

Signs from the Stadium

Kenny Walker, born deaf in Crane, Texas, felt like an outsider.

As he matured, however, he compensated for his deafness with physical strength.

His large frame, extensive knowledge of football and intense focus attracted the attention of high school football coaches and then of college coaches. When Walker's high school coach asked him where he wanted to play football, he signed N for Nebraska. Nebraska's coaches immediately recruited him and made arrangements to have an interpreter present at every game.

At Nebraska, Walker made All-American and was named Big Eight Conference Defensive Player of the Year. But the crowning moment of his college football career came during his final home game in 1990.

Traditionally, senior players were introduced alphabetically and ran onto the field, welcomed by a cheering crowd. But because Walker was deaf, the university found a unique way to honor the player. The *Omaha World Herald* explained to fans how to sign an ovation by standing, holding their hands above their heads, spreading their fingers, and then waving their hands from side to side.

When Walker stood in the stadium tunnel, he felt the vibration of the cheering crowd as each senior ran out on the field. But when he ran onto the field, he felt no vibrations. Puzzled, he looked around the stadium to see more than 75,000 fans standing for him, waving their hands in a way that only a deaf person would recognize as applause.

Walker went on to play defensive lineman for the Denver Broncos – one of only three deaf players to have played in the National Football League – and was the first deaf player in the Canadian Football League.



But what a stirring event in the life of Walker – to be thanked for his football exploits and welcomed by the fans on his final game in the Nebraska stadium – as happened on that day.

But as grand as that day was for him, it doesn't compare to the reception in glory awaiting those who have given their hearts to Christ.

The Apostle Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:11: *And you will be given a very great welcome into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, a kingdom that never ends* (ERV).

What a day of rejoicing that will be!

– Beecher Hunter