

# Neibauer gets big opportunity

by RANDY YORK  
Assistant Sports Editor

Gary Neibauer is getting his biggest test and best opportunity as a major league baseball pitcher this spring.

"I've got a good chance to work into a starting job," says ex-Nebraska hurler Neibauer, who's beginning his second season as a full-time Atlanta Brave.

Neibauer's chance developed even more this week when ace Atlanta pitcher Ron Reed, who won 18 games last season, broke his right collarbone in spring training at West Palm Beach, Fla.

"I'M OFF to a good start," Neibauer noted after besting the Houston Astros, 2-1 Monday in an impressive relief role. "The fifth starter in the regular pitching rotation is between Milt Pappas and me now."

Knuckleballer Phil Niekro, Neibauer's roommate George Stone, Pat Jarvis and Jim Nash are the Braves' top four pitchers, who are aiming for a repeat National League Western division crown.

"It's a lot easier for me this year," Neibauer offered. "This is only my second spring training, but I'm in more of a routine. I was just trying to get my feet wet last year as a relief pitcher, but now that I've got a good shot at being a starter, things are a lot different."

Southpaw Larry Jaster, acquired in a trade from the Montreal Expos since last season, is one of the reasons why Neibauer is in a better position.

"I think we're just going to use him in the bull-pen this year," Neibauer explained, "and he's really going to help our relief pitching. He's taking some of the pressure off the rest of us."

NEIBAUEER SAYS experience in the South Dakota Basin League between his sophomore and junior college seasons was instrumental in his vault to the big leagues.

"There's no better organization than the Basin League for college players as far as I'm concerned," says Neibauer, who signed his pro contract in the special phase of the free agent draft after his junior season at Nebraska.

"The Braves paid for me to finish college the next year," Neibauer adds, "and so I helped Tony (Sharpe) with the Nebraska team. Then I was in the Army until June."

Neibauer, who says he's developed more breaking pitches this season, also

acquired something else last month. His wife Nancy had her first baby, Gary Gregg, and is living in Gary's hometown Scottsbluff while he finishes spring training.

"BOY, THERE'S been a lot happening since last year," Neibauer said. "I remember my first major league game I pitched in last April. Jarvis was pitching against Cincinnati, and I relieved."

"And I really got bombed," he continued. "I was so scared I didn't know what a baseball was. I forgot I was even on a mound. At least I didn't recognize it."

"But Jarvis didn't exactly leave me with the bases clean either," Gary added. "He left me in a real jam. He told me after the game that he poured the gasoline on the mound, and I just lit it."

Neibauer's adjusted to the majors now, but his initial fear seemed justified.

"I REMEMBER when I used to collect baseball cards when I was a little kid in Billings, Mont.," Gary recalled. "That must have been in about 1954. I always wanted to get Hank Aaron and Ernie Banks. Now Aaron's my teammate, and I don't really cherish getting Banks out."

Neibauer, whose club finished ahead of San Francisco, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Houston and San Diego in the Western division last year, claims his biggest adjustment concerned psychological pressure.

"It's a lot different when you're throwing against a Mays, a McCovey or a Rose," Gary acknowledged. "I think McCovey is the toughest hitter to throw against because of his tremendous scoring potential."

CINCINNATI IS the National League team to beat this season, not the magical Mets, Neibauer believes.

"All the magazines we've seen, of course, say the Mets will repeat," Neibauer noted, "but I think Cincinnati's the real team to beat."

"Their pitching absolutely folded last year," Gary added. "There's absolutely no question about that, but they have a lot better balance now, and with the best hitting in the majors, they'll be tough."

But Neibauer predicts the Braves again will be involved in the NL scramble. "We're stronger than we were last year," he says, "and we're anxious to get back at the Mets. They cost us a lot of money last year, about \$16,000 apiece."

# Soph wrestler optimistic NU's George eyes NCAA

by STEVE SINCLAIR  
Assistant Sports Editor

For a wrestler with national championship capabilities, Nebraska's Joe George had an unusual introduction to the sport.

WHEN GEORGE was a high school freshman he bypassed football and was looking for a way to occupy his time in the winter. "Another kid said he would go out for wrestling if I did," George recalled. "He dropped out, and I stuck with it."

The 158-pounder has made a lot of progress since his freshman year. He was a two-time state champion at Omaha Creighton Prep with a 22-2 record in his junior year and a 24-0 mark as a senior.

George climaxed his sophomore year at Nebraska with a third place finish in the Big Eight meet last week.

"I thought I did pretty well in the Big Eight," he said, "although I thought I could have gotten into the finals."

"THE HUSKER wrestler was defeated by the eventual champion, Dennis Brand of Oklahoma in the semifinals. George explained that his match with Brand was tied at 4-4 and it boiled down to who would make the first move. "I was ready to move, and he surprised me. I was probably being too cautious."

George would like another shot at the Sooner senior and he could get the chance at the NCAA wrestling championships at Northwestern University March 26-28.

George believes he will have a chance for the individual title if he could get by Brand and Dave Martin of Iowa State. Martin finished second in this year's Big Eight meet and was second in last year's NCAA meet.

THE SOPHOMORE sees the Huskers finishing in the top 10 of the NCAA. "We're taking our whole team, and if everybody can win at least one match, and a couple of us win a few more, we could score 15 to 20 points and be sure to finish in the top 10," George theorized.

Although he hasn't been as successful in college record-wise, George has enjoyed wrestling at Nebraska more than he did in high school. "The competition obviously isn't as tough in high school," he said.

To compete on the college level George said he has had to learn to be more cautious, and to strive for more endurance.

"I was wining a lot of meets last year in the third period," he said, "but I couldn't hold on."

George said he has improved his stand up wrestling considerably, but hopes for more improvement.

"IT IS IMPORTANT to keep your legs moving," he said. "Most people think of wrestlers being strong, but you also need quickness."

"I have to develop more confidence in my moves to get more smoothness and speed,"

George said. "I also have to work on my pinning combinations. I used to pin about half my opponents in high school, but I've only had a few pins in college."

George admits that wrestling workouts are a challenge. "IT'S HARD to get ready for practice every day, but when the meets come it's all worth it," he said.

"You can't blame anything on the coaches, or make any excuses. It's just you and the other guy."



George

## NU gymnasts in Big Eight

The Nebraska gymnastics team will compete in the Big Eight gymnastics championships Friday and Saturday at Kansas State University.

The Huskers are led by Hoppy Batten, who is entered in floor exercise, rings, vaulting, parallel bars, high bar and all-around.

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