

Sports exaggerations common Heimuli: The Tongan terror



DAVID WINDER
SPORTSWRITER

Some people are going to lie to make themselves look better in the eyes of others, it's just a fact of life. But most people will lie to make themselves look better in the eyes of others when it comes to sports.

A screen pass that does not matter, suddenly becomes a 90-yard bomb that is tipped six times before the receiver catches the ball with his legs for the touchdown. A lazy pop fly turns into a screaming line drive that is caught barehanded on the dive. Almost every sports anecdote is at least ten times better than the actual event.

Every athlete exaggerates their sports feats, but fishermen have to be the worst.

Clint: "Hey Ed, how was fishing today? Did you catch anything?"

Ed: "Sure did. I caught a 106 pound perch."

Clint: "Wow! Can I see it?"

Ed: "Nope. The 223 pound catfish ate it while I was bringing in the two ton trout."

Other people have been known to embellish their embellishments. Every now and then they have to add to their story.

"In high school I was the backup punter, but I did get to play receiver once when we were down 73-0."

A couple of days later ...

"In high school I was the backup quarterback, but our starting quarterback broke his leg, so I got

into the game. I threw two touchdown passes, but we still got beat 31-17."

A week later ...

"In high school I was the backup quarterback, but our starting quarterback got shot in the head by the other team's linebacker, so I got into the game. We were down 73-0 at the half but I brought us back for the win by throwing 11 touchdowns. The last one was for 63 yards, and the receiver caught it after it went straight through the cornerback's chest. I've got the game ball at home, it still has pieces of his ribs on it."

It seems nothing get people's lying juices flowing more than their involvement in sports. But there is evidence that the exaggeration disease has crossed over into the workplace?

Doctor: "You would not believe the operation I just did. I

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Heimuli is looking to make a big impact as a freshman.

By David Winder
THE BATTALION

There's a comedian on the Texas A&M football team but he has only been able to make a few players laugh. Its not that his jokes are bad, its that his jokes are in Tongan.

Freshman offensive guard Semisi Heimuli (pronounced SAME-see HI-mule-ee) speaks fluent English but when something strikes him funny, he usually says it in his other native language.

"I'll be walking with my buddies and tell a joke in Tongan, but none of them will get it," Heimuli said. "Then I'll remember and tell it to them in English. Then they get it. Sometimes."

Heimuli was born in California but the rest of his family was born on the island chain that makes up the nation of Tonga in the South Pacific, south of Samoa. Heimuli said it has been tough coming to a college where he is the only Tongan.

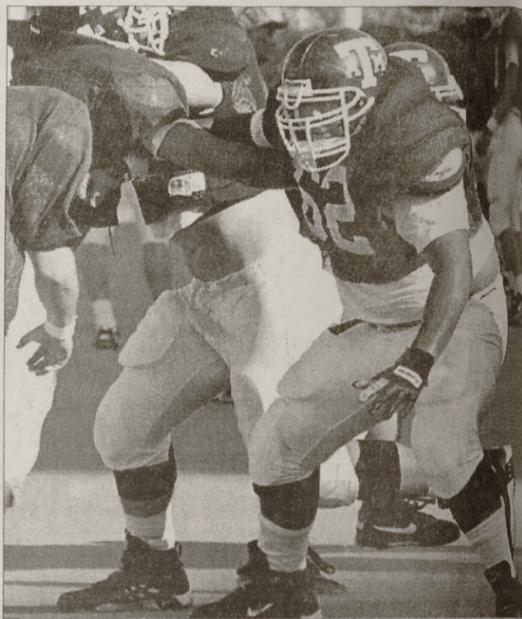
"When I came down here everybody was like 'What's a Tongan,'" Heimuli said. "Only a couple of guys on the team

knew. The guys from California knew because they had grown up with (other Tongans)."

"It's different here because I've never gone to school where there were no Tongans, there's always been a couple. I have to talk to myself in Tongan or call up my buddies at home and talk. I don't want to forget my language."

Heimuli solved his homesickness by talking to Tongan players from other schools.

"When we went to play Colorado they had a Tongan and three Samoan guys on their team," Heimuli said. "When I saw those guys that was the



Freshman offensive lineman Semisi Heimuli practices blocking during

first time I had seen any Tongans or Polynesians in a long time. I was happy then, I stayed there talking to them the whole time.

"He's got a low center of gravity for as big as he is."

— Mike Sherman
Offensive Line Coach

"After the game most of the players walked into the locker room because they didn't want to shake hands. They ended up waiting for me because I was out there talking to those guys. It felt good to talk to someone in your own language. I didn't want to leave."

Heimuli was introduced to sports at a young age by his uncle.

"He got me involved in sports like tennis, baseball and football," Heimuli said. "He'd take me to sign up and then he pay for it."

Even though he played a variety of sports growing up, foot-

ball was always Heimuli's favorite.

"I loved playing it," Heimuli said. "I just loved to hit people. When I was younger and playing flag football, I got so excited I would just tackle people. It was just in my blood."

As a senior in high school, Heimuli helped Trinity Eulen reach the first round of the Texas state playoffs. Named to several recruiting lists, Heimuli impressed A&M offensive line coach Mike Sherman with his size and speed.

"He's got a low center of gravity for as big as he is," Sherman said. "He's got a good feel for the game and he's tough. He's stout and can generate a lot of power."

Heimuli hopes to use the power to fulfill his lifelong dream of making it into the National Football League.

"All I ever wanted was to make it into the league," Heimuli said. "I think Texas A&M is the best place to help me do that with the coaches and players we have."

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THE BATTALION

ESPN taking it to the Extreme

ESPN's popular series is returning to Rhode Island for a second competitive season.

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — The Extreme Games, the alternative sports festival invented by cable network ESPN, will return to Rhode Island for a second edition, network and state officials announced Wednesday.

The state, which provided an incentive package totaling more than \$600,000, was selected from a field of approximately 20 U.S. and international locations. The other finalists for the event to be held June 24-30, 1996, were Austin; Vail, Colo., and San Diego.

"The Extreme Games are now a proven commodity delivering exposure to 150 countries and over 500 million house-

holds worldwide," Gov. Lincoln Almond said at a news conference. "Cities and towns all over America wanted that exposure and I'm proud to say Rhode Island is the winner."

The Extreme Games feature alternative sports including street luge racing, skysurfing and bungee jumping. Last year's event was held at sites in Newport, Middletown, Providence and Mount Snow, Vt. There also was an "eco-challenge" orienteering race that started in Maine and ended in Rhode Island.

Last year's Extreme Games were viewed by 133,500 spectators at venues and millions worldwide. The economic impact on the state was more than \$14 million, including \$7.4 million in direct expenditures by ESPN, according to a University of Rhode Island study.

"The Extreme Games are good for Rhode Island's econo-

my in ways far greater than dollars spent here," Rhode Island Economic Development Corp. Director Marcel Valois said.

"The Rhode Island Sports Council, the cities of Newport and Providence, the Economic Development Corp. and private interests led by Hasbro Chairman Alan Hassenfeld — collectively called Team Rhode Island — put together the incentive package.

It includes \$250,000 in private-sector donations in the form of goods, services and cash; \$200,000 from government agencies primarily in the form of services and technical assistance; \$155,000 in public safety cost reductions; and the use of all publicly owned venues.

The other prospective host cities could not provide the same package as Rhode Island, Ruhe said.

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