Miller arrived at U.N.D., the scorecard (1976 through the 1982 football season) on how the three highly visible sports have fared reads: hockey won 151, lost 86, tied 5 for 63% winning margin. The hockey team has won WCHA championships in 1979, 1980 and 1982, and captured NCAA Division I national championships in 1980 and 1982 and was national tournament runnerup in 1979. The men's basketball team, coached by Dave Gunther, who was on board when Miller arrived, has posted a 128-50 won-lost record (72%) and won North Center Conference championships in 1977 and 1982 plus appearing in NCAA Division II post-season play all six years except 1978. Two basketball regional titles have been won during that span. Football has posted a 39-32-2 record for 55% winning margin and won the North Central Conference championship in 1979 and the same season played in the NCAA playoffs in Mississippi. Those three sports have a combined 318 won, 168 lost and 7 tied record for a 65% winning margin.

Additionally, the Sioux men's golf team has won four straight NCC championships (1979, 1980, 1981, 1982) and appeared in post-season NCAA play twice. The women's field hockey team placed sixth nationally in AIAW play in 1980. And many individual conference championships have been won by swimmers, wrestlers and baseball players.

Indicative of the superior student-athletes recruited during his regime is the fact that U.N.D. athletes have received three NCAA post-graduate \$2000 scholarships, including Dale Lian and Doug Moen in football and Alison Myhra in women's tennis in competition with thousands of athletes over the nation.

The overall operational budget for the department has gone from \$700,000.00 to 1.5 million for the 1982-83 school year. Approximately 85% of that is soft money, or funds that Miller has had to raise through various sources including gifts, tickets sales, concessions and programs such as the V.I.P.

Under Miller's guidance U.N.D. is very close to being in compliance with Title IX requirements. No sports have dropped since he arrived and he has stabilized the funding and scheduling parameters for the non-income sports. It is a broad-based program and one which is the envy of many upper midwest colleges.

Facilities is an area where Miller has directed changes in the short time he has been at U.N.D. At least 10 million dollars worth of new construction or renovation work has been completed or is now in process under his guidance.

In Memorial Stadium, constructed in 1927 with private donations, he has made great changes. A complete suite of coaches offices and a team meeting room were constructed by U.N.D. workmen on a second level under the west stand. A huge, carpeted team locker room, new showers and restrooms were added. A new weight room was opened in 1982. All new aluminum seating was installed and all the cement work redone in the West stand. A computer-operated football scoreboard and message center board was erected in 1980 in the stadium.

The Hyslop Sports Center, formerly known simply as the U.N.D Fieldhouse, has undergone continuing improvement with the addition of new offices, lockers and paint. A \$6.5 million recreational and intramural facility addition is now under construction. The new addition will greatly enhance recreational and teaching opportunities for students, faculty and staff. The new addition contains more square feet (131,337) than the original structure (123,000). The new addition will contain a new swimming pool and many open areas for basketball, tennis etc.

With approval of the Columbia Road overpass in a second city-wide election in 1982, Miller also is making plans to restructure practice and teaching areas that will be taken by the overpass, which will span the area between Memorial Stadium and the Hyslop Sports Center. Among his proposals to President Thomas J. Clifford are an all-weather track in Memorila Stadium, possibly artificial turf for the stadium football field and lights. The overpass will effectively wipe out nearly one-half of the practice area.

A \$750,000.00 foyer addition to the Winter Sports Center, funded through the estate of Kenneth Hyslop, a major U.N.D benefactor, has been completed and will enhance the University's capability of hosting the NCAA Division I national hockey tournament March 24-26, 1983. The foyer addition, a very functional but beautiful area, contains a large room that can seat 250 for a sit-down dinner, large lobby area, new coaches offices, potential new training room, new public skating rooms and has other refinements that make the U.N.D. rink one of the best in the nation in a college setting.

With construction of a new federally-funded aerospace building on the west side of campus on the site of the Hyslop baseball field, Miller now is making plans for construction of a new baseball field on the north campus, known as the Bronson Property. He hopes to have the field named for the late Harold (Pinky) Kraft, longtime U.N.D baseball coach and intramural sports director, who passed away in June 1981.

A number of All American players have performed on U.N.D. teams under his tenure, including several in football, hockey, wrestling and golf. A five-year study of U.N.D. graduation rates and scholarship attainment revealed that U.N.D. student-athletes scored higher grade-wise than the all University average. Over 70 percent, of the UND athletes graduate, which is well above the national average.

One area that Miller has continually strived to improve is basic salaries for his coaches. He has been successful in that area too, even in a time of economic depression and uncertainty.

Miller's abilities have been recognized nationally by his peers. He currently serves on the NCAA Committee on Committees and the National Association of College Directors of Athletics board of directors. Additionally, he serves on many civic and fraternal boards.