

# In the Field

## Sports Corner

LEE WARREN/Contributing Writer

### Chadron State Football Player Wins Harlon Hill Trophy

Four years ago, the University of Nebraska decided to pass on in-state standout running back Danny Woodhead, who was Nebraska's state player of the year his senior season at North Platte High School. He rushed for 2,037 yards and scored 31 touchdowns that season, but such statistics didn't garner him one Division I scholarship offer.

Why?

Because he was thought to be too small to play running back. If you talk to him about it now, he'll admit that he wasn't very happy about the label.

"I thought I deserved Division I, and maybe I did," Woodhead said. "But, I was a little bit too caught up in that. And I was too caught up in going to Nebraska instead of letting God decide. I had my own way. I wanted to go where I wanted to go at the time. Whenever you have your own plans, it almost seems like God has different plans."

Even now, at 5-9 and 200 pounds, he would probably still be deemed too small by most experts, but only if you didn't look at how he performed in his four years at Chadron State—a Division II college in Chadron, Neb., a town located in the northern part of the panhandle.

Woodhead broke the NCAA all-division's career rushing record with 7,962 yards. He is second in all-purpose yards with 9,479. He also holds the NCAA record for scoring in 38 consecutive games, for rushing for 200 yards or more on 19 occasions, and for rushing for 100 yards or more on 37 occasions.

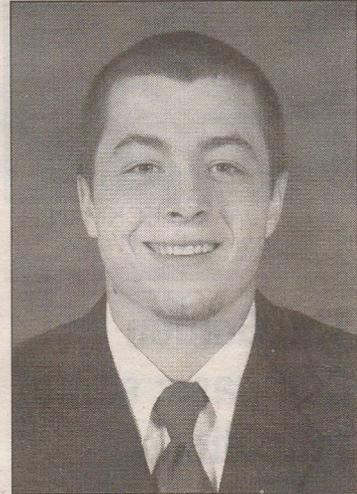
And for the second straight season, Woodhead recently won the Harlon Hill Trophy—Division II's equivalent to Division I's Heisman Trophy—given to the best player in the division. But you won't hear him bragging.

"I was just blessed to have people around me," Woodhead said. "The thing that people don't realize is that there are 10 other people on the field working their tails off trying to give me space to run. I was just blessed to have great talent around me."

By the time he finished his playing days at Chadron, he couldn't have imagined going anywhere else. He could see God at work in many ways, including his walk with Christ.

"Throughout high school, I never had one Christian friend," Woodhead said. "And the way things turned out, it gave me a chance to go to Chadron with my brother and also I met one of my best friends in college and he was a believer. And it gave me a chance to become great friends with my pastor at Ridgeview Bible Church in Chadron. It really confirmed to me that God wanted me here because I'd never had Christian friends and I was able to be surrounded by them."

Woodhead grew up in a Christian home in North Platte. He became a Christian when he was 3 or 4 years old. He said that his parents set a great Christian example for him and that college was the best thing for him, because it made him live out his faith on his own, rather than



Danny Woodhead  
Running back, Chadron State College

through his parents.

He admits that his time in the Word is hit and miss, but he works his way through different devotional books as often as he can. At night, he likes to do devotions with his fiancée, Stacia Ries of North Platte. Woodhead and Ries are high school sweethearts who have been together since their freshman year in high school. They plan to get married this summer.

Woodhead has other big plans in his future as well. He is hoping to get the chance to play professional football. A recent *Sports Illustrated* article quotes a representative from NFLDraftScout.com as saying Woodhead projects as a fifth or sixth round pick in the NFL—which would sort of make him Nebraska's version of Rudy—but on an even higher level. †