

Denver finds goldmine in drafting rights to senior Huskers

By Kevin Warneke
Daily Nebraskan Senior Editor

The Denver Gold figures it hit the jackpot by receiving territorial drafting rights to Nebraska's senior football players.

Each United States Football League team receives exclusive rights to protect and try to sign players from a certain amount of college teams.

This year, the Gold has rights to protect 25 players from six college teams including Nebraska, Oklahoma State and Brigham Young.

According to June Jones, offensive coordinator, the Gold received its allotted teams through "some inner-circle negotiations." The Gold is excited about their teams, he said.

The USFL will have its territorial draft Dec. 15, and can protect players from their respective teams. The teams will select the remaining players in an open draft Jan. 3 and 4.

The Gold has to make some decisions, Jones said, whether to take a chance and draft the top players or take those not highly sought after by the NFL.

"The players we take might not be the best ones," he said.

Because of Nebraska's strong program and depth in all positions, Jones said, the Gold won't lose out by signing the players the NFL isn't actively pursuing.

Speed is the most important factor for the Gold, he said.

"We're interested in speaking with any kid who can run," he said. "It doesn't matter if he hasn't played much."

"But if he hasn't played much and isn't fast, we probably won't look at him."

Shane Swanson and Craig Sundberg,

two Nebraska players high on the Gold's list who probably won't be highly sought after by NFL teams, said the USFL allows college players to continue to play the game.

"Any opportunity I would have to play pro football, whether it be in Canada, the NFL or whatever, I would take it," Swanson said.

Sundberg agreed. "For me in the position I am," he said, "it lends an opportunity in which I could continue to play football."

According to Jones, the Gold is interested in some players, not in others. Jones' views on some of Nebraska's seniors follows.

Mark Traynowicz and Mark Behaig: "These two guys are high on the NFL's list so they probably won't be high on ours," Jones said. "But we'd love to have them."

Craig Sundberg: Jones said the Denver Gold coaching staff would be assessing their needs for the quarterback position soon. He said he was impressed with Sundberg's performance last season and the early part of this season.

Jeff Smith: "He won't fit into our program," Jones said. The Denver Gold offense uses four receivers, two split ends and two slot men, Jones said. The only running back used in its offense is a fullback-type, Jones said, who needs to weigh about 225 pounds. Smith is an NFL running back, Jones said.

Scott Porter: He fits into our running category, Jones said. Realistically, he said, Porter could play some football for us.

Shane Swanson: Although undersize by NFL standards, Jones said, Swanson fits our slotback mold. "He has good

hands and is fast," Jones said. The Denver Gold probably will have 15 to 20 players his size at spring camp, Jones said, battling to make the roster.

Tom Morrow and Anthony Thomas: "They're our type of players," Jones said. Morrow and Thomas could start for most colleges, Jones said, but had to play behind people who are top NFL picks.

Scott Livingston: USFL roster limits have been lowered to 40 players, Jones said. This makes Livingston a top prospect, he said, because he can punt and kick. Jones said the likelihood of whether the Gold drafts him in December depends on his status with the NFL.

Harry Grimmer: Grimmer is on NFL lists, Jones said, so he might not be high on ours.

Dave Burke: "He's not rated high in the NFL," Jones said, but Nebraska defensive backs are rated high with the Gold. A definite prospect, he said.

Bret Clark: "He's a player," Jones said. According to Jones, Clark has been rated as high as a second-round NFL draft pick, but usually as a fourth or fifth-round pick. The Gold's interest depends on Clark's interest, he said. "We'd definitely love to have him," he said.

Scott Strasburger: "He's the type of guy we're interested in," Jones said. Strasburger makes a lot of plays and runs fast, he said. Although Strasburger has indicated he wants to attend medical school, Jones said, he could play for the Gold and attend school in the off season. Strasburger probably would be used as an outside linebacker, Jones said.

Rob Stuckey and Bill Weber: The two aren't rated high in the NFL, Jones said, but meet the Gold's standards.



David Creamer/Daily Nebraskan

Bret Clark, one of the Denver Gold's prospects.

Huskers aim for national rank in Iowa dual

By Ward W. Triplett III
Daily Nebraskan Senior Editor

The teams are almost alike, their strengths are about the same. The one difference between the Iowa women's swimming team and Nebraska is that the Hawkeyes will enter Friday night's dual at the Bob Devaney Sports Center with a national ranking. Nebraska won't be, but coach Ray Huppert would like to change that while the opportunity is available.

"With the times we posted last week in our invitational, and if we can go head-to-head with Iowa and beat them, it would show some coaches that we belong in the top 20," Huppert said.

The national ranking is a team goal, Huppert said, even at this early stage of the season. The Huskers already have registered a few times good enough to make national standards, led by Dana Powers, Erin Hurley and Emily Ricketts. They will need more to beat Iowa, Huppert said.

"We've got a lot of people in a lot more events who will make national standards," Huppert said. "You can't say enough about the swimmers that meet standards in the invitational. It's nice to get that out of the way early."

The teams are comparable to begin with, Huppert said, but there is no closer match-up than those in the spring-freestyle races. Nebraska will swim Powers, Shauna Gilmore, Linda Sebesta and Cindy Hampel, while Iowa will counter with Jennifer Petty, Kim Stevens and Donna Strilich.

"All seven of those girls are within a half-second of each other," Huppert said.

Iowa is ranked No. 19, a carry-over from last season's strong finish, Huppert said. At the same time, the Huskers, bogged down with injuries, faltered at the end of the season.

"We've got to beat the teams like Iowa in order to get into the top 20," Huppert said. "We got beat in some duals at the end of last season and lost our position in the rankings. We need to beat the Iowa's, the Minnesotas, and the Kansases to get some respect."

Huppert said this year's team has proven to be stronger depth-wise than previous teams. Swimmers like Christy Forsberg, Melissa Johnson and Penny Shanek haven't won, but they have been swimming fast enough to get Nebraska important fourth and fifth place points.

"Maybe they're not swimming as fast as our best people, but by them continuing to improve, it will help us get points in the conference meet," Huppert said.

The comebacks of Sebesta and Gilmore have helped as well, he said.

Sebesta and Gilmore were both big point-getters as freshmen, but Sebesta had an off-year last season because Huppert said he misjudged her training. Gilmore had a rotator cuff injury last season and was out of the water for an entire year. Both have come back to swim faster than their freshmen times.

"It would have been so easy for them to quit, but they've responded well," Huppert said. "We're just really pleased they're doing so well after very disappointing years for them."

The match will begin at 7 p.m. Friday at the sports center pool.

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