

sports

Basketball success results from devilish encounter

We've been pondering and thinking and contemplating and pondering again.

What magical change came over Joe Cipriano's UNL basketball program this season to make them such a success? What mystic potion made people suddenly start cheering Terry Novak's every move? What magic wand was waved in order to induce such talented freshmen to come to this campus?

Then it came to us (In a flash that happened, coincidentally, during a Vincent Price movie).

jim kay / mike mccarthy

Cip has sold his soul to the devil. Poor Joe was so desperate. He wanted a winner so badly.

Visages of Adolph Rupp and Phog Allen looked down at Cip from their spots in heaven.

"No Joe. Don't do it," they moaned.

The words fell on deaf ears. Temptation reared its ugly head and Cip picked up the phone.

"Mr. Lucifer?" he asked with quivering voice.

"One moment please," came the secretary's reply. "He's on another line with Idi Amin."

There was a short pause.

"Yes, Mr. Cipriano. I've been expecting

your call."

"You have?" said Cip.

"You bet," said the devil. "For a hell of a long time."

"That's very funny," said Cip. "Then you probably also know I need a small favor."

"There is no such thing as a small favor as far as I'm concerned, Joe ol' boy. This is strictly a one-shot deal. How bad do you want it?"

"Awfully bad," said Cip. "I need a 20-game win season so bad I can taste it. Please, can you help me?"

"Oh Joe, Joe. It ain't so easy."

"It isn't."

"Oh my stars, no. Why the paper work alone is staggering. And what you're asking for Joe. I mean I've had some toughies before but geez, this is a lulu."

"It is? Well, maybe we better forget it then."

"No, no, no. We'll work something out. Can't never made it up the hill you know. But in one year. This could take till..."

"Hell freezes over."

"Hey that's pretty good, Joe. I like that. You could fit right in down here. Now let's get to the business at hand. What exactly will you need?"

"Well I could use some bench strength. Maybe some big freshmen with a couple of ball-handlers."

"Done. What else?"

"A big season for Terry Novak and Curt Hedberg. Local boys and all, you know."



"Gotcha. What else?"

"Well maybe a super season for Brian Banks. You know, injury-free, improved defense. Maybe even All-Big Eight, huh? How about that?"

"You don't pull any punches do you, Joe boy? OK, one All-Big Eight season for Banks. Anything else?"

"Yes. Keep the fans off my back, will you? I mean they're nice and Big Red and all that, but they're so damn fickle. Just pacify them for awhile, okay?"

"OK Joe, but I think I ought to warn you that you're getting in pretty deep."

"Oh, I know. But I want it so bad."

"How about the Big Eight Championship, Joe?"

"No I don't think so. People might get suspicious. Just get us the home court advantage for the opening round of the playoffs."

"Sure that's all?"

"Well, maybe a win over Kansas would be nice. I'd love to put Teddy Owens in his place."

"That's more like it."

"Uh, Mr. Lucifer?"

"Yes, Joe I know. How much is this gonna cost, right?"

"Yeah. I guess I've kind of run the gambit, huh?"

"You bet your sneakers you have. Just a minute. I'll have to get out the calculator."

"Oh, God."

"No, it's out of His hands, I'm afraid. Let's see. That comes to about, hmmm, 357 years."

"WHAT?"

"Look, Joe. I'm a busy man. If you don't like it, talk to the freaks in the halos."

"No, no. Don't hang up. I'll do it. When do I sign?"

"The papers will be on your desk in the morning."

"OK. Well thanks, I guess."

"Hey Joe, don't mention it. It's gonna be one fine season. Enjoy it while you can. Bye-bye."

"So long," said Cip as he hung up the phone. "What the hell," he thought.

"What's 357 years in the life of a basketball coach anyway? At least there won't be any referees down there."

UNL-MU match is a toss up in Big Eight tournament



Photo by Bob Pearson

UNL center Carl McPike, shown here in Tuesday night's game against Oklahoma State, was named the All-District 5 basketball team Wednesday by the U.S. Basketball Writers Association. McPike will take his 15.6 scoring average to Kansas City's Kemper Arena tonight at 7:05 against the University of Missouri in Big Eight semifinal playoff action.

UNL basketball coach Joe Cipriano will take his most victorious team against the Missouri Tigers in the semifinals of the Big Eight Conference Tournament in Kansas City, Friday.

Friday's UNL-MU matchup will be between two teams each having won one of the previous meetings this year.

UNL, 21-6 on the season and 9-5 in Big Eight play, defeated the Tigers 56-55 in Lincoln, however MU, 12-15 on the year and 4-10 in conference play, walloped UNL 74-52 in Columbia.

"The papers called Missouri's win at Iowa State an upset, but it really didn't surprise me, because when Missouri is on, they can play with anybody," Cipriano said. "They proved that by beating us by 22 points at Columbia."

"I hope that game is on our minds and that revenge is in our eyes. We know what Missouri can do to us, so we'll just have to be more ready this time than the last."

UNL's chances to make NCAA or National Invitational Tournament ride on the outcome of the Big Eight Tournament.

The only way the Tigers can advance to tournament action is to win the Big Eight Tournament. The tournament winner advances to the NCAA first-round games at Wichita, Kan.

"The postseason tourney looks good to us this year because it gives us something to shoot for at this point in the year," Tiger Coach Norm Stewart said. "Even though we haven't had a great deal of success the last few weeks, this gives us a chance to turn things around."

The Tigers have won only three of their last 10 games.

"We've discovered that we are not a team that is able to make a large number of turnovers or have a poor shot selection and still win basketball games," Stewart said.

MU is led by senior forward Clay Johnson averaging more than 16 points and seven rebounds a game.

Other Tiger starters include Brad Droy, averaging 11.8 points at forward, center Stan Ray, guards Larry Drew, averaging 12.8 points and Jeff Currie.

Continued on page 11.

sports shorts

The UNI men's gymnastics squad will face the number two-ranked team in the nation, Louisiana State University, tonight at Baton Rouge.

UNL, 3-5 for the season, has faced three top-10 teams in the nation in the last five weeks. UNI lost to number one-rated Oklahoma University and suffered losses to Iowa State University and Southern Illinois University, both rated in the top 10.

Against Southern Illinois, UNL was led by freshman all-rounder Barry Cook who scored career highs in the floor exercises and the still rings.

After the Iowa State dual, the Huskers will prepare for the Big Eight Gymnastics Championships at the Sports Complex, Saturday at 10 a.m.

The UNI women's tennis team, which defeated Kansas State University last weekend, will host Iowa University and Creighton University at the Sports Complex, Saturday at 10 a.m.

The defending Big Eight Champion,

which have a 1-0 dual record, are led by Joyce McVicker and Sue Sloboth who won their doubles match last weekend.

After being named to the United Press International All-Big Eight first team, UNI guard Brian Banks was placed on the second team of the Associated Press' All-Big Eight basketball team.

Teammate Carl McPike, who received honorable mention on the UPI team, was named to the All-District 5 basketball team selected by the U.S. sportswriters.

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is counting
on you.**