

# No matter where, Kathmann has fun



Andrea Hoy/Daily Nebraskan

Husker tennis player Joe Kathmann serves during practice Monday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

By Chuck Green  
Sports Editor

**Editor's note: This is the 12th in a series of stories featuring foreign students who are athletes at Nebraska.**

For Joe Kathmann, fun is the name of the game.

Kathmann, a sophomore international business major from Vechta, West Germany, and a member of Nebraska's men's tennis team, doesn't only have fun on the courts. He tries to work fun into every aspect of his lifestyle.

Of course, fun on the tennis court is the most important thing to him.

"I always want to have fun playing the game," Kathmann said. "It's always nice to improve your game, but as long as I feel happy on the court, that's all I want."

Kathmann, 22, said he never planned to go to school in the United States. After spending a mandatory two-year stint in the Luftwaffe, the West German Air Force, Kathmann came to the United States to visit friends of his family in Omaha. That visit in May 1985 changed Kathmann's life.

"I always wanted to go to America," he said. "I wanted to get to know the country, the people, the culture. After I went to Omaha for the summer, they (his friends in Omaha) asked if I would stay and go to school in Lincoln. I thought, 'why not?'"

Kathmann spoke with Nebraska's foreign student advisor and made arrangements to attend the university in fall 1985. Kathmann also met with Cornhusker tennis coach Kerry McDermott.

"I met Kerry in Omaha a few months before, when I played in the Nebraska Open," Kathmann said. "He saw me play and said that he could use me on the team."

Kathmann said he thinks tennis competition in the United States is tougher than it is in Germany. He said this is because of the early preparation American tennis players receive.

"Everybody here plays tennis at an early age," he said. "There are courts all over the country here. Also, America has high school programs, which we don't have in Germany, and college programs, which we also don't have."

One German player, Boris Becker, is helping to popularize the sport in Germany, Kathmann said. Becker is Kathmann's favorite player because of his edge on the court and the way he handles himself during competition.

"He behaves better than (John) McEnroe," Kathmann said.

Kathmann said he feels that his forehand is the best aspect of his game, while ground strokes and quickness are the things he'd most like to improve on. He also said he'd like to improve his consistency and his mental concentration.

Kathmann said he has had no major problems adapting to life in the United States because "the cultures are pretty much the same." Even so, Kathmann said, driving habits here aren't the same as those in Germany.

Last December, Kathmann was on his way to Omaha after his last fall exam. He was driving on Interstate 80 at about 85 mph, he said, when a car began moving closer and closer to him from behind.

"I figured the guy wanted to go faster, so I went faster, too," he said.

It wasn't a smart choice.

"All of a sudden, I saw flashing red lights behind me," Kathmann said. "It was a cop."

Not wanting an expensive ticket for speeding, Kathmann had to think quick.

"When he got to my window, I began speaking German to him," Kathmann said. "I asked him (in German) if he spoke German. He didn't. Then I pointed to my tennis bag (which was in the front passenger seat) and said 'airport . . . home.'"

The patrolman, not knowing what to do, tried to make Kathmann understand what was going on.

After a few minutes, Kathmann gave the patrolman his German driver's license, German passport, German I.D. card and his international driver's license.

"After that, the cop went back to his car and sat there for 15 minutes, probably trying to figure out what I had given him," Kathmann said.

Finally, the officer came back and wrote Kathmann a warning. Along with the warning, he tried to give Kathmann one final word of advice.

"He was motioning to me and saying, really slow, 'Please drive slower!' in English," Kathmann said.

After dodging one bullet, Kathmann said he has decided to drive a little slower when there might be state patrolmen around.

After graduation, Kathmann said he hopes to go to Spain or Mexico to work on his third language, Spanish. His real goal, however, is to work for a company and then start his own business.

"I want to make my first million dollars before I turn 40," Kathmann said.

Whether he does or not, he'll have fun trying.

## Cross-country teams win at invite

Saturday was a good day for both the men's and women's cross-country teams.

The women captured the Illini Invitational Championship for the third straight year, and the men's team won it for the second.

The women out-distanced runner-up Iowa by 15 points, and third-place Florida by 16. Twelve teams competed in the tournament.

"It was an important meet for us, and I'm really, really happy," Coach Jay Dirksen said. "As a team we were really strong, and top five finishers were only

34 seconds apart, making it a pretty tight group."

The Huskers were led by senior Laura Wight, who finished seventh. Mary Amen placed ninth, five seconds behind her at 11th was Jill Noel.

"The competition individually was outstanding. Some of the better distant runners at this level were there. So we found out we're a pretty good team," Dirksen said.

He added that the coaches' poll comes out sometime this week, and the women should be ranked fairly high.

On the men's side, Dirksen was somewhat surprised at the finish of his team.

"They did a good job, and I was really elated. I wasn't really shocked because I knew they were capable," he said.

Nebraska led the nine-team field, beating runner-up Indiana by two. Illinois finished third, 17 points back.

"Illinois was probably the top team there, but they held out three of their top six runners (due to injury purposes)," Dirksen said.

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