

# Sports

## Athletic department drops Lincoln Parents program

By Jeff Apel  
Sports Editor

The cancellation of the Lincoln Parents program at Nebraska brought a wide variety of reactions from members of the Cornhusker athletic department and from Nebraska boosters involved with the program.

Nebraska athletic director Bob Devaney said the Huskers elected to drop the program entirely this year because there "is no way" the athletic department can keep a close enough watch over the Lincoln Parents to make sure they are complying with NCAA rules.

Under NCAA restrictions, student-athletes are prohibited from receiving cash or gifts from their host parents, driving their host parents' vehicles and spending the night at their host parents' homes.

Devaney said while the Cornhusker athletic department never knew of any Lincoln Parents who directly violated NCAA rules, the Nebraska athletic department elected to drop the program because of the increased number of restrictions which were placed on host parents.

"It was getting to the point where the only thing Lincoln parents could provide was an afternoon watching television," Devaney said. "We just had to withdraw."

Devaney said he was somewhat saddened when he realized it wouldn't be feasible for the Nebraska athletic department to continue the Lincoln Parents program.

The Lincoln Parents, Devaney said, always ran a great host program.

"They were always responsible people," Devaney said. "They realized what they could and could not do."

Nebraska women's swimming coach Ray Huppert said he was disappointed to learn that the Lincoln Parents program had been dropped.

Since he instituted the host parents into the women's swimming program five years ago, Huppert said he hasn't had one athlete leave Nebraska because of homesickness.

But now, Huppert said he isn't sure what to expect from future recruits who won't have the privilege of having a host family.

"It was such a nice, positive program," Huppert said. "It's going to be difficult to tell the athletes it's no longer there for them when they have done nothing wrong."

Huppert said the key ingredient Lincoln Parents gave which he is going to have trouble giving is the fatherly image adopted by many host parents.

When an athlete wanted to know where she could get her car fixed or needed help with a personal crisis, Huppert said his athletes would turn to the Lincoln Parents for help.

But now, Huppert said that special friendship is going to be lost.

"I have a coaching relationship (with the athletes)," Huppert said. "But it's difficult to develop that same type of relationship with the athletes as they had with their host parents."

Huppert said in the past, the NCAA always seemed to take the stand that there must be violations being committed in the Nebraska host parents program.

The Huskers, Huppert said, were always forced to put up with a lot of flack from the NCAA.

"We even let the NCAA know we wanted to follow their policies," Huppert said. "The program at the Univer-

sity of Nebraska was done above the board."

Lincolnite Ann Cech, who for seven years headed the Lincoln Parents program which worked with the Nebraska men's basketball team, said all potential host parents were given a document which forced them to comply with NCAA rules once they signed it.

In order to qualify to be a Lincoln Parent, Cech said all individuals had to meet a set of criteria including:

- They had to have children of their own at home.

- They couldn't be hosting another athlete.

- They had to be between the ages of 30 and 50.

- They had to be members of the Rebounders Club and regularly attend Nebraska basketball games.

Cech said she often rejected applicants who were interested in becoming Lincoln Parents because they could not meet one or more of the criteria.

Cech said the 15 Lincoln Parents she hired provided such services as checking up to make sure the athletes were attending class and speaking with the athletes after home basketball games.

"We felt we really did a good deed to some of the kids," Cech said. "We were just like a friend to them."

Lincolnite Arthur Basso, who served as a Lincoln Parent for both Stan Cloudy and Bernard Day, said the host parents program gave him a chance to develop a special relationship with both Nebraska athletes.

If it wasn't for the Lincoln Parents program, Basso said Cloudy would have gone home to Texas soon after his arrival in Lincoln.

"Stan (Cloudy) was very close to us," Basso said. "We were very fortunate. We just hit it off well."

Basso said he thinks part of the reason Nebraska men's basketball coach Danny Nee chose to suspend the Lincoln Parents program two months before it was officially dropped by the university was because of the problems former Nebraska men's basketball coach Moe Iba encountered with "a few" host parents.

According to Basso, some Lincoln Parents called Iba after they became upset when their athletes weren't receiving enough playing time.

"It's unfortunate that a few parents just got out of control," Basso said. "It's all a shock to me."

Basso said he didn't spend much time with Day, other than give him an occasional meal at his home. NCAA rules prohibit host parents from serving meals to athletes.

Nancy Mitchell, a legislative assistant with the NCAA, said the situation involving Basso serving Day meals "could have been a problem" in terms of NCAA violations because it involved giving a tangible benefit to a student-athlete.

Basso said he would often take Cloudy out to eat breakfast after a basketball game, and would feed Day on holidays such as Thanksgiving.

Another Lincoln Parent, Elna Phillips, said the only things she did while hosting former Nebraska football player Todd Frain was babysit for Frain's infant child and provide a place for the Frains to think of as their home.

Dropping the Lincoln Parents program, Phillips said, was a mistake.

"I had always thought of it as a good program," Phillips said. "Now, the athletes won't have anywhere to turn if they are from out of state."

## VanZant out for season

COLUMBIA, Mo. — Freshman running back Tony VanZant of Missouri underwent arthroscopic knee surgery Monday and will sit out the entire season, Tiger coach Woody Widenhofer said.

VanZant, named the Parade Magazine High School player of the year last year, was injured in the Missouri High School All-Star game in Jefferson City, Mo., three weeks ago. Doctors determined he had damage to ligaments and

cartilage in his left knee.

"It's a shame," Widenhofer told The Associated Press.

VanZant, who last year led Hazelwood Central High School in St. Louis, Mo., to the class 5A state championship, chose Missouri over Nebraska and Michigan.

Widenhofer said he was assured by doctors that VanZant would be back to 100 percent following his rehabilitation period.



Lincoln's Randy Jensen tests his chip shot at Firethorn Golf Course, 91st and Van Dorn streets.

Paul Vonderlage/Daily Nebraskan

## Hosting a pro tournament a possibility for golf course

By Steve Thomas  
Staff Reporter

Nary a golf course in the area received the applause that Lincoln's Firethorn Golf Club has in the past year. Pete Dye, the nation's most renowned golf course architect, has given the area his finest efforts. But the verdict is still out on whether Firethorn can attract the professionals.

Jim White, Firethorn's head pro, said the size of Lincoln might be a major drawback in luring a Professional Golfer's Association (PGA) tournament.

"We don't want to rule anything out," White said. "I think between Lincoln, Omaha and Kansas City there would be enough of a population base, but there are other problems to consider."

Among those considerations is the challenge of finding enough sponsor money to support today's wealthy tournament purses, White said.

"Sponsors — not population — might be our biggest problem," White said. "And you also have to remember that there are politics and planning involved with events that we can't control."

White said Lincolnites have an above average interest in golf and is confident of their support should an event be scheduled at Firethorn.

"The people in the area are hungry for something," White said. "We can't say that Lincoln hasn't supported a major event. We haven't really tested the waters yet."

In terms of population, White said Lincoln would still be a good distance behind Tucson, Ariz., the smallest stop on the professional circuit.

While Lincoln's size causes doubts, White's support for the year old golf course is full-fledged.

"It has been a well-received golf course," White said. "All of the good players who have played here have said that Firethorn is a good test of golf. From the back tees, it's easily the hardest course in the state."

White said the course's character would be enough to attract people to Firethorn to watch the professionals. Parking and seating facilities would pass the test of a professional event as well, White said.

In the course's first year, White said the focus was on building a course that they had promised to the people. Much work has been done on the clubhouse, and work on

Firethorn's 62 sand traps has been completed.

These areas of focus have slowed the process of luring PGA events.

"We're not actively seeking any major tournaments right now," White said. "We just haven't had time for it. We're still trying to get into a maintenance routine, and a big name tourney may still be eight to 10 years away."

Should tournament possibilities arise, White said a seniors' event or a ladies' event might be a good way to get started.

"There has also been talk of rotating the Quad-Cities Open around the Midwest and that could be something worth looking at," White said.

Firethorn hosted a state pro-am tournament this past year and next year's Class A Boys' State High School Tournament is slated for Firethorn.

Aside from tournament talk, White said he is very optimistic with the development of Firethorn.

"The golf course is getting the look we want, the membership is nearing our goal, and lot sales in the area are up," White said.

Firethorn is located at 91st and Van Dorn streets in Lincoln.