

Nicodemus boosters continue rehiring campaign

By Rob Barney

The reason George Nicodemus was fired as UNL women's basketball coach last summer still is being pondered by staunch Nicodemus supporters.

Peter Vavak attended John F. Kennedy College in Wahoo when Nicodemus was there. He now is leading the bandwagon to rehire Nicodemus.

"I wish to heck to raise some interest in the situation," Vavak said. "There's a guy sitting in Malmo (where Nicodemus lives) that can do the job."

"He came to Nebraska with the program just starting, and went 21-16 last year, playing such national powers as UCLA and Nevada-Las Vegas. He did the job with the girls," Vavak said.

Vavak feels Nicodemus was fired for no reason.

"Jay Davis (UNL women's Athletic Director) had her own reasons. I think it's sickening," he said.

"Nic can get across to the girls. He's one helluva girls coach. I think he's the best at what he does. He won two national championships and had runner-up at JFK," Vavak continued.

Davis, who now is looking for a new women's basketball coach, said she would not change her decision about Nicodemus.

Davis gave five reasons last fall for relieving Nicodemus. She said Nicodemus was disorganized and players complained about not playing enough. Davis also said Nicodemus was hard to locate and he did not submit his travel times for away games soon enough. Nebraska high school coaches would not send their players to UNL because Nicodemus was coach, Davis said.

Vavak said Nicodemus had a verbal agreement with Lynette Woodard, a high school all-American who is now attending Kansas.

"Nic forecasted a national championship," Vavak said. "With her and the talent they had returning he could have done it."

"I have nothing against Marcia Walker (who resigned as women's basketball coach Jan. 17)," Vavak said. "It's the administration. I don't know how they can get rid of a coach with national recognition that was going to bring national recognition to the program."

"So they (the administration) go and settle on a second-rate coach. I'm not saying Marcia Walker is second-rate, but she came from a small college (Dakota Wesleyan in Mitchell, South Dakota) to a division-one school."

Cagers face toughest test

Tonight is the night.

An expected sellout crowd of more than 15,000 fans will see whether Nebraska basketball coach Joe Cipriano and his 14-3 club truly are a "14-3" team. Playing the United Press International's sixth-rated team, the University of Kansas Jayhawks will be the acid test—a test that could make or break UNL's Big 8 Championship hopes.

But even with a capacity crowd, a national power and championship hopes present tonight in the Sports Complex, the contest may be played with a sour note.

jim kay / mike mccarthy

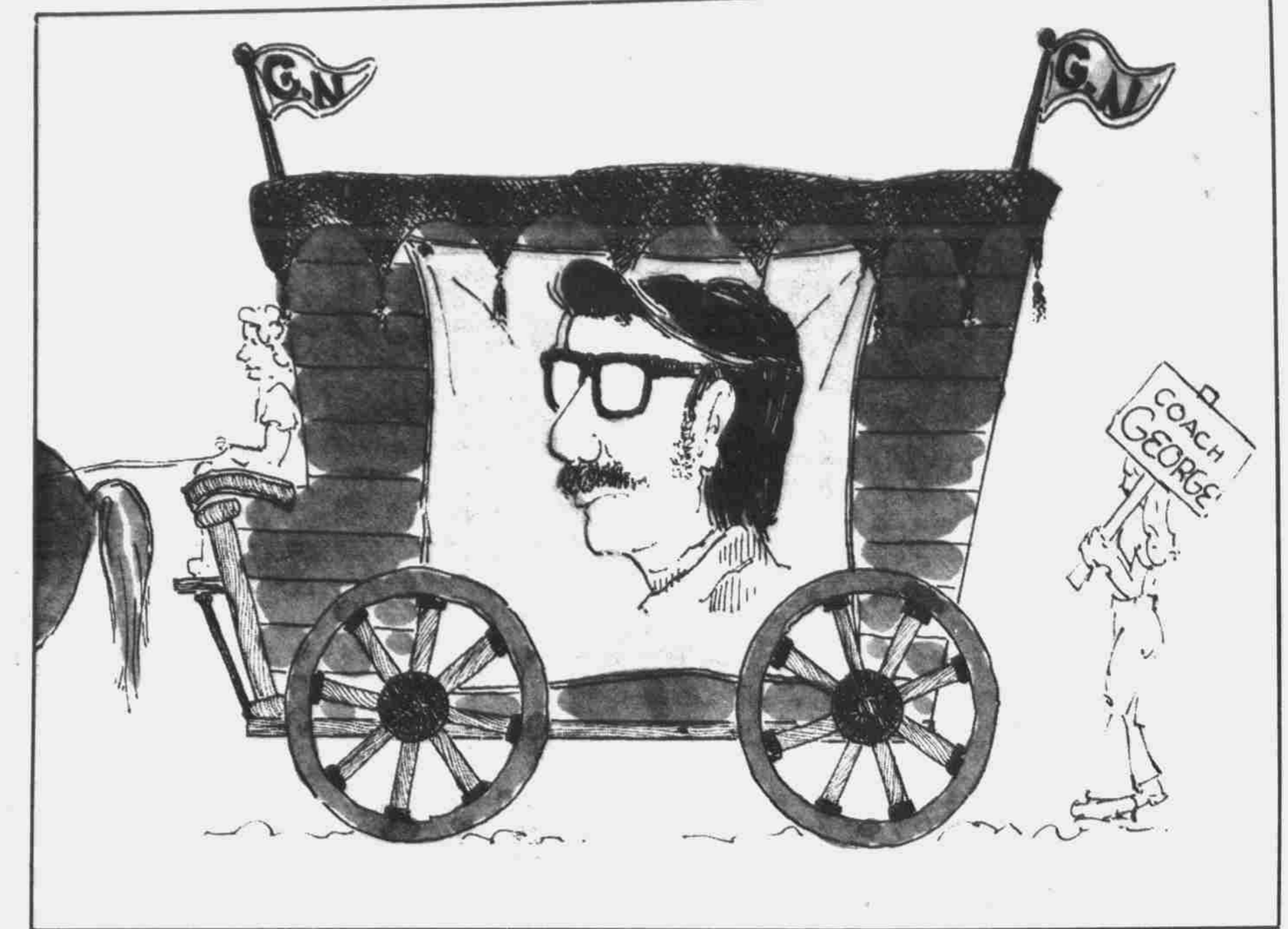
Brian Banks is recovering from the flu. So is Mike Naderer. Banks was released from the hospital Tuesday and Naderer left Monday. Both players are small, but their presence has been paramount in the team's success.

"It's hard to establish a new guard combination this late in the season," Iba said Tuesday. "Banks is our leader."

Reserves Bob Moore and Gerard Myrthil may have to form that new combination if the Huskers are to win. Moore likes to launch 25-foot bombs from nowhere and Myrthil likes to lope around, then burst through the lane for a layup.

If Moore can "hit the bombs" and if Myrthil can lope the Jayhawk defense to sleep and then weave for a couple of lay-ins, Nebraska has a chance.

But Banks and Naderer are question marks. Even Iba doesn't know whether they will play, or if they do, how much



Vavak has not talked to any of the current team members about Nicodemus' situation or the team's present situation, but he says he hears the team is unhappy.

"A friend of mine talked to Mrs. Crouch (mother of forward Jan) and she said the team is not happy," UNL student Dan Novak said.

"It's understandable. What can they do? They're losing to the same teams they beat last year. It's the administration's fault," he said.

Vavak does not know if he and Novak can help get back the job for Nicodemus. He said he just wants to make the situation known to UNL students.

"Nic still contends the job is his," Vavak said. "He said he was given six days notice when university by-laws say 90 days."

"For Nebraska's sake I hope Nic gets rehired. He can do the job," he said.

they will play.

"I don't have any idea what we're going to do," said Iba, with some frustration. "We didn't even have 10 players at practice yesterday (Monday). When I go to practice today, I hope to see some friendly faces."

Kansas Coach Ted Owens said UNL's illness problems will not change his game plan.

"We like to press and we like to run when we can," he said. "We're not protecting anything by being ranked."

Owens and Cipriano have been known to stage some classic, verbal encounters during UNL-KU games. But the off-court contest Owens insists, is precipitated by mutual respect and competition.

"Joe's a great guy," Owens stated. "He's done an excellent job with the people he has, and I enjoy coaching against him."

"I think Ted and Joe get along off the floor," Iba said. "They just compete hard when the game starts."

People with student tickets, look out at the UNL-KU game tonight. If you purchased a \$1 ticket and try to sit in the court, floor bleachers the men in red and white stripes will likely boot you toward the Sports Complex rafters.

In the past non-sellout games, \$1 ticket holders were allowed in the bleachers.

But Helen Ruth Wagner, UNL ticket manager, said those bleacher seats are reserved for students with season tickets. About 2,000 students hold season passes, she said.

Wagner added that if the bleachers are not full by 7:15 p.m., which is unlikely, \$1 ticket holders may sit in them.

Tickets were selling fast Tuesday afternoon, but some still are available.

Wagner said tickets not sold by 4 p.m. today, will go on sale before the game.

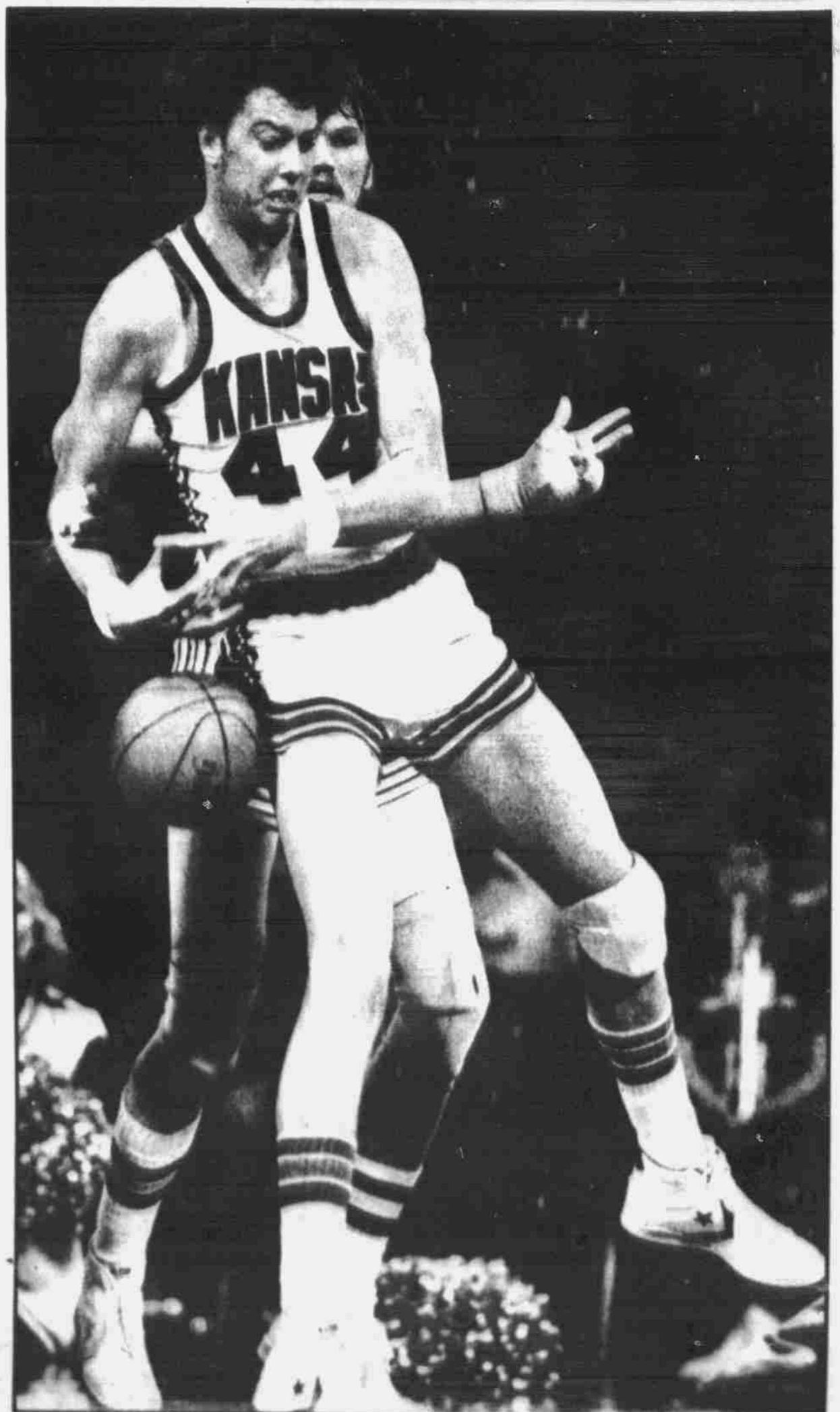


Photo by Ted Kirk
Kansas University's Paul Mokeski, a 7-foot one-inch, 250-pound center, is one of the many substitutes in coach Ted Owen's plays. The Jayhawks come to Lincoln tonight leading the Big 8 with a 5-0 record and are rated sixth nationally.

sports