

Sprinter's performance frustrating

By Tony West
Staff Reporter

As Mark Graham quit running and walked the last 10 meters of the 400-meter run at Ed Weir Track on Saturday, it was obvious something was wrong with the sophomore All-American.

He finished last in the event with a time of 52.55.

And Cornhusker coach Gary Pepin wasn't pleased with how Graham handled the situation.

"It shouldn't be done," Pepin said. "You always teach the athlete to run through every event."

Graham agreed that he didn't handle the race appropriately.

"One of the things I have to learn, not only as an athlete but also as a person, is to handle my frustration better," he said.

And in this past year, Graham — who competed in the 1992 Olympics for Canada — has had to deal with a lot of frustration.

Last season, as a true freshman, Graham finished seventh in the 400-meter run at the NCAA Indoor Championships and was a member of the eighth-place 1600-meter relay team.

Graham also was a member of Canada's 1600-meter relay team in the Commonwealth Games, where he pulled up short with a hamstring injury last summer.

But Graham was still considered one of the best in the world in the 400-meter run with his top time of 46.16. He was also named Nebraska's most outstanding newcomer.

But this past indoor season, Graham's best 400-meter time was nearly three seconds slower than last year. And he didn't qualify for the NCAA Championships meet.

In this outdoor season, so far, his best 400-meter run time has been 49.94 in the first meet at North Carolina on April 1.

"With those results, you can't help to think that something that you love to do is slipping away," Graham said. "I'm just lacking the confidence right now."

Nebraska assistant coach Steve Rainbolt, who works with the sprinters, said that the hamstring injury may be one of Graham's problems this year.

Rainbolt said the coaches were being cautious in training Graham because of the hamstring. But now Rainbolt realizes that caution may not have been the best tactic.

"The bottom line is that we haven't got him ready," Rainbolt said. "We needed to train him harder."

Graham said he was just going to have to keep working hard and hope for the best.

"I just have to get over the mental fear of competing again," he said.

Reaching out



Travis Heying/DN

Former Nebraska linebacker Trev Alberts shows his appreciation of his role model Charles Barkley while speaking to students at the "School is Cool" Jam Monday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Alberts accepts, uses role-model status

By Todd Walkenhorst
Staff Reporter

Trev Alberts saw a disturbing trend when he returned to his former high school recently.

When Alberts — a former Nebraska All-American who now plays for the Indianapolis Colts — visited Cedar Falls Northern University High School, he said some of the 56 students had green hair and earrings in strange places.

And Alberts understands what students go through, he said.

"Kids nowadays have it really tough," Alberts said. "It's strange; our society is pretty nuts."

When Alberts was in high school, it was different, he said.

"When I went there, there just wasn't the problem with drugs," he said. "The kids are into some weird things."

I've been blessed in so many ways. Coach Osborne gave a little kid out of Iowa a chance to come and play football.

TREV ALBERTS

Former Nebraska linebacker

"There were kids the size of me that were not interested in playing football or any sports."

But Alberts was interested in playing football, and that interest led him to being named a Butkus Award winner at Nebraska in 1993. That interest also led to Alberts being drafted into the National Football League.

After his first season with the Colts, Alberts was back in Lincoln reaching out to

children by speaking at the fourth annual School is Cool Jam at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on Monday morning.

"When I played football," Alberts said, "I didn't want to play unless I was having fun. School is fun. I never took it as a job."

Alberts said he realized the success he had achieved in both football and school was the result of good fortune and luck.

See ALBERTS on 8

Loss for Husker baseball could be trouble for coach

The Nebraska baseball team was on the edge of collapse this weekend in Stillwater, Okla.

The Huskers were humiliated in the first two games of the three-game series with No. 1 Oklahoma State.

Nebraska hitters were shut out for just the second time this season in the first game, managing just three hits while losing 9-0.

In the second game, it looked like the Huskers would rebound, scoring four runs in the first inning.

Then the nightmare began.

Cody Winget walked five, allowed five hits and gave up 11 runs in 1 2/3 innings. Gus Castro relieved Winget but walked five more and allowed nine hits and 12 runs in 1 2/3 innings.

The walk-fest and slug-fest continued for the Cowboys for more than four hours until it ended at 37-18.

The Huskers spent a day in hell. Before the Oklahoma State series, the Huskers thought they

were improving. They thought they were coming together. They thought they were going to challenge the Cowboys.

Instead, the Huskers tottered on the brink of collapse.

The Huskers stumbled into the final game of the series looking for hope, but the Cowboys continued to tee off on the Nebraska pitching staff.

In the first inning, Oklahoma State scored five runs off starter Bob Courter.

The collapse appeared complete. The Huskers would give up and be swept under the Big Eight rug by the Cowboys.

But the Huskers came back.

They rallied with three runs in the third inning. Then a single run in the fifth gave the Huskers a 7-6 lead in the seventh.

The Huskers finished off the Cowboys with four runs in the eighth inning to seal an 11-7 win.

The Huskers absolutely needed a win, and they got one.



Jeff Griesch

Without a win, Nebraska would have been in disarray entering the series with intrastate rival Creighton.

The Bluejays are 22-9 and in first place in the Missouri Valley Conference with a 12-2 record. They are building their best season since going to the College World Series in 1991.

More than a MVC championship, an NCAA Regional bid, and maybe even a CWS berth, the Bluejays and their fans in Omaha want to beat John Sanders and Nebraska.

The past week, the Omaha World-Herald's "Voice from the Grandstand" has been filled with letters criticizing John Sanders for not recruiting enough Omaha players, for poor coaching at third base and for playing favorites with his son, Craig.

If Nebraska entered the Creighton series flat, the Bluejays would have pounced. Two losses to Creighton would mean a flood of anti-Nebraska, anti-John Sanders letters in Omaha.

Sanders tries not to let the criticism bother him, but since Nebraska reported violations at Creighton two seasons ago, the scrutiny has been continuous.

Creighton supporters called Sanders jealous.

They said he was a whining wanna-be.

They said he was a loser.

Like Nebraska's day in Stillwater Saturday, Sanders' coaching life during the past two years has been bordering on a

personal hell.

He tries to be strong, but he is only human, especially when the criticism starts to involve his family.

The win against the top-ranked Cowboys gave Sanders a chance to forget the critics. It also gave the Huskers confidence before playing the Bluejays in Omaha today.

The only way for Sanders to silence and forget the critics for another year is to sweep Creighton.

A split of the two-game set will allow the fires of criticisms to keep burning.

If the games are rained out, the baseball fans in Omaha will say it is Sanders' fault.

If Nebraska gets swept, the letters will flow and the flames in Sanders' hell will grow. Fans in Omaha will not only call Sanders names, they will call for his job.

Griesch is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and columnist.