

Sports

Semi-pro team ends 15-year run

By Jeff Apel
Sports Editor

Nebraska baseball players who planned on spending their summer playing semi-pro baseball with the Beatrice Bruins found themselves looking for a new team.

Beatrice, which had hosted a summer team for the past 15 years, folded its semi-pro squad because of a sagging economy and a decline in the interest level among fans.

Former Bruin coach Bob Steinkamp said that although the Bruins were operating around the break-even point during their early years of existence, the Beatrice-based squad had been losing between \$3,000 and \$5,000 yearly for the past several years.

With the economic outlook being the way it is, Steinkamp said he saw this year as good of time as any to end his 15-year coaching stint and fold

the Bruins.

"It was a decision I completely made on my own," Steinkamp said. "It was a tough decision to make, but at this time it just is not feasible to continue the operation of the Bruins."

Steinkamp said that the Bruins had been relying on private donations, sales of a yearbook and gate revenue to off-set their \$15,000 a year operating expenses.

Though Beatrice operated on a budget consistently lower than all of the other teams in the semi-pro Jayhawk League, Steinkamp said that he proved to himself that the Bruins could remain competitive despite having only one-fifth of the total budget a rival team in Clarinda, Iowa had.

Beatrice finished among the top 10 semi-pro teams in the country four of the last six years, and also sent 65 players on to professional baseball.

"We maintained one of the top programs in the country," Steinkamp said.

Steinkamp said that he feels sorry for the many college players who had hopes of playing for the Beatrice Bruins this summer.

Semi-pro clubs still exist in Hutchinson, Kan., and the Iowa-based organization is still going strong, but Steinkamp said that both of these nearby organizations won't be nearly as convenient as the Bruins were because of the required traveling time for Nebraskans.

In hopes of making the transition to a new team an easier one, Steinkamp said that he has been in touch with other coaches from the Jayhawk League in hopes of finding new homes for the athletes who had hoped to play for the Bruins.

But when the rival teams in the Jayhawk League are producing such players as Von Hayes of the Philadelphia Phillies, Ozzie Smith of the

St. Louis Cardinals, Will Clark of the San Francisco Giants and Pete Incaviglia of the Texas Rangers, Steinkamp said that he is sure that someone is going to get left out.

"More and more teams are folding," he said. "There is just not the interest in amateur baseball now that there used to be."

Steinkamp said that he will stay active in the baseball field by working full time at his trophy shop in Beatrice.

While he was still coaching the Bruins, Steinkamp used to juggle his 50 hour-a-week schedule with the Bruins around his job as the owner of an insurance business.

When the Bruins future began to look shaky, he sold his insurance business so that he could pursue other interests.

That's how he opened his trophy shop, which also deals in distributing awards and is expanding to include baseball cards.

Fall switch likely for NU's Hicks

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Lorenzo Hicks, a Cornhusker split end, announced in a telephone interview Saturday that he will move to the defensive backfield next fall.

Hicks said the decision to move to defensive back came during the final week of Nebraska's spring football practices. Hicks said that he made the decision during that week, but decided not to tell the coaches until after the annual Red-White intrasquad scrimmage had been played.

Hicks, a redshirt sophomore from Kansas City, Mo., said he didn't know exactly what position in the secondary he would move to, but hopes to play at safety.

"I look at split end and see only one senior graduating next fall," Hicks said, "and then I look at safety. I think my chances to play are better at that position."

Three Nebraska safeties will graduate following next season.

Hicks finished last spring listed as a third-team split end on the final Husker depth chart.

Though the Husker defensive system will be new to Hicks, the position won't be. Hicks played safety for Coach Walt Thompson at Kansas City Southeast High School. During his senior season, Hicks intercepted 10 passes from his defensive position, and caught 38 passes for 560 yards from his wingback slot.

"He was an excellent player in high school at defensive back," Nebraska defensive backs coach George Darlington said of Hicks. "He was very heavily recruited. He has excellent speed and good size, but it's difficult to say anything more about him (as a defensive back), because he spent the whole spring at wingback and we just haven't seen what he can do on defense."

As a freshman at Nebraska, Hicks led the Husker freshman team in receiving, snagging seven passes for 91 yards. He also returned three punts for 28 yards, another team high for the 1984 freshmen.

Hicks said he views the move to defensive back as starting all over again.

"It'll be tough at first," Hicks said of the adjustment, "but once I learn the system, everything should fall into place."

Darlington said Hicks is likely to begin next fall "fairly high" on the depth chart at defensive back, so the Husker coaches will be able to get a good look at his defensive capabilities early.

Through the adjustment of switching from offense to defense will take time, Hicks is anxious for his chance.

"I'm looking forward to it," he said. "After playing wingback, I know how a receiver thinks and what they have to do. I think that'll help me a lot on defense."

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