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The Beginning of the Cornhusker State Games:

One evening I received a phone call from Bill Smith from Fremont, the state's softball commissioner, wondering why Nebraska did not have its own mini-Olympics. At this time in the mid-eighties, many states were hosting their own games—emulating the successful Empire State Games in New York. Bill requested my help in organizing the first ever Nebraska State Games.

I was serving as Nebraska athletic commissioner and coaching The South Lincoln Track Club—a team of youth winning a number of National Championships. We enlisted the help of Dr. Richard Hammer, a talented Lincoln physician involved in competitive swimming.

It wasn't long before we got together at the State Office Building to kick the idea around. We attended a convention about state games in Indianapolis and were convinced of the importance of healthy competition for a variety of sports in our community. We sold Governor Bob Kerry on the idea and he started the fundraising process. We not only believed in the dream but worked well together organizing and setting up everything step by step. Many people volunteered their time and contributed to the extraordinary teamwork it takes to pull something of this magnitude off well.

The first games were held in July of 1985 and were a total success. We had predicted we would attract at least 2,000 entrants, but were not too surprised the debut drew more than 4,000. It seemed that with archery, basketball, bowling, boxing, chess, cycling, diving, equestrian, golf, gymnastics, horseshoe pitching, judo, open water swimming, pocket billiards, road race, roller skating, sailing, shooting, soccer, softball, swimming, table tennis, tennis, track and field, triathlon, volkswalk, volleyball and wrestling there would be something for everyone.

Today the Cornhusker Games have added other exciting events and increased attendance by several thousand. Dave Minarik and his staff carry on the tradition and have taken the dream to the next level. It is a pleasure for the pioneers to continue to witness the quality of success in full motion.

Jerry E. McGinn