

Comedy Update: Doug Abeles '81

Award-winning *Saturday Night Live* writer is inducted into Athletics Hall of Fame.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

DOUG ABELES '81, WHO WAS INDUCTED into the Athletics Hall of Fame over Meliora Weekend last fall, says a lot has changed since he was a master of the 10,000 meters.

The former Yellowjackets track and field and cross country star is an Emmy Award-winning comedy writer and producer for the *Saturday Night Live* segment "Weekend Update."

For one thing, he says he's funnier now.

"I was amusing to my friends, but that was about it" he says of his student days. "I was known at parties for doing a pretty good Mick Jagger impression."

Abeles, who got into the comedy business after taking a comedy writing class and courting a couple of industry contacts, has written and produced for "Weekend Update" since 2001. He's often asked to compare the parody news segment, which has aired almost continuously since *SNL* premiered in 1975, to more recent political satire shows such as Jon Stewart's *Daily Show* and Steven Colbert's *Colbert Report*.

"Our approach is a little different. It's for a bit broader segment. We try to make it about both politics and pop culture."

Often the two intersect. Asked to recall his favorite "Weekend Update" segment, he cites "the Sarah Palin rap," which aired in October 2008, and featured a very blond and pregnant news anchor Amy Poehler launching into an animated hip-hop performance, rapping lyrics written from Palin's point of view, while Palin, co-anchor Seth Myers, and a crew of parka-clad backup dancers moved to the beat.

"Every time I see it I'm just bowled over by Amy's performance," says Abeles. "I had very little to do with it other than a few things here and there, but I'm very proud that it was on the 'Weekend Update' that I helped produce."

As for Barack Obama, Abeles says the president has supplied steady material.

"Initially he was tough, but it's been getting easier," says Abeles with a loud laugh. 



FUNNY MAN: Known for doing a "pretty good Mick Jagger" impression as a student, Abeles says he's funnier now as an Emmy Award-winning writer and producer for *Saturday Night Live*, where he's helped guide the show's "Weekend Update" segment for almost a decade.