

Daily Nebraskan Sports

James Pearce, sports editor

Huskerlan Gives No Support

The following article was written by Larry Eckhoff, assistant to Don Bryant, Nebraska Sports Information Director.

It is an open letter to the students of the University of Nebraska. Let us all read it with an open mind.

The day was appropriately dreary. The fog was so thick coming in to Lincoln that a some wondered if we'd land at all.

But those with the basketball party were wondering something else. Would there be anyone at the airport to greet the team? The question was already answered in their minds. "Who would think of meeting the team after Nebraska got trounced by 37 points?" Well, maybe...

"Maybe" never came. It never has.

The trip to Lawrence started with the same treatment. As the Big Red from Nebraska left the Coliseum Friday afternoon not a soul was there to wish the Big Eight leaders well. Oh yes, there were three members of Tassels who showed up a little earlier. They distributed NU feathers to the team with a message — "Tar and feather the Jayhawks." It was a comical. Some one cracked that the school must really be in financial trouble.

At the Kansas City airport a photographer from the Kansas City Star met the Huskers and their coach. "Gee, maybe we are a little important," I thought as Grant Simmons and Willie Campbell posed with Coach Clipper for the photographer.

The Huskers traveled the 30-odd miles to Lawrence in four burgundy LTD Fords, two with black vinyl tops, two with white vinyl tops. "My god, this is really classy," I said as we neared Lawrence, "but it should be for the nation's Number 8 team."

Once in Lawrence one could feel the excitement that this game generated since Nebraska beat Kansas on Jan. 18, to take the conference lead. Every fraternity house and sorority house on campus had a display. It was almost like Homecoming. Phi Kappa Theta, the national Catholic fraternity, had a large "Give 'Em Hell, Hawks" plastered across the side of the house.

All of the dorms had slogans in the windows. Like Abel Hall used to do. Nebraska was hung in effigy in front of the Administration Building, but KU has trees on the campus which helped matters.

A letter addressed to the NU basketball team was sent to the Holiday Inn. In it was a clipping from the local news paper showing KU coach Ted Owens smashing a car labeled Nebraska. A P. S. was added. "Oh yeah, we totaled the car."

The school newspaper contained ten pages of ads, from local business firms and living units, congratulating the Jayhawks and wishing them well.

And then the game... Woods aren't needed to describe what took place in Allen Fieldhouse on Saturday night. Most Nebraskans saw what happened. Or did they?

You caught the feeling of the players. Though it was a resounding defeat, at no time did their belief in Coach Clipper, or the team's potential fade.

As crushing as this defeat was you felt that this team could come back and beat the best in the country. That's the type of team it has been all along, starting with last season's triumph over Michigan.

You had the feeling that this group would go on to win their remaining games and then bring themselves real honor by defeating Kansas in a play-off, if such a thing developed.

But as you left the locker room, and walked into the crisp Kansas night air, filled with Jayhawks the sickening feeling that the team was doing it alone hit you again, and you knew this was the thing that hurt Nebraska most.

Saturday night the Hawks were better than Nebraska. The Huskers weren't happy with their playing. But most of the post game talk concerned the Big Eight race.

And if there's a playoff? "We can do it," said a team member, meaning that NU can beat Kansas again.

But there is no support in Huskerland, at least from the students. No cheerleaders could find the time to make the Big Game. No good luck telegrams to wish the Huskers well were sent. No one to meet the team when it comes home could be found.

But the Coliseum was still there, waiting for the Huskers to prepare for the game with K-State. The Huskers practiced the minute they left the bus.

The bleachers weren't up yet. The Coliseum was quiet. What a change from the packed Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence. Oh well, it's home.

The Sporting Life

By James Pearce

As you enter Lawrence, Kansas from the west on the Kansas Turnpike you see a sign that says "University of Kansas—Next Exit." On top of that green highway sign that greets any traveler to any exit there is a big Jayhawk striding out toward the open fields beyond the turnpike. Following him are four smaller Jayhawks, holding their heads just as high, and striding just as big.

Ever-present Jayhawk

When you get to the campus, the first thing that impresses you is the stone Jayhawk near the Kansas Union overlooking the football stadium and in the shadow of beautiful Memorial Campanile.

As you walk through the campus that Jayhawk follows you very step of the way.

You see him on paper cups in the Union, on trash barrels around the grounds, on carpets, printed on floors, in the windows of cars, dorms, and fraternity houses—yes, that's right, fraternity houses, too.

There is no doubt about the feeling students at Kansas have toward their University.

All Out To Smash Nebraska

Climaxing a week long drive to "Smash Nebraska" those students came to Allen Fieldhouse Saturday night and raised its towering roof another twenty feet with their enthusiasm.

And there was that Jayhawk leading them. Strutting around in the middle of the court, he carried a sign saying "Smash Nebraska".

When the game started, and the spirit symbol had to leave the floor, there was something to take his place.

Every time Kansas scored the big red eye of the Jayhawk painted on all four sides of the overhanging scoreboard blinked with joy, and the crowd roared its approval.

Kansas had a team of 17,000 playing Nebraska Saturday night.

There was something marvelous about the display of unity in spirit going on all around the arena.

Kansas was a complete team. Every Jayhawk was dedicated to his team, win or lose.

For a little while this year, the disappointment of losing to Nebraska earlier might have blurred their spirit, but the Jayhawks never lost sight of their team.

And Saturday night 17,000 Jayhawk dreams came true.

Nebraska Alone

What about Nebraska? The Nebraska basketball team lost alone.

Sure tickets were hard to get hold of, with only twenty-five allotted to the University. But you have to think that the cheerleaders and maybe even the band could have made the trip. But they didn't.

There were only a few scattered Nebraskans trying to hold back the tidal wave of arms and yell's being thrust at them, and damn few of those few Nebraskans were students.

But there was television coverage back in Huskerland.

But how many students had time for that in the middle of Saturday night when the basketball team was out of town?

No Time?

After all, with parties and activations going on all up and down the Hollow Line, and with three good movies in town all at once, and the Christy Minstrels strumming and humming at good old Pershing who the hell had time to sit down in front of a box in a comfortable living room and watch a basketball game?

If some of those people spilling out their Hollow Line, or some of those rolling in the aisles at the "Hallelujah Trail" or some of those clapping along with the Christies could have walked into the Husker dressing room after the game I'm sure the toughest of them could not have faced the scene before them.

How Do You Explain It?

There was captain Grant Simmons sitting on the training table, kicking his legs, head down, hands folded, dejectedly trying put the puzzle of the proceeding two hours together.

Nate Branch moved from spot to spot sipping a coke saying nothing, pondering much.

As I approached Jim Damm he threw a towel gingerly in the air, smiled, shook his head, then sagged on the bench.

And so it went throughout the room. Ron Simmons alone with his thoughts, Coley Webb wanting another chance at the Jayhawks...

Cipriano Was With The Team

In the midst of all this was Coach Joe Cipriano. The coach made his way around to each player, shaking their hand and offering his smile and words of inspiration.

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