

Sports

Redshirts sit for the present; practice for the future

By Kevin Warneke

At the end of the bench at every home game sit three Nebraska basketball players. They won't score a basket from the corner or reject an opponent's shot or even leave the bench. Not this year. But that's the way they want it.

These three players, John Matzke, James Moore and Mike Martz, are being redshirted this year.

"A student athlete has five years to compete in athletics and is eligible to use any four years," said David Berst, director of enforcement for the NCAA. "The year not used is referred to as a redshirt year."

Although redshirting is more familiar in college football, Nebraska Coach Moe Iba said he thinks the idea of redshirting is good.

"I think it's a situation if your program gets in the position that we can redshirt a player, it gives you an edge later on," he said. "The player gains experience by watching and gets physically stronger."

Nebraska used the redshirt rule during the 1981-82 season when Eric Williams chose to sit out a year of competition.

"Eric's was a little different situation," Iba said.

After breaking a cheekbone in pre-season drills, it was decided that Williams would sit out the season instead of starting late, and have two full years left, Iba said.

Williams said he used his redshirt season to learn, mature and work on his overall game.

This year, Williams and Handy Johnson have backed up Greg Downing and David Ponce at the guard positions.

"He's been fighting injuries, but he played well against Arkansas and Iowa State," Iba said.

Matzke, a sophomore, was redshirted this year for different reasons, Iba said.

"We have a lot of forwards who are seniors," Iba said. "We talked about his playing time and it wouldn't have been up to what he wanted."

"I don't think it's unfair at all," Matzke said. "It's a chance for me to work on things I need to improve on."

Martz and Moore, both freshmen, came to Nebraska with intentions of playing this year, but midway into pre-season practice they decided that it would be best if they redshirted this year.

"Through three weeks of practice it looked as if there was a chance they wouldn't play as much as they would like to," Iba said.

"I thought about it and talked to my parents," Martz said. "Coach said it was totally up to me whether to redshirt or not."

That option is up to the player, Iba said, and all four players agreed.

"They gave me the option of redshirting or staying on the team," Moore said. "There was no pressure put on me at all."

"I would never tell a player he had to redshirt," Iba said. "You're dealing with a year of their life."

Another benefit of sitting out a season, besides the extra year of practice, is also an extra year of school, Williams and Moore said.

"The year I sat out, I gained an extra year of playing and school," Williams said. "You can't beat that."

"Not only am I here to play basketball, but to also get an education," Moore said.

But with the good, comes the bad. All four players said it isn't the requirement that they must practice with the team, but

watching their teammates play in games is the hardest part.

"I was going through withdrawal," Williams said. "One game that stands out is Arkansas. I wanted to run into the locker room and change my clothes."

"It really is hard," Martz said. "All my life I have played during the winter and now I can only watch."

"It's hard not playing because it would be a lot of fun playing in the games, especially with the group of guys we have this year," Matzke said.

"It's kind of hard because you feel the enthusiasm in practice but you know you won't be playing," Moore said. "It gives you desire to work hard."

The chance of being excluded from the team since they are not playing in the actual games is not a problem, Matzke said.

"The team this year is really closer as a whole," he said. "Everybody is included."

Besides the closeness of the team, Moore said the thought of playing next year keeps him going.

"I'm just sitting here looking toward next year," he said. "And working toward next year."

Ross hopes to hurdle qualifying time

By Jeff Korbek

The spectators at the Nebraska-Southern Illinois men's track meet Saturday should pay close attention to one particular event: the 60-yard high hurdles. Nebraska's junior Ed Ross will be trying to become one of the first Huskers to qualify for the upcoming indoor national meet this spring.

"I am excited about the meet (So. Illinois) because I missed qualifying by a tenth of a second at Tennessee (Eastman Invitational)," Ross said.

At the Eastman Invitational, Ross finished fourth in the 60 highs with a time of 7.5 seconds. Earlier that day he ran a 7.3 in his heat, but needed a 7.29 to qualify for the nationals.

"I twisted my knee at Tennessee," Ross said. "While hurdling, my legs were twisting in the air, and I'm working on controlling it. By meet time I should be 100 percent."

Ross is one of the new faces on the Husker team this year. He was recruited from Gloucester County Community College in Sewell, N.J., where he became a Junior College All-American. In the 1982 national Junior College indoor meet, he finished third in the 60 high hurdles, and finished fifth in the 110 highs at the outdoor meet. Ross graduated from Penns Grove High School in New Jersey, where he was voted the most valuable athlete.

While Ross was in junior college, Mark Fluitt, a Nebraska assistant, called him and invited him to try out as a Husker.

"I was told that there was good coaching and facilities. I learned a lot in junior college, but needed to learn a lot more," Ross said.

Ross will compete in the hurdles for the Huskers this year. However, Ross said he may run relays for the team.

He proved that he is a versatile athlete in high school in the Woodbury Relays in New Jersey. He was voted the most valuable athlete at the 32-team meet. Ross anchored the hurdle relay, anchored the 440 relay, ran in a spring medley and anchored the 880 relay.

Last year's track team was led by senior sprinter and hurdler Randy Brooks. Ross is starting where Brooks left off last year.

"I didn't know Randy that well. I'm not trying to replace him, I'm just doing it for the team," Ross said. "I heard he was a versatile athlete and I kind of wish that I could have met him and talked about a couple of things. Maybe I will see him later this year."

Nebraska is loaded with depth in the hurdles with Ross, junior Scott Marshall, sophomore J. Jones and freshman Vernon Massey, Ross' roommate.

"Vernon and I get along real well," Ross said. "The coach put us together and we help each other out."



Staff photo by Joel Sartore

This may be the last time you see Nebraska hurdler Ed Ross standing next to one. More often than not the junior college transfer will be seen leaping over them. Ross gets his first home competition this week as Nebraska meets Southern Illinois in a dual meet Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center track.



Staff photo by John Zoz

Nebraska freshman Vernon Massey easily clears 6 feet in the high jump during practice at the Bob Devaney Sports Center track. Besides competing in the high jump, Massey runs the hurdles and competes in the long and triple jumps.

Trackster Massey ready to 'sail'

By Jeff Korbek

Vernon Massey may be more comfortable in the air.

The Aurora, Colo. freshman can be seen "gliding" over high hurdles, "leaping" into sand pits, and "sailing" over high-jump bars for the Nebraska men's track team.

"I want to qualify for the nationals this year, if not indoor, then outdoor," Massey said. "I would also like to try to break the (Nebraska high jump) record as a freshman."

Doug Phelps set that record (7 feet-1 inch) in 1979. Phelps also holds the 1979 outdoor record of 7-1½. Massey has recorded a 7-2 high jump in competition and has been jumping 6-10 and 6-11 in practice and has made some attempts at 7 feet.

"I haven't really gone for the higher heights as of yet," Massey said.

Massey graduated from Aurora High School where he was a high school All-American in the high jump. He was the 1981 Junior Olympics high jump champ and 1982 Track Athletic Congress high jump champ. He won a gold medal in the triple jump at the TAC and finished second in the 110 high hurdles. Massey was awarded Most Valuable Athlete and Athlete of the Year in high school.

"Vernon is a good athlete and will do well if he just does what he is capable of," Nebraska Assistant

Track Coach Dick Railsback said. "If we ever need him for a sprint relay we can count on him. He is very versatile and he is going to be a big help."

Massey was recruited by UCLA, Stanford, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arizona, Arizona State, Colorado and others.

"I chose Nebraska because it is kind of close to home, they have a good journalism department, good team and facilities," he said. "The main reason I came here is that they try to help you with your academics. The other schools emphasized track more than school, but here school comes first, then track."

"Railsback was the most honest recruiting coach," Massey said. "The other schools would give me the run-around concerning scholarships."

"I think he (Massey) liked Nebraska because of our philosophy of training and education," Railsback said. "What we have is an awful lot with academics and our facilities. If we can get a student to come and visit; once they come, it is pretty hard to keep them from signing."

On Jan. 29, Nebraska will host Southern Illinois. Massey will compete in the high jump, long jump, triple jump and the 110 high hurdles.

"I'm really nervous because this is my first college meet and I would like to do well," Massey said. "I have only practiced once in the long jump and the triple jump and I am anxious to see how well I will do in all the events."