

nebraskan sports

Size no worry to UNL cager Willis

By Jim Hunt

Basketball is referred to as a big person's game, but UNL basketball guard Steve Willis said size doesn't make much difference.

"You can do just about anything you want, if you work at it hard enough," said the 5 ft. 10 in. guard.

In Willis's case, Husker head coach Joe Cipriano agrees.

"Steve's speed and quickness has made up for his size," Cipriano said.

Willis begins his second season at UNL after transferring from North Idaho Junior College. While at North Idaho he was twice named to Junior College All American teams.

In his first season at UNL, Willis averaged 10.3 points a game, 8.1 in Big 8 play and became the second junior college transfer to move directly into a starting position during Cipriano's 12 years at UNL. The other transfer that started was Bob Antlov who came to UNL from Columbia Junior College, Richland, Wash. in 1972.

"There is a big adjustment to make from junior college to major college basketball," Cipriano said.

Disappointed teammates

Willis said he thought he could have played major college basketball right out of high school, and disappointed some of his teammates when he went to a small junior college.

"I think playing junior college ball was a good experience for me," said the Indianapolis native. "I got to play a lot more games as a freshman against older players than most freshman that go to a major college."

Defense, execution, ball control, leadership and consistency are areas of his game that need work, Willis said.

"Steve must work on consistency," Cipriano said. "He played better for us on the road than he did at home last year."

This is because most of North Idaho's games were played on the road, Willis said.

Foul trouble

Although Willis didn't foul out of any ball games last season, he experienced early foul trouble in several games because he usually had to cover the quickest guard on the opponent's team, Cipriano said.

"There is a lot of competition in the Big 8," Willis said. "Each team knows the other's personnel and so you are always trying to change something to fool your opponents, and often this is not easy."

"The Big 8 has some very good, quick guards," he said. "Without the 30-second clock, there should be a difference in execution and quickness. It should be good for us."

"I think UNL has the ability to battle for the Big 8 title this year," he added.

Willis had his highest scoring game with 27 apoints against Kansas in the Big 8 Tournament last year.



Photo courtesy UNL

Steve Willis is a competitive Big 8 guard despite his size.

Husker home crowds breaking NCAA marks

By Susie Reitz

Hundreds of thousands of fans have given Nebraska football teams 80 straight sellout home football games, and this Saturday's contest with Iowa State will be number 81, UNL ticket manager Jim Pittenger said.

The sellout record is the longest in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) records, according to the NCAA statistics bureau.

The 76,000-plus fans attending every home game make Memorial Stadium Nebraska's third largest city on football Saturdays, he said.

A 76,509 attendance mark at the Colorado game was the highest total this year, Pittenger said.

"If Colorado would have brought a full band with them, it would have been an all-time record," Pittenger added.

Instead, the Colorado game was sixth in the all-time record list, which is headed by the 1974 Oklahoma-Nebraska game with 76,636.

No actual head count

"All of the 'official' attendance figures are guesstimates," Pittenger said. "There is no way to actually take a head count so we have to estimate from experience. If someone says they don't agree with our official estimates, I say they can count the crowd themselves."

Attendance this year has averaged 76,206 for the six home games, although the actual number of public tickets sold for

each game is 72,771, Pittenger said.

Allowance is made for 600 concession workers, 400 working press members, 600 Boy Scout ushers, 100 with team passes, 100 home team players, managers and coaches, and 74 visiting players, managers and coaches.

The figures allow for bleachers seating about 300 high school coaches, players and recruiters, Pittenger said.

Ball chasers

"Guesstimates" also include bands, police, pompon squads, visiting pep clubs, wheelchair spectators and a dozen youngsters hired to chase balls after field goal and extra point kicks, Pittenger said.

"I usually allow about 500 for the kids who sneak in and watch the game from behind the fence in the end zones," Pittenger said. The 150 police on duty are not enough to control the flow of sneakers, he said.

Lowest attendance this year was at the Texas Christian University game with 75,931. Other attendance figures are Louisiana State University, 76,259; Indiana, 76,002; Miami, Fla., 76,231; Kansas University, 76,285.

All away games this year have not been sellouts, although Nebraska fans did give Kansas State their first 41,000 sellout crowd of the season last Saturday. The Oklahoma State (OSU) game in Stillwater had some empty seats because OSU sent Nebraska 1,000 extra tickets and not all were sold, Pittenger said.

Grid playoffs end Friday

Six high school football champions will be crowned Friday when the first Nebraska state high school playoffs conclude.

Two games, Lincoln Pius X vs. Waverly and Elgin vs. Adams, match unbeaten, untied teams. Nelson and Lawrence, the Class D finalists, played earlier this season and Nelson won 18-14.

State Championship games are:

- Class A—Omaha Westside (9-1) vs. Lincoln East (9-0-2) at UNO, 7:30 p.m.
- Class B—Waverly (10-0) vs. Lincoln Pius (9-0) at Lincoln Seacrest Field, 7:30 p.m.
- Class C-1—Plainview (10-0) vs. Wahoo Neumann (9-1) at Fremont, 1:30 p.m.
- Class C-2—Grant (9-1) vs. Scribner (9-1) at Grant, 1:30 p.m.
- Class D—Nelson (9-0-2) vs. Lawrence (9-1) at Superior, 1:30 p.m.
- Eight-Man—Elgin (10-0) vs. Adams (10-0) at Elgin, 1:30 p.m.

If the finals remain on a statistical par with the semifinals last Friday, the games should be high scoring and not very close.

The average winning score from last week's 12 semifinal games was 29.3 points. Losers averaged 13 points for an average winning margin of 16.25 points.

Of course, that winning margin should fall when the best two teams in each class meet Friday.

The highest score was registered by Nelson, a 48-14 winner over Homer. Lincoln Pius's 35 point margin over Hartington Central Catholic was the most in all classes. Five games were won by seven or fewer points.

Team speed compensates for player's lack of height

Although UNL women basketball players lack height (averaging 5 ft. 7 in.), they make up for it in quickness, according to George Nicodemus, head coach.

"People expect a lot from the team," Nicodemus said, "but we're young—14 freshmen out of 24 players out for the team."

There are no seniors on the roster yet, Nicodemus said, but Jan Zink, a senior on basketball scholarship is playing volleyball and will play basketball after that season.

UNL's first game is Saturday against Grandview College in Des Moines, Iowa. Nicodemus said Grandview had 11 of Iowa's top 20 women basketball players last season, but only one member of that team returns.

"They'll be good, though," he said. "They offer 12 full-ride scholarships, so they attract a lot of talent."

Nicodemus said he plans to take a dozen players to Des Moines.

Scholarship athletes Sherry Brydle Brink, Jan Crouch, Kathy Foley, Rhonda Rhodes and Darcy Williamson will make the trip. Brink (5 ft. 8 in.) and Rhodes (5 ft. 4 in.) are sophomores from Lincoln. Crouch, (the tallest player at 5 ft. 11 in.),

Foley (5 ft. 3 in.), and Williamson (5 ft. 9 in.) are freshmen.

Deb Lee (5 ft. 9 in.), a freshman from Omaha, has been awarded the scholarship Nicodemus reserved for a walk-on. Kathy Hawkins, a 5 ft. 6 in. junior, is on a tennis scholarship.

Lee and Hawkins are on the traveling squad along with sophomores Liz Lee (5 ft. 6 in.), Marta Prichard (5 ft. 6 in.), and Christy Oswald (5 ft. 3 in.).

Two other travelling players will be selected on practice performance, Nicodemus said Tuesday.

The team has been spending about 70 per cent of practice time concentrating on the 1-2-3 zone defense, Nicodemus said.

"We may switch to man to man because we don't have much height," he said.

In a practice scrimmage Tuesday, Nicodemus said, he was disappointed with shooting.

"They're going to have to shoot better than they did in practice to win," he said.

In a scrimmage two weeks ago against former John F. Kennedy (JFK) college players, the UNL team played "fairly well," Nicodemus said. The JFK team, coached by Nicodemus, was national champion two years ago.



Photo by Ted Kirk

Jan Crouch, tallest player on the women's basketball team, takes a shot during practice Wednesday.