

George helps change image of African sprinters

By Bob Asmussen
Staff Reporter

When people think of great African track athletes, the names that usually come to mind are Kenyans Kip Keino, Ben Jipcho and Henry Rono. They also probably think of the great Ethiopian marathoner Abebe Bikila. All the names are those of distance runners.

But in recent years African countries have moved toward sprinting. In the Los Angeles Olympics, Morocco's Nawal El Moutawakil won the Olympic 400-meter hurdles. Sunday Uti of Iowa State has been a dominant force in conference track meets.

One African sprinter who hopes to make people think Africa has sprinters is Nebraska's Phillips George. George, a native of Lagos, Nigeria, said the sprints have gained stature in his country the last few years.

"The longer distances are more natural, sprinting is not natural," George said. "Sprinting is more technical and most of the coaches back home don't have the know how. More recognition and better coaches have changed the way people in my country feel about the sprints."

George ran the 100-, 200- and 400-meter sprints in high school. He said he prefers to run the 400 because it is a longer race.

"I've been concentrating on competing in the 400 for the last two years," George said. "It's different from other sprints in that you can make up for a mistake. In the 100 you just get started then the race is over."

Lagos, Nigeria, where George grew up, has a population of about 1.5 million. George said it was a culture shock for him to come to Lincoln.

"The Lincoln airport was so small," George said when he recalled arriving in Lincoln last August. "I never expected it to be that small. The buildings are small, but better organized than back home."

"I love Lincoln. This suits me just fine."

George said it has been easy for him to make friends in Nebraska.

"Nebraskans are generally friendly," George said. "The most friendly set of people I've ever met."

In Saturday's Nebraska Invitational at Ed Weir track, George had his best meet since coming to Nebraska. His time of :21.29 placed him fourth in the 200. He also ran :10.62 in the 100. George said he is starting to live up to his advanced billing.

"I'm starting to feel in the groove," George said. "By this time of the year I should be running better than I am now."

One of the reasons George said he came to Nebraska was because of the indoor track and other facilities. He said running in the indoor track is a new experience.

"I really had to get used to competing indoors," George said. "The whole atmosphere was weird to me. We have larger stadiums back home."

Back home, George is his country's fifth-rated 200- and 400-meter sprinter. He said Iowa State's Uti is considered one of the great runners in Nigeria.

Besides the facilities, George said,

another reason he chose Nebraska over Iowa, Idaho and other schools was because of the letters and contact the Nebraska coaches had with him.

"Nebraska coaches seemed like they would take care of me better," George said. "I don't think I want to go anywhere else."

George said college is not as difficult as he expected it would be. But he

said work in his political science major is still time-consuming.

"I don't have any time to stay off the books," George said.

George said he has two goals. The first is to get his political science degree from Nebraska. The second goal is to represent his country in the world's biggest track meet.

"I'd like to run in the 1988 Olympics. That's my major goal in track."



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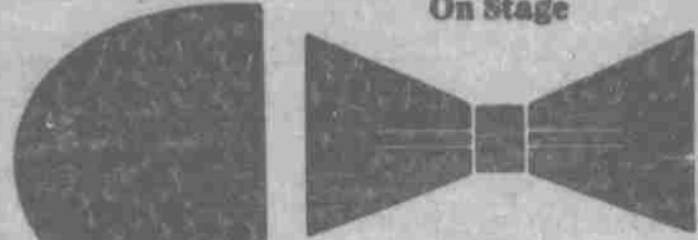
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UNL water polo team takes third at tourney

By Mike Reilly
Senior Reporter

Despite playing without any substitutes, the Nebraska Water Polo Club claimed third place at the Iowa Spring Tournament last weekend.

Nebraska took only seven players to the eight-team tournament, which included teams from Iowa, Iowa State, University of Missouri-Raleigh and Granel College. Club teams from Chicago, Des Moines and Wisconsin also competed.

"The odds were against us," player-coach Mike Morosin said. "We lost six players to January graduation, so our inexperience hurt us."

"Most of the teams in the tournament are ranked and only two of us had played that caliber of competition before."

After losing their opening match of the double-elimination tournament, the Huskers won four consecutive games to claim the consolation bracket and third place. Iowa won the tournament, defeating Iowa State in the finals.

In placing third, Nebraska qualified for the regional tournament in St. Louis this summer.

"We're to the level now that we're invited to the high quality tournaments," Morosin said.

Next fall, the Huskers will host their

first tournament. Morosin plans to invite several of the teams they played last weekend to compete in Lincoln. Nebraska also will play in the Senior Nationals Tournament next fall.

"We're really looking forward to going to the Senior Nationals," Morosin said. "We were invited last year, but we didn't have the money to go."

The club pays for travel expenses and equipment with the money it earns from teaching swimming, scuba diving and first aid classes.

"People should realize that our club benefits the community as well as the university students," Morosin said.

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The Nebraska softball team plays at Creighton today at 9 p.m. The Huskers defeated the Bluejays 3-0 and 6-1 April 4. Nebraska is ranked ninth in the country and solidified its first-place ranking in the Midwest region with four wins over nationally rated Missouri and Oklahoma State last weekend. Creighton fell out of the top 20 after the losses to Nebraska. The Huskers have won eight straight from the Lady Jays.

A campus recreation advisory council meeting will be tonight at 6:30 p.m. at the Office of Campus Recreation, 1740 Vine St.

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