

Sports

Track coach signs 13 recruits so far

By Jeff Apel
Sports Editor

The final verdict is still out on how successful the recruiting season has been for the Nebraska men's and women's track teams.

Nebraska track coach Gary Pepin said he is very satisfied with the 13 athletes he has signed so far. But he's waiting before he assesses this year's recruiting class because the Cornhuskers are hoping to sign more athletes. "We're not through yet," Pepin said. "We're hoping to sign anywhere from two to five more guys and at least one girl."

Pepin said he has had trouble finding sprinters for the Husker men's track team, because of the academic standards required by the newly-imposed Proposition 48.

After analyzing almost 100 sprinters,

Pepin said he found only "three or four" who were able to meet the academic requirements imposed by Proposition 48.

"It's not by coincidence that all of those sprinters weren't eligible," Pepin said. "It's just that's an event where the overall grade point average just isn't as high as some of the others."

Pepin said that many Division I colleges tried to get around the lack of eligible sprinters by signing athletes who couldn't meet the NCAA's academic requirements.

Those colleges are gambling that the athletes will meet academic eligibility by sitting out their first year of college athletics. But Pepin said that under most circumstances he would not consider taking such a risk.

"We don't feel that is right," he said.

Pepin said that he is confident that the eight women and five men athletes

he has signed will be assets to the Husker track and field teams.

This year, Cornhusker coaches chose to take a close look at each athlete to whom they were considering offering a scholarship in hopes of learning as much as possible about them.

Though the process was extremely time consuming, Pepin said that it should lead to a better Nebraska track and field team.

"We've got a lot of good athletes who are not only good competitors," he said, "but they have also got a lot of character."

Among the athletes the Cornhuskers signed were:

Sharon Powell, a transfer from Eastern Oklahoma State College. She was the 1986 National Junior College Athletic Association champion in the 600 and 800 indoors and the 880 and mile outdoors.

Jody Fischer, a junior college transfer from Taft, California College who competes in middle and long distance events.

Toya Barnes, a transfer from El Camino Junior College in Torrance, Calif., who captured the state discus championship with a throw of 151-11.

Beth Webster, a sprinter-hurdler from Sanford High School in West Grove, Pa.

Pam Brown, a discus thrower from Clarks whose best throw (156-11) ranks among the top-five high school throws in the country.

Juliet Prowse, a distance runner from South Africa.

Kim Guthrie, a sprinter and jumper from Amarillo, Texas who captured a gold medal in the state high school track and field competition.

Michele Marthaler, a distance runner from Brooten, Minn. She was a two-time champion in the 3,200 meter run and also captured the state's high school cross country championship.

Robert Gonzales, a middle distance runner who is transferring from Long Beach, California College.

Mark Perry, a former Omaha Northwest sprinter who is transferring from Wichita State.

Jeff Hooper, a freshman-to-be from Del Campo High School in Carmichael, Calif. He captured the state's prep discus championship with a 192-3 throw.

Dwight Mitchell, a triple jump champion from Clarendon, Jamaica.

Joe Kirby, a Missouri prep champion in the 3,200 meters from Jefferson City High School.

Much recruited baseball player satisfied with choice of Auburn

By Jeff Apel
Sports Editor

When Gregg Olson signed a baseball letter-of-intent to attend Auburn last spring, most Nebraska baseball fans shrugged it off by saying that the Omaha native would be selected in the major league draft.

But when major league scouts chose to pass over Olson because of his inflated contract demands, the same Cornhusker fans who had predicted him to be drafted as high as the first round suddenly realized what the Husker baseball program had lost.

Olson, an Omaha Northwest graduate, had compiled a 27-0 record during his three-year career as a Huskie.

He had also teamed with his father, coach Bill Olson, to guide the Omaha Gladiators to the American Legion baseball title during the summer of his sophomore year in high school. Olson's three year pitching record for the Gladiators was 36-4.

Despite pitching in conditions which included having more than ten major league and college scouts at each of his games, Olson proved himself capable of cracking any college pitching rotation. His fastball was consistently clocked in the 100 mile-per-hour range.

Forty college baseball programs responded to Olson's over-powering fastball by offering him a full scholarship to play baseball.

Nebraska and Creighton were among the schools on that list. But Olson said he immediately eliminated all of the schools in the Midwest because of the climate.

"I wanted to go someplace where it was warm," Olson said.

With that in mind, Olson narrowed down his list of potential colleges to five colleges.

Texas, Miami, Auburn, Mississippi State and South Carolina were the schools on Olson's final list of potential colleges. Olson said he ended up choosing Auburn because of the school's climate and because of the Tigers strong athletic tradition.

"I knew I had made the right choice from the minute I got here," Olson said. "Things are working out as good as I expected them to."

Olson said that he had a somewhat difficult adjustment trying to play the role of Tigers second pitcher in their starting rotation.

He is no longer able to consistently throw his fastball by college hitters, so Olson said he has made somewhat of an adjustment in order to be successful against them.

"I've had to learn to set up my fastball," he said. "The times I got hit hard were the times when I just threw it right over the plate."

Olson said that he is convinced that he has a lot to learn about the more competitive college game looking back at his freshman season with the Tigers.

After a slow start, Olson managed to post a 7-3 record with a 5.72 earned run

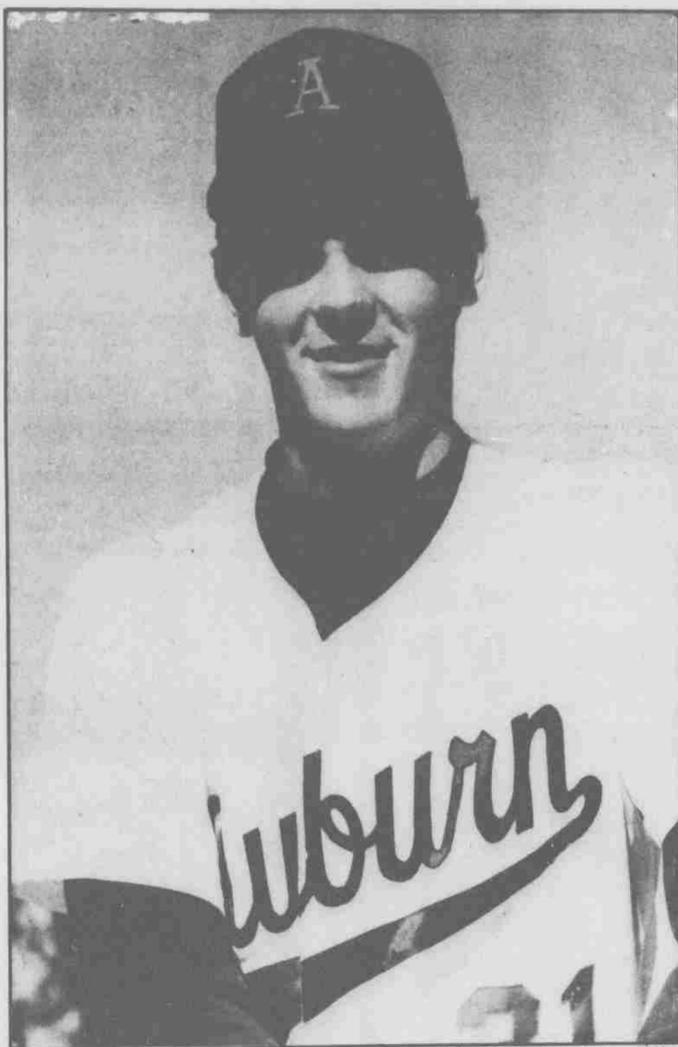


Photo courtesy Auburn SID

Olson

average for the 31-24 Tigers. Fourteen of his nineteen pitching appearances were made as a starting pitcher, while the other five pitching appearances came in a relief role.

"I am willing to contribute any way I can," Olson said.

Olson said he considered it a great honor to be a teammate of Bo Jackson's, the Tigers' Heisman Trophy winning running back.

Jackson spent the early part of the baseball season with the Tigers but was declared ineligible by the NCAA after he took a free trip to Tampa, Florida for a physical examination by the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Although Jackson knew he would soon be a wealthy individual, Olson said he tried to fit in just as any other student-athlete on the Auburn campus.

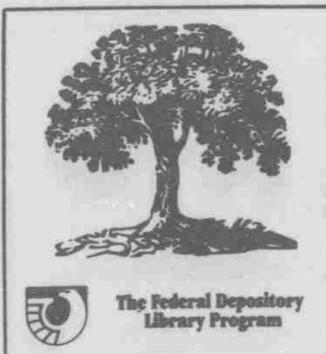
"I could tell he got tired of all the attention he was getting," Olson said. "Everytime he would walk around the campus, someone would stop him to ask him about his athletic career."

Olson said Jackson often tried to escape the attention he received by trying to be by himself as much as possible.

During the baseball season, Olson said Jackson would often sit and think in the dugout about whether to pursue a career in professional baseball or the NFL.

Now Jackson has made his choice of choosing to sign with the Kansas City Royals, Olson said he is convinced Jackson will one day become a success in the major leagues.

"He has all the tools," Olson said of Jackson. "It's just he had so many other things on his mind when he was trying to play baseball at Auburn."





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