

DRIVE

FOR SHOW & DOUGH

By DIRK CHATELAIN
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

ASHLAND, Neb. — The boy with the sandy blond hair is bored.

It's a hot and windy Sunday afternoon in July and there ain't a shade tree to be found on this Quarry Oaks driving range. He sits in the grass, hand on chin, legs tucked under him like a soft pretzel, waiting patiently for some show to start.

Dan Boever, the goofy golf guy at the front of the range, will have to earn his paycheck today.

"Dan has really become, I guess, quite a character," says the Fred Alexander Memorial Golf Clinic director into a microphone as she introduces the main attraction.

So Boever, who used to hit baseballs over the left-field wall at Nebraska's Buck Beltzer Field, who shared the batting cage with Albert Belle, who once hit a drive 473 yards in a Long Drive competition, tees a ball and rockets it into the clouds. The blond-haired boy perks up. Boever is halfway into a joke about Nebraska football before the ball gently falls some 350 yards away.

During the next hour, Boever hits balls through boards. He clobbers balls that hang on a
See Boever: Page 2

Former NU baseball player Dan Boever is a hit in exhibitions and long drive competitions

"People love to watch the ball go far. Afterward, you hear people, 'Oh my gosh. Did you see what that guy did?'," said Dan Boever, a former NU baseball player who now performs in golf exhibitions and long drive competitions.

SPECIAL TO
THE WORLD-HERALD



SHRINE BOWL:
NORTH 18, SOUTH 1



CHRIS BEAVER
The North's Luke Lavicky of Ag chased down by the South's Mike Gretna during the first half.

Alegria

four F

lift No

■ The place-kicker
North Platte stand
at the Shrine Bowl

By Stu Post
WORLD-HERALD

LINCOLN — Jordan Alegria scored four field goals Saturday night to set a Shrine Bowl record, but it was a kick that really lifted him up.

"I was pretty mad. I wasn't supposed to mess up this game," said the North Platte kicker.

Alegria also helped preside over a win at Seacrest Field with a 46-yard field goal in the final quarter of the game's next-to-last play.

A crowd estimated at 6,000 fans gathered for the test day of the year in Lincoln on Saturday afternoon, which was complete at halftime.

Alegria, who will walk off the field with four field goals of 52 and 34 yards and a 46-yarder in the third quarter, is the final quarter of the game's next-to-last play. He had a 54-yarder hit the end zone but missed his final two attempts.

INSIDE

Boever: Ex-Husker drives for show and dough

Continued from Page 1

string. By the end of the clinic, people are laughing and shaking their head simultaneously. The blond-haired boy is clapping.

"Where'd that go?" Boever says after blasting another ball. "I don't know, but I think it ought to have a flight attendant!"

He's half John Daly, half Bozo the Clown. He can hit a golf ball as far as anyone in the world. He can shank on command. This is how Dan Boever plays golf.

Boever's athleticism — he'd laugh at that — and showmanship have sent the 44-year-old on a path seldom traveled. Twenty-two years ago, he was cracking jokes and hitting home runs as a third-team All-American for the Huskers. But after seven years in the minors, Boever found his calling in "stupid golf". Now he's filming TV commercials and movies. He's working 80 clinics and corporate outings a year. He's competing for jackpots in Long Drive competitions.

This is how Dan Boever plays golf.

It's a different steamy summer day, this time in June. This time Boever left the tricks at home in Springfield, Mo. He's on the Willow Creek range in Des Moines competing with "some pretty large mammals" at the Alpha Long Drive Classic, an event he calls "the home run derby, the slam-dunk contest of golf."

Bon Jovi's "Living on the Edge" rocks the public address system at 8:45 a.m. Spectators sitting on metal bleachers behind the range hoot and holler when a body builder in golf spikes hits one deep.

"Let's go, Bubba!"

Boever steps to the teeing area for the first round. On his third ball, he bombs a little fade up the hill. "367," an official tells him.

The 10-time World Long Drive finalist will eventually barely miss the semifinals and minimum \$1,000 payday in the three-day competition.

"Some of these guys hit it far enough to make linemen at Nebraska look like little girls," said Boever, who's a member of the Pinnacle and Cobra Long Drive team. "There's testosterone dripping off everything out here. You can hit it 340 and feel like the biggest loser on the planet."

Boever walks around the range and jokes with peers whose forearms are as solid as fire hydrants. Boever's got a solid foundation — he's 6-foot-3, 230 pounds and likes to make fun of his well-rounded "gut" — but his golf swing wouldn't look out of place on a PGA Tour range.

Boever grew up on a pig farm outside Remsen, Iowa. He came to Lincoln after a two-year stint playing baseball at an Arkansas junior college.

While Boever was starring on a Nebraska team that started the 1983 season 26-0, he wasn't thinking about golf. He didn't even pick up a club during his two years in Lincoln.

The Reds drafted him in the eighth round of the 1983 draft. He hit .300 two straight years for the Reds in Class AA, before moving to Class AAA. Boever was traded to the Mariners, then the Indians, and finished his career in 1989 backing up Albert Belle in Class AA.

"If you're not in the big leagues at 28, you're an old man," he said. "I didn't want to spend my life riding buses."

Boever started considering Long Drive competitions after his baseball playing days. He had gained some weight and was drilling drives 330, 340, 350. He started competing.

Boever went to every Long Drive event he could find in 1997 while selling chemicals full-time in dairy barns across the Southern plains. But money was still tight, so he started performing shows part-time.

"During the week, I'm in these hot sweaty, smelly places — 'Oh, that cow just went to the bathroom on me. That's wrong, man.' Then on the weekend, I might be at Pinehurst."

Boever remembers one incident at an Arkansas barn in 2000. He calls it "decision day."

"This cow apparently had a stomach problem. I hid behind this guy as this cow showered, I'm telling you, he showered my friend with this green, chewed grass. It wasn't coming out of the mouth, my friend."

Boever, who's married with two kids, quit and started working shows full-time. He started practicing trick shots at the range in Springfield.

"People love to watch the ball go far," said Boever, who normally shoots in the 70s. "Afterward, you hear people, 'Oh my gosh. Did you see what that guy did?'"

Shelly Godeken-Wright, a former Nebraska golfer and Alma, Neb., native, is executive director of the Fred and Judy Alexan-

der Foundation. She's seen dozens of golf entertainers across the country. Boever's combination of personality and skill is unique, she says.

"It's just one trick after another," said Dutch Sevens of Bellevue, who accompanied his kids to Quarry Oaks for the clinic. "It's impossible. He's flipping the club upside down and backward and still hitting it farther than 95 percent of people."

This is how Dan Boever plays golf.

One time, a guy in Springfield called him and asked to help trick a few companions, both leaders of Christian organizations. Evidently the guy was tired of his friends giving him golf tips, trying to "fix him."

So Boever goes to this guy's country club. First tee shot, he aims 60 yards left of the fairway and slices it over the pool back into the fairway. They would have been less surprised had the Missouri River parted.

"Look," Boever told the puzzled playing partners. "I played baseball. I've always been a slicer. This is how I fixed it."

Next hole, Boever aimed even farther left, and sliced it over million-dollar homes back into the fairway. The group comes to a 180-yard par three and Boever pulls out driver again. He aligns his feet exactly 90 degrees left — this is his best trick shot — and hits a banana slice that lands 10 feet from the flag.

"They looked at me, they looked at the ball and said, 'I wouldn't change a thing.'"