

sports

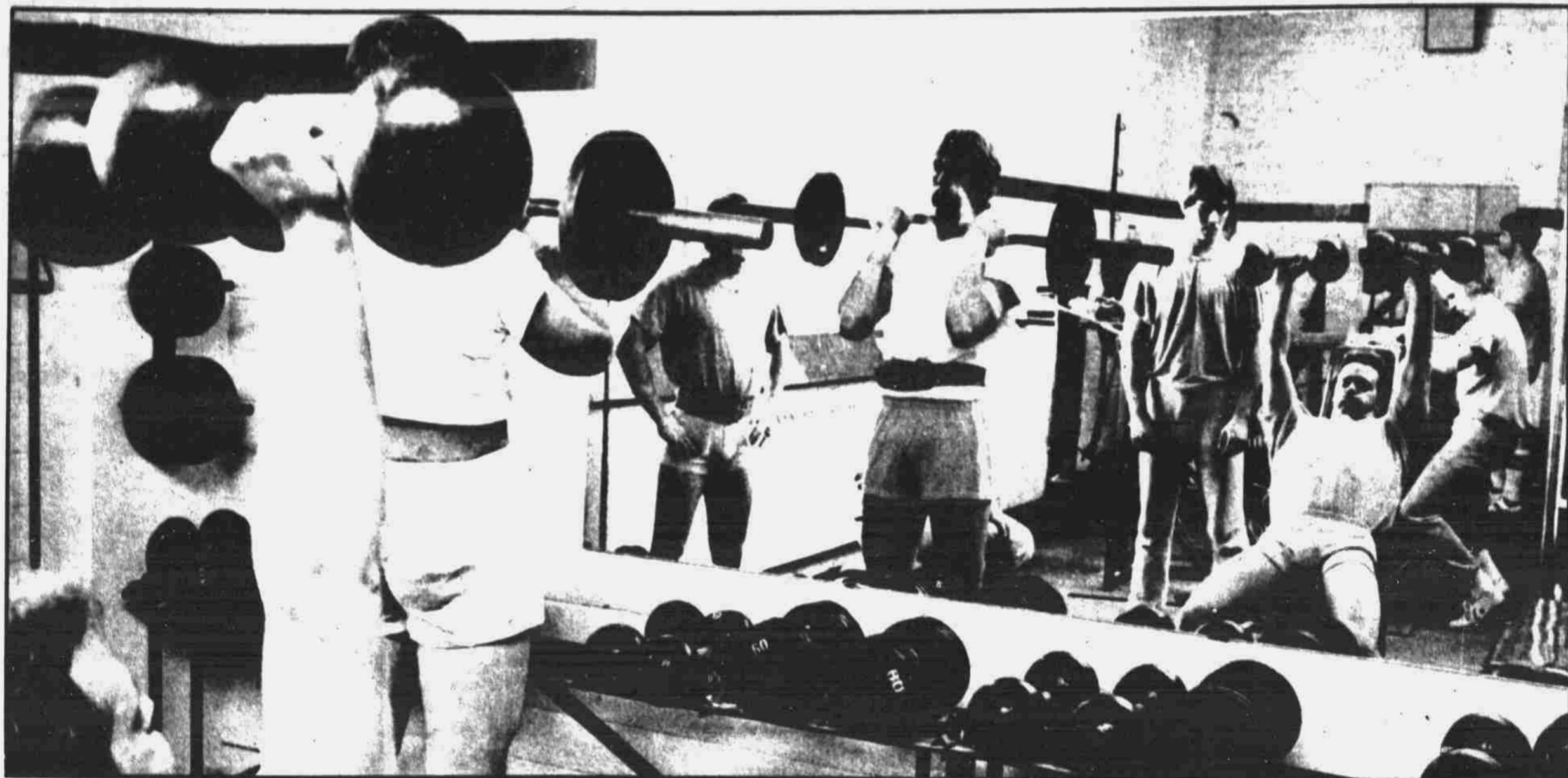


Photo by Mark Billingsley

UNL athletes strengthen themselves in NU training room

UNL trainer says athletic injury report is inflated

By Sara Martens

Sports can build an athlete's confidence and character, bring financial rewards and fame and lead to education or employment.

However, behind these obvious benefits lurks a constant threat that can cause the athlete to miss practice, a part of the season or the rest of a career.

Athletic injuries have been the subject of concern for participants and coaches for years, and a major weapon for sports critics.

How prevalent and serious are athletic injuries, and how well equipped are coaches and trainers to handle them?

Depending on the source, injuries are dangerous and frequent, or rare and not very serious.

UNL Head Trainer George Sullivan is one who believes injuries are at a minimum and those that do occur are treated in the best possible way, despite a recent Health Education and Welfare department report questioning those attitudes.

Report

As reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education; HEW has recently released a report stating that among other things, in the academic year 1975-76:

—College and high school athletes suffered more than a million injuries in sports programs.

—There were 14 sports-related fatalities and 100,000 "major" injuries.

—Football casualties were most prevalent at four-year colleges, where there were more than nine injuries for every 10 players.

These findings are based on survey results of 1,300 colleges, including Nebraska

and 2,500 high schools.

Sullivan questions some of these findings, the survey used to obtain them and the comments made by Joseph Califano, secretary of HEW when he released the report.

"That one million figure will scare some people. My initial reaction was, my God, everyone is going to die if they go out for sports," he said.

Sullivan said Nebraska's injury ratio in football is about four out of 10 rather than the nine of 10 reported by HEW.

Minor injuries

He said the report's inflated numbers may result from questions on the survey asking for things such as bruises, blisters and jammed fingers, which Sullivan said he would not consider injuries.

Sullivan classified a minor injury as one that causes an athlete to miss at least one day of practice. If an athlete is in pain but still capable of practicing he is not considered injured by Sullivan's definition.

He said the severity of an injury is a matter of what is prevalent to that sport, and that injuries are also affected by the age group of the participants and their mental outlook.

"Schools with a winning tradition sustain fewer injuries because of the attitude," he said.

Sullivan said this, along with a number of other things, has helped UNL have fewer injuries.

He cited the close attention paid by coaches to potentially dangerous drills and techniques, the off-season conditioning to prepare athletes for the season, the playing fields and equipment and the emergency care available if injuries do occur as UNL's major benefits.

Sullivan agreed that the health of UNL athletes is being bought in a way, with all of Nebraska's benefits being the reflection of the budget.

"This is the atmosphere people want. If you have the best athletes, you reward them with the best programs," he said.

The \$240,000 report quoted Califano as saying that many of the injuries "might have been prevented if schools used safer equipment, if coaches and trainers were better trained in preventing as well as promptly treating injuries, and if participants had been taught safety rules as well as the rules of the game."

In defending Nebraska's program, Sullivan replied to all of Califano's charges.

"These are pretty broad statements. Califano obviously doesn't know the requirements."

Sullivan was referring to NCAA rules governing equipment and physicals.

Rules and physicals

All helmets used by NCAA schools must be approved by the National Operating Commission on Safety in Athletics and be repaired by someone approved by the NOCSA, Sullivan said.

"They are blaming the helmet for deaths resulting from neck injuries when the helmet has nothing to do with it," he said.

The NCAA require pre-participation physicals for every athlete. These physicals are very thorough and administered by medical specialists, Sullivan said.

He also questioned Califano's knowledge of requirements for athletic trainers. All trainers are required to have a bachelor's degree and pass the national certification test, he said.

In Nebraska's case, four such trainers are employed by the athletic department. All four are also registered physical therapists. Student trainers, who are working toward national certification, are also hired as assistants, Sullivan said.

Possible benefits

Sullivan admits that although his initial reaction to the report was negative, he does see possible positive benefits stemming from the study.

"If they were doing it in a positive light, to correct problems in some places, then it is a good report, but I don't know what they are searching for with this study," he said.

Sullivan said the National Athletic Trainers Association has been pushing for solutions to many of the problems outlined in the report and that the figures presented, whether accurate or not, will scare people into improving their athletic training programs.

He said such improvement administered through the NATA would be desirable, but federal legislation calling for requirements could have a negative effect.

"I would hate to see a school punished with the withdrawal of federal funds because of the athletic program," he said, "when the whole reason for non-compliance in the first place was a lack of funds for qualified trainers."

Sports have taken over such a large part of people's lives, that they really don't think about injury until it happens to them, he said.

Then injury becomes an accepted way of life and simply one of the things an athlete must contend with.

sports shorts

The Nebraska's baseball team moved its record to 12-0 Wednesday with an 8-5 victory over Utah at Lakewood, Calif. Thursday afternoon the Huskers were scheduled to face defending national champion Southern California at Rod Dedeaux Field.

Nebraska, rained out for two straight days on the California trip, had games with Cal. State Fullerton and Chapman College cancelled Wednesday before meeting Utah late in the afternoon.

The Huskers led only 2-1 entering the fifth inning but a two-run single by junior catcher Mark Haas and a two-run double by junior shortstop Greg Schafer gave NU

insurance for the win.

Utah, which dropped to 1-11 on the season, mustered one run in the seventh and three in the ninth to close the gap.

Junior right-hander Jim McManus earned his second pitching win of the season for Nebraska.

Ray Tromba, junior right-hander was scheduled to pitch for the Huskers against USC Thursday. Nebraska was expected to leave for Hawaii Thursday night.

The Nebraska women's softball team won three consecutive games Wednesday afternoon upping its season record to 3-3 before entering the Sooner Invitational at

Norman, Okla. Thursday.

Nebraska's wins came over Grand Valley (Mich.) 3-2, Missouri-St. Louis, 4-1, and Northwestern, 6-4. Early Wednesday the women fell to Minnesota, 7-0, as Kris Hermanson collected the only hit off Minnesota pitcher Dani Orler.

Allison Bodley, Candy Hoffman and Connie Gonyea each pitched a win for UNL.

Leading the hitting attack in the win over Grand Valley were Hoffman with a home run and single and Linda McCrea with a double and single. Against Missouri-St. Louis, Hermanson and Shelley Scott had two hits apiece. Cheryl Morrow had

three singles and three runs batted in and Hoffman contributed two singles in the victory over Northwestern.

The Nebraska women's tennis team leaves Sunday for a southern trip through Oklahoma and Texas. Mark Ziegenbein's netters, with victories over K-State 8-1 and UNO 9-0, will face Oklahoma State Monday, Oral Roberts and Oklahoma Tuesday and compete in the Texas Invitational at Austin March 29 through April 1.

In Wednesday night's sweep over UNO, singles winners

Continued on page 11