

## SPOKE TALK



### Trail courtesy — Be a good trail ambassador

Many years ago, I worked for a horse outfitter. He was a crusty, old curmudgeon of a man, but every time we found ourselves on a multi-use trail, he would bend over backwards to be friendly and polite to every person we encountered.

“Some people don’t like horses on these trails,” he told me. “Remember, whenever you’re out here, you are an ambassador for all horseback riders.”

It was an important lesson, and one that I carry with me to this day, particularly as a mountain biker on our local trails. We are, each of us, ambassadors to our sports. Whether you’re on a mountain bike or a horse, trail running or hiking with your dogs, remember that you are the ambassador for your sport to every other trail user you encounter that day.

You have probably seen the Trail Courtesy Triangle at most trailheads. It indicates that bikers yield to hikers and horses, and hikers yield to horses. The reason for this is fairly simple. Even the best horses can be unpredictable. Fast moving objects, like bikes, can be unfamiliar and scary to animals. When a horse spooks, it can endanger all of the users on the trail, not just its rider.

When you are approaching a horse and rider, announce yourself calmly and clearly from a safe distance away. Stop, put a foot down and ask the rider the safest way to proceed.

In most cases, you will find that the rider will want to pull their horse off to the side of the trail where the horse can watch you ride by. If nothing extraordinary happens, congratulations. You were a great ambassador for bikers.

A couple of weeks ago, a friend and I were riding our horses near Stagecoach Reservoir, and we were approached by a biker who did not announce himself, did not stop pedaling, ignored repeated requests to stop and who eventually fell almost directly underneath my horse. He was a perfect example of what not to do and a bad ambassador for mountain bikers.

On the other hand, this past Sunday, I was riding my bike down MGM on Emerald Mountain when I hit a deep patch of moon dust and augured myself face-first into the trail.



IRA GAY SEALY/THE DENVER POST

Broncos quarterbacks John McCormick, left, and Mickey Slaughter prepare for snaps from Jerry Sturm, left, and Larry Kaminski in 1966.

## From underrated to best

### *Kaminski named to Broncos all-time Top 100 player list*

Shelby Reardon  
Steamboat Pilot & Today

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — In 1966, Purdue graduate Larry Kaminski was an undrafted free agent and an undersized center, ready to start a business career rather than realize a dream of playing in the NFL.

More than 50 years later, the Steamboat Springs business owner was named to the Denver Broncos all-time Top 100 Team.

“To me, it’s probably the greatest honor I have, being a free agent and being named with the 100 players that were really, really great players,” Kaminski said. “There’s a lot of tremendous football players there and to have my name mentioned with them is beyond belief for me and a wonderful surprise and a great, great honor.”

Kaminski, who started B&K Distributing, is listed alongside legendary quarterbacks John Elway and Peyton Manning as well as current linebacker Von Miller. Kaminski is one of five centers on the list and one of 17 who started playing in the 1960s.

According to the Broncos website, 5,000 fans voted to help determine who was named to the list, along with team historian Jim Saccomano and senior digital reporter Andrew Mason.

The All-Time top 100 team has 47 offensive players, 46 defensive players and

seven special-teams players. Every player or their family will receive a commemorative game ball, and a few team members will be invited to “Fantennial Weekend” and will be recognized ahead of the game against the Tennessee Titans on Sunday, Oct. 13. Kaminski isn’t sure if he’ll be attending the event yet.

Unlike most of the names next to his, Kaminski wasn’t drafted, even after being named to the first team All-Big Ten team following his senior year at Purdue.

Under head coach Mac Speedie, offensive line coach Ray Malvasi gave Kaminski a chance, signing him to the Broncos squad. The rookie started most games that year, and the Broncos went 4-10.

The next year, Lou Saban took over as head coach until John Ralston came in 1972. With each change in staff, Kaminski had to prove himself all over again.

“The thing that I’m really proud of is that I made it eight years, and I had a lot of coaches,” Kaminski said. “I had a lot of coaches, and every coach that came in thought I was too small, and they brought in somebody bigger. But every year, I managed to make the starting lineup. That in itself was something I’m extremely proud of.”

While playing for the Broncos, Kaminski made an impact on and off the field. Not only was he a Rookie of the Year finalist, but in his second season in the NFL, he was named to the All-AFL team and played in the All-Star game. He was a Man of the Year nominee in 1972 and 1973. Also in 1973, Kaminski helped Denver to its first-ever winning season since

the team’s conception in 1960.

“I would hope the fans remember me as a hard-working player as somebody that did my best, and I was involved in the community in terms of trying to get the new stadium back in the day,” Kaminski said. “I would hope they felt that I was a good player, a guy that gave his best and did a lot for the Broncos in my eight years.”



#### POST-FOOTBALL

In 1974, after eight years in the orange uniform, Kaminski retired. He and former Denver teammate Walt Barnes were awarded the Anheuser-Busch franchise for Northwest Colorado, bringing B&K Distributing to Steamboat in 1977. Kaminski’s son Chris now runs the business, and Larry lives in Poulsbo, Washington.

“The time that Larry really was here in town, before he moved out west, this was a much smaller community. Larry was a larger-than-life figure in our town in those days,” Steamboat photographer Rod Hanna said. “Larry was very well known and well respected within the community.”

Hanna was the Kansas City Chiefs photographer while Kaminski was playing for the Broncos. The two didn’t meet until Hanna moved to Steamboat in 1975. At one point, Hanna was the official photographer of the Broncos, so he said he probably has a few “accidental” photos of Kaminski somewhere in the archives.

Hanna recalls seeing Kaminski at The Tugboat frequently. He recalled Kaminski being “fiercely loyal” to the



## SPORTS



FILE PHOTO

Larry Kaminski, who started B&K Distributing in Steamboat Springs, played for the Denver Broncos from 1966 to 1973.

### BRONCOS

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Anheuser-Busch brand.

"If you were a friend of Larry's and you got caught drinking a Coors beer, you were in big trouble," Hanna said.

At 74, Kaminski is retired and enjoys a life filled with fishing and antiques with his wife. In his voicemail message, he identifies himself as "Captain Larry," an ode to his former fishing business, Captain Larry's Adventures. He also fills retirement by spending time with his 13 grandchildren.

He gets back to his alma mater in Lafayette, Indiana, often for homecoming weekend. Purdue has been ingrained in his bloodline. Two of his sons are Purdue graduates, a pair of grandsons are at Purdue, a daughter-in-law and her brother were Boilermakers and another one of Kaminski's grandsons is aiming to keep the tradition alive by attending Purdue.

"It's fun to be around everybody — the war stories and the excitement," Kaminski said. "Purdue is what got me started after high school. I had a chance to play with a really good team."

Forty-five years removed from his playing days, he's still feeling the effects of the high-contact sport.

In a 2012 article by Steamboat Pilot & Today,

“For me to be able to stay in Steamboat and have the support I did from the local community. ... To remember me as one of the best players, it's the greatest honor I've had to this point in time for my 19 years that I played from beginning to end.”

**Larry Kaminski**  
Former Denver Broncos center

Kaminski said he sought help to combat symptoms of what is known as chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE.

Kaminski was one of the original filers in a lawsuit against the NFL, claiming the league knew about and covered up the effects of head injuries, and he joined a workers' compensation suit against the Broncos. Around the same time, he donated 40 "guardian caps" to the Steamboat Springs High School football team as it fundraised to buy new, better-fitting helmets. The caps are a soft outer shell that goes over helmets and reduces the impact of hits.

Yearly, he meets with the staff at the CTE Center at Boston University to track his condition. Like many others, Kaminski will donate his brain to the research center upon his passing.

"I'm sure a lot of us have CTE, but the league's not going to admit to it. It's like anything else, it's political football. They're going

to protect their brand as much as possible," Kaminski said. "I do what I can to support the players that are suffering, because there's a lot of them out there that need the help. There's guys that are kind of dropped to the sideline and for me, that's not right. Anything I can do to help any of those guys, I will do what I can."

Even though Kaminski was born in Ohio and now resides in the Pacific Northwest, his name has become a Steamboat staple. Kaminski was named Steamboat Man of the Year and Winter Carnival King in 1977.

"For me to be able to stay in Steamboat and have the support I did from the local community. ... To remember me as one of the best players, it's the greatest honor I've had to this point in time for my 19 years that I played from beginning to end," Kaminski said.

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## NOMINATIONS ARE NOW OPEN!

Let us know who you think is the **best of the boat.**

**Step 1: Nominate your favorite business, person or organization**

Jul 18 - Aug 8

**Step 2: Come back and vote for the winner**

Aug 15 - Sep 5

### SPOKE TALK

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A couple of women were hiking up a few minutes later and noticed that I was covered head to toe in dust and dirt. They stopped and made sure I was OK, made sure the bike was OK

(cheers to you both) and were incredibly kind to my bruised ego. They were amazing trail ambassadors.

So, please be a good trail ambassador. Remember that we're all neighbors in this wonderful town. Slow down when approaching other users. Be kind. Make

eye contact. Smile. Yield if it's your turn to yield. Heck, maybe yield if it's not your turn to yield. Common courtesy goes a long way towards minimizing user conflict.

Heather Jones is an employee of Routt County Riders.

TO NOMINATE YOUR FAVORITES GO TO:  
<https://bestoftheboat.com>