



Ray Novak, 83, Last of Five Brothers, Dies



Ray Novak lettered three years (1951-52-53) in Nebraska football and was a third-team Husker All-American in baseball.

Photo Courtesy UNL Photographic Services

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Randy York's N-Sider

Official Blog of the Huskers

Ray Novak, 83, the last of five brothers from a famed Omaha family that included Nebraska football legend Tom “Train Wreck” Novak, died Monday at his home in Omaha. His wife Donna, son Scott, and daughter Alisa were with Ray at his home when he died. “Around Christmas, he got sick and went to the hospital,” Scott said. “He had stomach cancer. We were hoping for six more months to a year, but it was two months.”

Ray Novak was the youngest of five brothers who grew up in South Omaha. Edward was the oldest, followed by Anton, Tom, Rich and Ray. As the youngest, Ray followed “Train Wreck” as a double letter winner in both baseball and football at Nebraska. “Trainwreck and

wreck as a double letter winner in both baseball and football at Nebraska. Trainwreck and Ray were the closest two brothers of the five,” Scott said. “They had a bond. They were both All-Americans and both lettered in the same two sports. In fact, dad played in the High School All-America Football Game in Memphis after his senior year at Omaha Technical, and then went straight to Chicago from there to watch Train Wreck play in the College All-Star game.”





Bill Stern: Ray Novak May Have Been State's Best Prep Athlete Ever

Ray Novak, pictured above, was first-team all-state in football, basketball, and baseball. Bill Stern, narrator of MGM's News of the Day newsreels and a legendary sports announcer, named Ray Novak "the best high school athlete in the state of Nebraska" and even indicated that Ray might be the best high school athlete in the history of the state at that time. Ray earned three Husker letters in football (1951-52-53). "He was a halfback, a fullback, a punter, and a kicker," Scott Novak said. In 1953, Ray's backward punt against Oklahoma became famous. "He was near his own end zone ready to punt, and the center hiked the ball over his head into the end zone," Scott Novak said. "Oklahoma's players were thinking safety. Dad had his back to them, but picked up the ball and punted it backwards over his head. Oklahoma recovered the ball in Nebraska territory but did not score. It was a play that made national news. If the same play happened today, ESPN would probably highlight it all day, maybe even longer. Social media would have had a field day."

Ray Novak played for Nebraska Head Football Coach Bill Glassford and with All-America running back Bobby Reynolds. He earned two letters and All-America honors in baseball (1952-53). One year he was 6-and-0 as a Husker pitcher with an earned-run average of 0.95. Former Nebraska Head Baseball Coach John Sanders told the Novak family that those stats would still be the all-time record if teams in the 1950s "played more games like they do now," Scott said. The last three of the five Novak brothers all played football at

they do now," Scott said. The last three of the five Novak brothers all played football at Nebraska with Rich and Ray following Train Wreck. Ray Novak asked to be cremated and requested a simple ceremony with family and friends at his longtime home in South Omaha. "We will honor his request and keep it simple," Scott said.





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