

Williams NU's elder statesman

By Bob Asmussen

When Eric Williams looks up in the stands at the Bob Devaney Sports Center this season, he will see something that he hasn't seen regularly in the four years he has been at Nebraska, a full house.

Williams, a senior guard from South Bend, Ind., said that the expected sell-outs for Nebraska's home games this season should give the team an emotional lift.

"15,000 people screaming for you really pumps you up," Williams said. "The crowds really helped us through the NIT (National Invitational Tournament) last year."

Williams and David Ponce are expected to be the starting guards for Nebraska this season. Williams started part of last season along with Ponce and Greg Downing.

"I want to give 100 percent the best way I can and help the team in all possible ways," Williams said. "I'm going to try and do things that I didn't do last year. One thing I'll do is look for my shot more."

Williams, Ponce and Stan Cloudy are the three seniors on this year's team. Williams at 23 is the oldest player on the team. He describes himself as the team's "elder statesman." He said this year's team seems to be a closer knit group than last season.

"It's a whole different atmosphere from last year," Williams said. "The

chemistry was close last year but it seems more so this year."

Another difference between this year's team and last year's will be how the team is rated going into the season. Last year's team was picked anywhere between fifth and eighth going into the season. This year's team has been picked along with Kansas as the teams to beat in the conference. Street and Smith Magazine has the Cornhuskers rated 16th. Williams said the preseason predictions are something to be leery of.

"I like them saying we have the talent but you have to look out for that sometimes," Williams said. "We're going to have to go out and play every game with no letdowns."

"Last year's over and this is a whole new year," Williams said. "Teams will be shooting at us this year."

When talking about the prospects for Kansas, Williams said a lot will depend on how new coach Larry Brown brings the talent together. The Jayhawks open at Houston on November 26, a game that, according to Williams, could show what type of a team they are.

"You can see where your ball club is playing a team like that," Williams said. "I'm not saying Kansas is going to win but I think that they could win."

Looking at this season's non-conference schedule Williams said the Huskers game with Creighton on December 3 will be an important one.

"I think Creighton will be a tough

game because they're an intrastate rival," Williams said. "They've got a good team coming back this season."

When asked if Nebraska's Dec. 10 game with Arkansas in Lincoln would be a big game, Williams responded with a definitive "Oh yeah."

The player from last season's team that Williams said will be the hardest to replace is Claude Renfro. Williams said that no player who did the things Renfro did has emerged in practice thus far.

"Claude was a role player who knew his limits. He really inspired the team with his play," Williams said. "I think Coach Iba is looking for that type of player. I know I would if I was coach."

Williams said his best moment as part of the team came last year when the team went to the NIT. He said his fondest moment as an individual player

came against Colorado during the 1980-81 season.

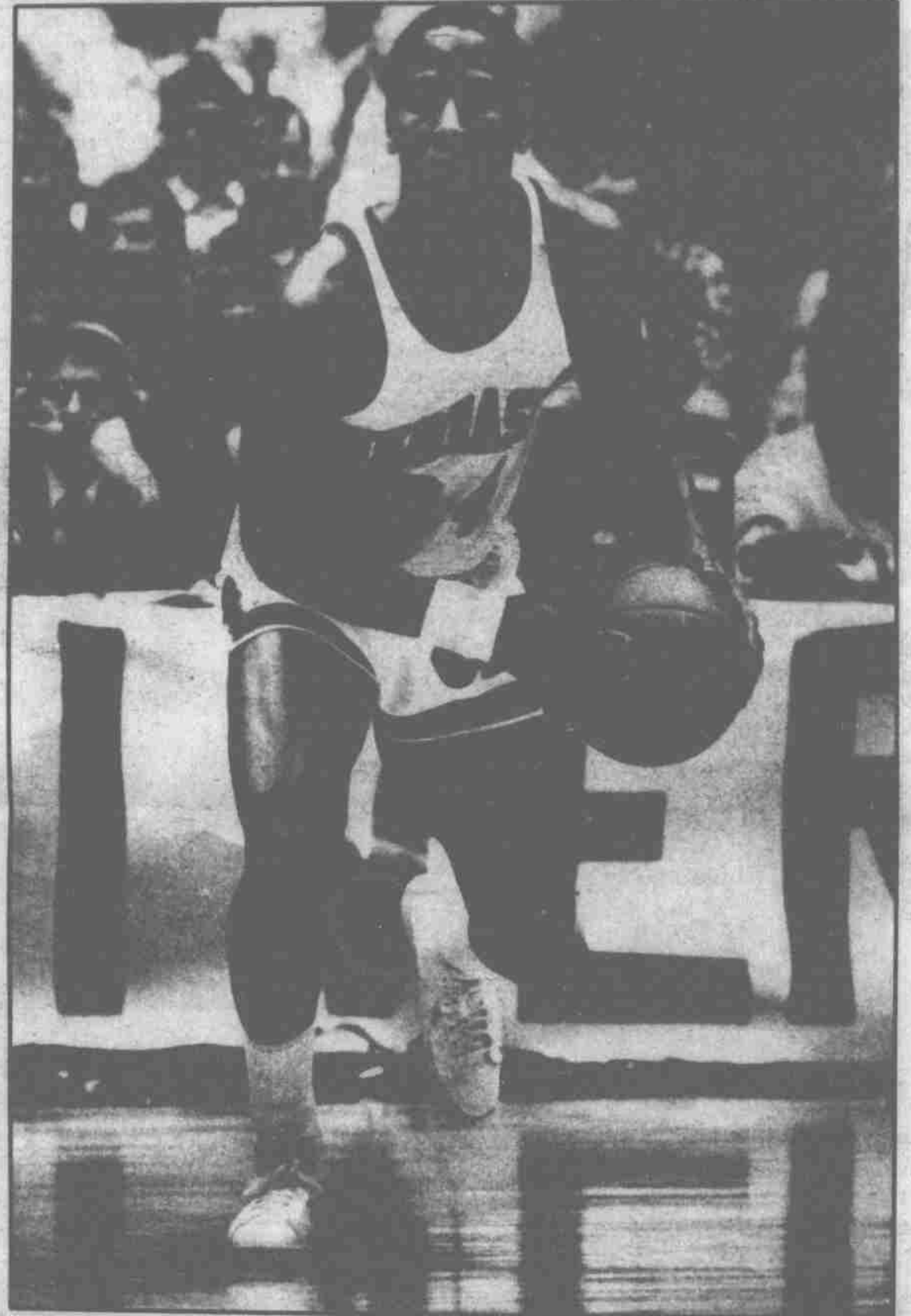
"We played Colorado down there and Ray Collins got hurt," Williams recalled. "I hit four out of four and I covered Jo Jo Hunter. He took a shot and I blocked it and we went down the court and scored. We won the game (67-56) and I played good defense on Hunter. That's the game that sticks out in my mind."

Williams said the team's goals this season are to win the Big Eight tourney and go to the NCAA tournament. He said the team won't be able to lose more than seven or eight games and still get to the NCAA Tournament as an at-large team.

"I honestly think we can go as far as we want to go," Williams said. "That's the type of players this team has. They think like that."



Daily Nebraskan file photo
Nebraska guard Eric Williams dives after a loose ball during Nebraska's game last year with Kansas at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Williams is an expected starter for the 1983-84 season.



Daily Nebraskan file photo
Eric Williams

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