

Sports

'Voice' of Husker basketball transmits emotion over radio

By Jack Denker

As far as Kent Pavelka is concerned, the fulfillment of a childhood dream has made his job as the voice of Nebraska basketball the "biggest kick I get, period."

Pavelka, operations manager for Omaha's KFAB radio, has been broadcasting Nebraska basketball for nearly nine years now and said the transition he made from avid fan to broadcaster has been "just the ultimate."

"It's the thing I enjoy doing the most," said Pavelka of his broadcasts. "I grew up in Lincoln and went to as many home basketball games as I could. So when 1974 came around it was like a dream come true for me to be cornering a team that I used to love as a kid."

Pavelka, who did his first play-by-play broadcast with KRNU radio, graduated from Nebraska in 1971. His first job out of college was with KHUB in Fremont. He moved onto KFAB in 1974, where he became the broadcaster for Cornhusker basketball. In addition to basketball, Pavelka also teams with Lyle Bremser to do broadcasts of Nebraska football.

"I just happen to be in a position to do a lot of different things," Pavelka said.

When Pavelka broadcasts a basketball game, he said he goes into it with preconceived notions that the game itself is an exciting event. He believes that the excitement should reflect the event, therefore if people can't be at the game in person the excitement and emotion of it should be transmitted to them through his voice.

"From an overall standpoint, what I try to do is paint a mental picture of what is going on down on the court, because if I don't do that then the people at home don't know what's going on. I try to be specific," Pavelka said.

Oftentimes during his play-by-play commentary, Pavelka will get so involved with the action down on the court that during a real good game he said he feels as if he's actually playing the game.

When this happens, Pavelka said he gets very excited and becomes animated. Inflections in his voice, coupled with spontaneous hand movements during a broadcast help him stay on top of the action, he said.

On one particular occasion, Pavelka's animated broadcasts almost got him into trouble with some unruly fans. The game was last season in Columbia, Mo., where the Huskers were in the process of upsetting the No. 1 rated Tigers, who were 19-0 at the time.

"People didn't think Nebraska could win due to their past difficulties at Mis-

souri, but Nebraska blew them out anyway and it was the biggest game I'd ever broadcasted," Pavelka said.

"It was an unbelievable moment for me to see what was happening and I was going nuts inside," Pavelka said. "So I started using my hands and I guess I started to draw some attention, because the Missouri students around the broadcast area, who were upset at the time, started throwing things at me. Consequently I had to drop my voice to a whisper for the rest of the game. I couldn't believe I was broadcasting the game that way due to the significance of it, but I was afraid that I was either going to get bodily harmed or my equipment would get damaged."

Close games, according to Pavelka, are one of the reasons why he has stayed at KFAB covering Nebraska basketball for so long. Pavelka admits that he has often thought about what it would be like to broadcast for a traditional basketball powerhouse like UCLA, Kentucky or North Carolina, but when he weighed all the pros and cons, he said he came to the conclusion that broadcasting Nebraska basketball "is the most exciting job around."

"When you think of Nebraska basketball you realize that they don't get blown out that much and there's always an awful lot of drama involved in their games," Pavelka said. "Like when they play a team with a historic background, Nebraska goes into the game as the underdog and sometimes they win the game by three and lose by three. Yet that type of game is more fun to broadcast and listen to than winning a game by a big margin which is what it would be like at UCLA and those schools."

"I don't think the average fan understands the direction Nebraska basketball is going and where it's come from. Just being associated with a program like Nebraska's has been my biggest highlight," Pavelka said.

Next season the Nebraska basketball games will be part of an exclusive radio rights contract, which means the only station to originate Cornhusker sports broadcasts will be KFAB. Other stations will then feed off KFAB.

This, in effect, means Pavelka soon will become the single voice of Husker basketball and he said he will feel no added pressure because of it.

"I think it's great," he said. "Because the alternative is that I wouldn't be able to do the games anymore."

The 33-year-old Pavelka said he has no plans of leaving KFAB or discontinuing the basketball broadcasts, simply because as he puts it, "I'm doing exactly what I've always wanted to do."



Staff photo by Craig Andresen

Kent Pavelka broadcasts Nebraska's 97-54 victory over Mesa College last Friday. And speaking of Kent Pavelka . . .

Pepin hopeful despite no Ottey

By Betsy Miller

Nebraska Women's Track Coach Gary Pepin said he'll field a good team this year, but one of the key elements won't appear until the start of the outdoor season in March.

Merlene Ottey, who set a world record in the 300-yard run last year, will redshirt the indoor season to resume training.

Ottey said most sprinters stop competing sometime around August to prepare themselves for the indoor season which starts this month. Ottey last competed in October in the Commonwealth Games in Australia.

"I need more rest and time to be in shape," Ottey said.

Pepin said Ottey will spend the indoor season working through a more vigorous training regimen. The routine will include extra weightlifting and flexibility training, he said.

Last year, Ottey competed in several meets and Pepin said he thought it "was a good experience year for her."

However, Ottey said she took a break after the Commonwealth Games and didn't start training again until after Dec. 1.

Since she is sitting out the indoor season in 1983, Ottey will be eligible to compete for Nebraska during next year's indoor season. That season will lead her toward

the 1984 Olympics. Ottey was a bronze medalist in the 200-meter run at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. The 22-year-old competes for her native country of Jamaica in the Olympics.

If she does wind up in the 1984 Olympiad, she will not only need to be well-prepared physically but also psychologically. Pepin said the psychological factors at the Games are tremendous. "My goal for her would be that she is ready psychologically," he said.

In addition to the 200-meter event, Ottey may be ready to tackle the 100- or 400-meter runs in the Olympics, Pepin said.

Sophomore Janet Burke, also of Jamaica, may be Ottey's replacement in the sprints for the Cornhuskers.

"She had a really outstanding indoor season (last year) but was injured for the outdoor," Pepin said. Some of Burke's times were better than Ottey's freshman marks, he said. Burke and Ottey are also close friends, he added.

"They're real good friends, they help each other and there isn't that 'have to win' pressure between them," he said.

Pepin concedes that the 1983 outdoor team may have an edge over the indoor team.

"You have to remember we've got an Olympic medalist and world record-holder that is not competing (indoors)," Pepin said.

Sooner women to give Huskers first Big Eight test

By Ward W. Triplett III

Nebraska and Oklahoma have been charter members of the Big Eight since the league formed in 1958. But when Nebraska's women's basketball team opens its Big Eight season against the Sooners tonight at 7:30 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, this conference opponent will be a virtual stranger.

"We haven't played Oklahoma in the three years I've been here," Husker coach Colleen Matsuhara said. "We've seen them play in the Big Eight tournament, and we know they like to play the same type of pressure defense we do and they have a good all-around offensive player." Meanwhile in Norman, Sooner coach Maura McHugh knows about as much about Nebraska.

"I'm aware of their personnel and size," McHugh said Monday. "Our teams are similar in some ways. I know they try to get the ball up the court as quick as possible, but not much else."

The Big Eight Conference requires women's teams to play a home-and-home schedule for the first time this season. Big Eight teams scheduled mostly regional opponents in the past. The winner of the regular season will be recognized as the conference champion and will receive the top seed at the Big Eight tournament March 10-12 in Norman. The winner of that will automatically

advance to the NCAA tournament.

While Nebraska has a surprising 9-3 record, Oklahoma is 8-3, including a win and a loss to conference foe Iowa State.

"That was easily our worst game of the year," McHugh said of the loss to Iowa State. "It was our opener, and we were just not with it that night."

After that 78-74 setback, the Sooners won their next seven straight, including a 16-point pounding of Iowa State at home, before losing at Oral Roberts. Last weekend, Oklahoma defeated Northeast Louisiana and lost to Wichita State in the Pizza Hut Classic at Wichita.

"I'm not pleased with that record," McHugh said. "I really don't think we should have lost three games."

McHugh blamed the losses on injuries and the flu. "We had an awful lot of pre-season injuries and the flu hit us pretty hard last month," she said. "We had all sorts of different combinations of people playing, and at practice we'd have maybe ten people at a time."

McHugh said the team is healthier now than it has been all year, although junior Bonita Turner joined 6-2 freshman Kelley Hill-Kahoutek on the sidelines for the season. Kahoutek suffered a knee injury in pre-season, while Turner played only three games before undergoing foot surgery.

The Sooners are led by senior Molly McGuire. Mc-

Guire, a 6-1 center, is averaging 21.4 points per game and 9.2 rebounds. Junior Lynn McCurdy, who missed two games because of illness, moved into the starting lineup six games ago and is second to McGuire in both scoring and rebounding at 14.0 points and 8.2 rebounds a contest.

Carla Pearson, a 5-9 forward, (9.8, 4.9), 5-9 guard Sandy Douglas-Hetherington (6.1, 2.3) and 5-7 guard LaDanah Sanders (6.8, 2.8) are the remaining starters. McCurdy is the only underclassman in the starting lineup and McHugh is getting good scoring and rebounding off the bench from senior Shelly Waller (5.1 rebounds), who missed four games with an injury, and 6-1 freshman Jacquetta Hurley (7.2, 6.1).

McHugh said the new players have adapted to her running game well. Unlike the last three seasons, the team isn't as dependent on getting the ball inside to McGuire.

"We'll try to keep pushing the ball up the court," McHugh said. "I know Nebraska will do that, with Colleen coming from the West Coast where you see a lot more of that type of play. I'm from the East Coast where we try the same thing."

"Around the Midwest, that style of play isn't very characteristic. Because of that, our game should be pretty interesting."