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Trying Cy On For Size

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“When you put on Cy’s costume, it transforms you. It’s hard to describe, but you instantly perform.”

Cy isn’t shy. Cy dances, hugs and throws high-fives to enthuse and entertain Iowa State University fans.

Matt Burt, a junior in agricultural business, has been watching Cy all his life. His parents and older brother went to Iowa State, and he grew up attending Iowa State games.

Burt always knew he would be a Cyclone. He never guessed he would be Cy.

Last year he went to the mascot squad tryout so he could try on Cy’s suit just once before he graduated and say he’d been Cy for 15 minutes. After attending a meeting before try-outs he decided to take the challenge and compete.

“They gave us directions on how to plan a five minute skit,” Burt says. “It was very competitive.”

Along with running with the Iowa State flag and performing the Cy strut, Burt and his friends put together a winning skit. They had Cy working out to the theme song from the Rocky movie, challenging
volunteers like Burt whose dedication and enthusiasm make Cy shine.

Squad leader Noelle Lichty, a senior in marketing, also appreciates Burt’s performances.

“I can always tell when Matt is in the Cy suit because he interacts with fans and he is always entertaining,” Lichty says.

Once students qualify to perform as Cy they are eligible to keep the position until graduation, which means Burt will perform the Cy dance until he graduates in 2012. He says he was looking forward to attending the games, but was surprised how different it feels to be on the field and part of the game.

“It’s fun and you feel more involved in Iowa State athletics as the mascot,” Burt says. “I traveled to the Kansas State football game and I thought it was amazing walking into Arrowhead Stadium.”

Burt’s most memorable moment, “crowd surfing,” Burt says. “My friends picked me up and I was passed halfway up the student section.”

Burt has tried to do the Cy dance for friends without the costume, but it just isn’t the same.

“When you put on Cy’s costume, it transforms you. It’s hard to describe, but you instantly perform,” Burt says.

Burt has also put his dance moves to work for a good cause. He was part of the Alpha Gamma Rho team during the ISU Dance Marathon held in January to raise money for the Children’s Miracle Network and the University of Iowa Children’s Hospital. The event raised more than $260,000 for the charities.

“It was special to hear the kids’ stories and how the money is helping their families,” Burt says.

Although he’s never auditioned for any other role, he has had experience in showmanship. The Marshalltown native was raised on a farrow-to-finish and row-crop farm and has shown livestock at the Tama County Fair and the Iowa State Fair.

Burt plans to pursue a career in agriculture and hopes to go into farming someday. He’s had an internship as an Agri-Gold sales representative and as a crop scout. After he graduates he’d like to get experience in banking, lending or commodity trading.

“I chose agricultural business because there are so many things you can do with it,” Burt says.

For now, he’ll continue to turn anytime he hears a call for Cy. He’s always ready to suit up as the Cyclone hero to strut, dance, offer high-fives and even crowd surf.}

rival fans to arm wrestle, a tug of war, a race, and finally beating a University of Iowa fan in football.

After making the elite team of seven students, his first performance was a two-day tour promoting Iowa State with the athletic department’s coaches and administrators. Traveling in a first-class tour bus around the state, Burt says, “was amazingly cool.”

Cy the Cardinal, which is the mascot’s official name, first hit the field at a 1954 Iowa State homecoming game. Cy was the winning idea in a nationwide contest to find a mascot to fit the “Cyclone” role. Cy performs at every Cyclone sporting event and several off-campus special events.

Mascot squad members don’t get paid or receive special recognition, says Mary Pink, Iowa State University associate athletics director for marketing. She appreciates