

sports

Rugby coach says he hopes club can improve

By Joni Kramer

The UNL Rugby club isn't doing as well as expected, but hopes to improve, according to coach Vince Powers.

"The team has lost some close matches," Powers said. "With a current record of 4-5, the season's been pretty even so far."

The team's first competition against Kansas was pretty tough, according to Powers.

"KU had been playing together for about a month before we played them, where as it was our first game, and we had only had a couple of practices," Powers said.

As far as player experience, Powers says there is a pretty even mix.

"Sometimes it's difficult to orient people to rugby when they're used to football, but our less-experienced players are learning," Powers said.

The team matches usually consist of an A and B game. According to Senior team member Jim Powers, B matches give less experienced players more chances to compete.

"I'm really glad we're having the B games, because it shows we have a lot of interest in the sport—enough to be able to fill two teams," Powers said.

Powers, last season's captain, is injured. Another team member suffered a serious injury last week. Kevin Jensen, a second semester player, separated his shoulder.

Keeping injuries down can be a problem since the players wear no pads, Jim Powers said.

"There's a lot of contact in the sport, so the technique of correct body positioning is vital in keeping injury free," he said.

Senior Dan McGuire, his three brothers and Mike McHugh have been performing well, he said.

"Dan and his brother Tom are playing very well, and his two younger brothers, Jerry and Dave, are new, but are coming along well," Jim Powers said.

The Rugby team's next match will be Saturday at 10:30 against a Grand Island team on a field by the Lincoln Humane Society.

"We're looking for a win this weekend," Jim Powers said. "I think we should be able to beat them. Most of

our losses have come from lack of conditioning or lack of concentration, but we hope to perform well against Grand Island."

The squad, which is sponsored by the Budweiser Brewing Company, has games every Saturday during the season, and sometimes on Sundays.

"The team is grateful for the sponsorship Budweiser gives us. They help fill the gap in our expense," Jim Powers said.

This fall, the team has set its goals toward the Heart of America tournament in Kansas City Oct. 18-19, he said. The tournament includes all rugby teams in the midwest.

"There are a lot of tough teams that attend, and competition is stiff," Jim Powers said. None of the eight teams in Nebraska has ever gone very far in this tournament, but we're setting our sights toward it. We've been playing a bit inconsistently so far this season. Things haven't jelled yet. We aren't playing bad, all we have to do is put everything together," he said.

Coaches say teams ready for JV match-up

By Larry Sparks

Nebraska's freshman football team will be going for its second straight victory this Friday against the undefeated UNO junior varsity.

Maverick Coach Ron Pecoraro said he is pleased with his team's 2-0 start this season, a 20-19 win over South Dakota State and a 9-7 victory over Kansas State.

"We have played exceptionally well, in my opinion," Pecoraro said. "We had a few problems against South Dakota State, but I was real impressed with our performance against Kansas State."

Frank Solich, UNL's freshman football coach, was also pleased with his

team's 62-7 victory over Oklahoma State last week, but said he was disappointed that the Cornhuskers often found themselves in third-down and long-yardage situations.

"Even though the score indicates we had a pretty good game, we need to continue working hard to improve on our consistency," Solich said.

Both coaches said their teams should be at full strength for Friday's contest. Pecoraro said the Mavericks are healthy and have no players out with injuries. Solich said Jeff Smith, who has been out with an illness, and Ricky Green and Brian Kramer, who were out with injuries probably all would be back in practice this week.

The Cornhuskers are strong at quarterback, according to Solich.

"Turner Gill played extremely well and Craig Sundberg also performed well when we put him in," Solich said. "Naturally, we're also pleased with the defense for holding Oklahoma State to 138 total yards and minus four yards rushing."

Solich also cited the outstanding play of Brian Ripa, Scott Porter, Bret Clark and the entire offensive line as a boost to the team in its victory over the Cowboys.

Pecoraro said his team is also strong on defense and noted that UNO's strongest area is probably its linebackers.

Tim Carleson, who was the most valuable player of the Shrine Bowl, has done an "outstanding job" in the first two games, Pecoraro said.

"We need to get our offense tuned-up a little, though."

"Our junior varsity team is also our scout team, so instead of practicing on specific areas, we are usually playing against the varsity. I just hope we can play good, basic football," Pecoraro said.

Solich said UNL hasn't scouted the Mavericks, but expects UNO to be well prepared. "They are 2-0 right now so we expect them to come in here and play us pretty tough," Solich said.

Kickoff for Friday's home opener is set for 1:30 p.m. in Memorial Stadium.

Split end Brown trades track for the gridiron

By Tad Stryker

Todd Brown made his first appearance in the Nebraska athletic spotlight in high school track. Now, he's making another appearance, but this time it's in college football.

Brown, a 6-1, 167-pound sophomore from Holdrege, is the Huskers top split end this fall. He had some big shoes to fill after Tim Smith's graduation and many people wondered how a high school track standout would fare in college football.

While in high school, Brown played football and basketball. He said he knows his participation in track and field will be remembered most.

Brown was the first Nebraska high school athlete to break the 50-foot barrier in the triple jump. In the 1978 state track meet he won the triple and long jumps and the 100-yard dash.

"After I started setting records in track, they (Husker coaches) started recruiting me," Brown said. "But they first took an interest in me when I came down here as a sophomore to the football school."

Walk-on

Husker Coach Tom Osborne asked Brown to walk-on which he did. This year, he has shown he can do much more than run and jump.

Brown caught five passes for 60 yards against Penn State, including one on a sharp sideline pattern to get the Huskers out of a third and long situation. Later, he caught a quick slant pass inside the Nittany Lions' 10-yard-line, was hit and went farther.

"I've wanted to come to Nebraska all my life," Brown said. "In the back of my mind, I always thought I could play."

Brown said he felt that many Husker fans weren't expecting him to excel.

"Most people didn't think I could play football here," he said. "They thought I was too small. The people back home thought I could, but some others thought I was only a track man."

Brown was redshirted his first year. He said he profited from the experience.

'Learned a lot'

"I learned a lot that year, and learned it quickly," he said.

Last year, Brown played enough as a reserve split end to earn a varsity letter and started this year by catching two passes against Utah. He caught two touchdown passes against Iowa.

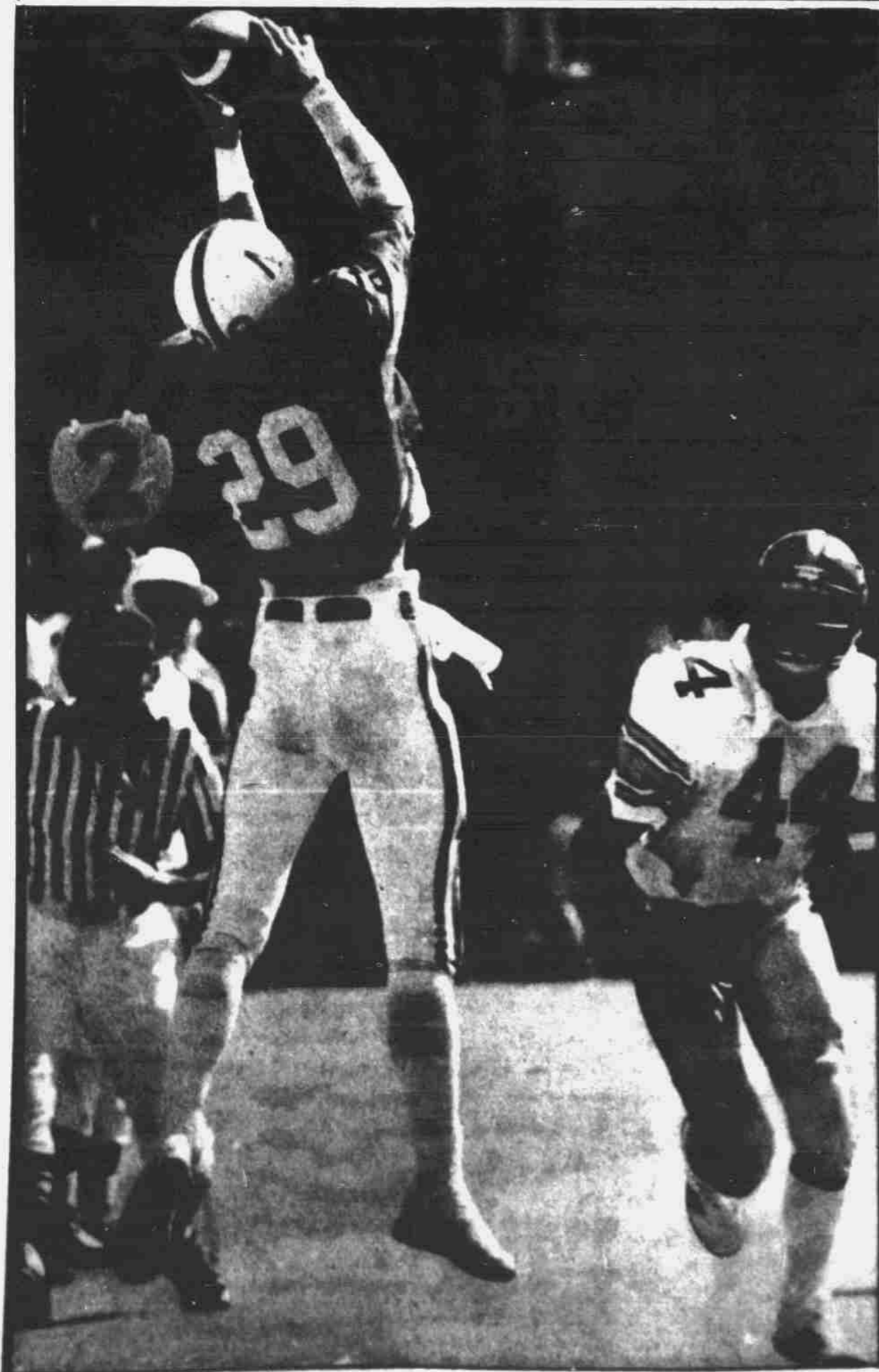
"The Iowa game really helped build my confidence," he said. "The two touchdown catches did a lot for that."

How does helping meet team goals compare with the individual accomplishment of passing a milestone in high school track history?

"I'm enjoying what I'm doing now more," Brown said, "but it's kind of tough to compare them. It (the 50-foot triple jump) lasted a few seconds, but this is lasting longer. I could gradually see this coming, and I enjoy it that way."

Brown said he felt some pressure to do well at football because of his track success. But playing on national television and facing the stress of playing split end in the Big Eight are not bothering him much, he said.

"I try not to let the pressure get to me," he said. "I just want to try to help us win all our games."



Todd Brown

Photo by Mark Billingsley