

Sports

Pitcher credits coaches for increased confidence

By David Mussman
Staff Reporter

Donna Deardorff is pitching better than ever. Just ask Nebraska softball coach Ron Wolforth.

In her third year on the Cornhusker team, Deardorff said the talent she knew she had in her first two seasons is finally starting to show.

"I always knew I had the potential to play well, even in my freshman and sophomore years," Deardorff said.

Deardorff attributes much of her improved playing to the team attitude that came with the change of coaching staffs.

Wolforth agreed that Deardorff is having her best season with the Huskers. All three pitchers are doing well, and Deardorff has come through when he needed her to play well, he said.

Deardorff said Wolforth's coaching style has allowed her to become more comfortable as a pitcher for the Huskers. Despite feeling uncomfortable in her first two seasons, however, Deardorff still managed to amass a 32-10 record, placing her fourth on the all-time Nebraska list for career victories. She had an earned run average of 0.85, a .762 winning percentage and 238 strikeouts, placing her within four of the fourth-place spot on the all-time strikeout list.

But all the credit for her success goes to her improved pitching, Deardorff said. She takes a lot of confi-

dence from knowing she has a strong defense behind her.

"Defensively we're very sound," Deardorff said. "I don't feel I have to pitch that well because I have a great defense behind me."



Deardorff

Deardorff said she believes that great defense, along with a great deal of hitting power and overall talent, will lead the team to the College World Series. After last year's disappointing disqualification from the playoffs for recruiting violations, the hunger for a good finish is greater than ever for returning team members, she said.

Deardorff, with an 11-4 record and 2.4 ERA so far this season, said she hopes her pitching consistency will help to achieve part of that goal.

"When I'm pitching I think that I'm pretty consistent," Deardorff said. "I get over my mistakes easily and I don't dwell on what has happened."

Husker first baseman drives home Love-ly perfectionism, coach says

By Tim Hartmann
Senior Reporter

First baseman Amy Love, a senior tri-captain on the Nebraska softball team, is the ideal captain, Coach Ron Wolforth said.

"Amy Love is one of your classic captains, and she is a self-motivated type of person," Wolforth said. "She very seldom gets rattled, she's competitive, and yet is a perfectionist."

An example of Love's drive for perfection is her response when asked how she thinks she has played this season.

"There's always room for improvement," Love said. "This is my senior year, and of course I want to do really well. I'm not satisfied with what I've done. I want to do better."

Love also strives for perfection off the field. She has a 3.4 grade point average in exercise physiology. This summer she will have an internship with the Cooper Clinic in Dallas. Last season Love earned Academic all-Big Eight Conference honors and was named to the Big Eight Academic Honor Roll.

This season Love has hit .224 and has earned six RBI. She leads the team in sacrifices with nine. Going into this season, Love had a career batting average of .225, which places her 15th on the Nebraska career batting charts.

Love also has proven herself defensively. She is No. 5 on the Nebraska all-time fielding charts with a .975 fielding percentage.

Being a captain for two consecutive years has been a big influence, Love said.

"Being voted in by your peers means a lot to me," she said. "They have faith in me and in my leadership and everything else. It's helped me a lot."



Love

Last Saturday, the Cornhuskers swept Iowa State to raise their record to 28-9 and increase their winning streak to five games. Love said the team has played well during the streak but still needs improvements.

"We have our good games and our bad games," she said, "but I don't think we have played as good as we can. There's plenty of goals — win Big Eights, go to regionals, go to the World Series. We have to take it one game at a time to accomplish that. We did that

last week against Iowa State, but now that's over. This week we play Missouri and Kansas, so we'll need to play well again."

Love went to Robert E. Lee High School in Houston and spent her first year of college at Sam Houston State. When Sam Houston's softball coach, Wayne Daigle, came to Nebraska, Love decided to transfer here.

After redshirting one season, Love started as a sophomore and hit .255. Last season her average slipped to .184, but Wolforth said before the year began that he looked for a strong year from her.

"I predict that she will have a very good year because I think last year she put too much pressure on herself, and this year we are going to let her do what Amy Love does well," he said.

Daigle resigned last year after several recruiting violations were uncovered by the NCAA. Love said Daigle's departure upset her, but she was glad she stayed at Nebraska.

"He is a great coach, but we have a really good team and I wasn't going to stop playing just because the coach left," Love said.

Love said the transition from Daigle to Wolforth, who was an assistant coach last year, has gone well.

"It has been a pretty smooth transition," she said. "Coach Wolforth has a lot of the philosophies of Coach Daigle and some of his own philosophies, and they have mixed well together."

Taylor up on himself; won't dwell on past

By The Associated Press

A more confident Steve Taylor says he learned last season not to get down on himself when things aren't going right.

"That's one problem I do have," Nebraska quarterback Taylor said. "When things aren't going right, I really do accept a lot of the blame."

Taylor, getting ready for his junior season, said he feels better prepared to handle it now when things don't go right.

"One thing I do feel is very confident," Taylor said. "I'm relaxed. I have nothing to prove. I just want to keep playing well and be the best player I can be."

'I feel it's my job to move the ball and score points. If we don't score points, I feel it's my fault.'

— Taylor

Taylor missed the scrimmage last Saturday at Memorial Stadium because of an injury to his right foot from the previous Saturday's scrimmage. But Taylor said he will play Saturday when the Huskers wrap up spring practice with the 1:30 p.m. Red-White game.

Taylor said while watching the team workout last weekend that the injury didn't keep him from accomplishing his goals for spring practice.

"When I came into spring, I really wanted to concentrate on being consistent, and leadership," he said. "I've been doing very well on consistency. Overall, I've accomplished my goals."

With a year's experience as a starter, Taylor said, he feels much more comfortable about his situation than a year ago.

"I'm going into my junior year," he said. "I feel confident. I'm on a good team. I'm a good player, and I want to

get better. I don't feel as much pressure as I did last year. There's always going to be a little bit of pressure, but I really feel confident about myself and about our team."

Taylor ended his sophomore season as the most valuable player in Nebraska's 30-15 Sugar Bowl victory over Louisiana State. He ended the game with 110 yards passing and 63 rushing after being replaced by Clete Blakeman for a series in the second quarter when the NU offense was sputtering.

Taylor said the Sugar Bowl helped him to realize that it's counter-productive to get down on himself.

"A lot of it is not my fault," Taylor said. "But as a quarterback, I feel it's my job to move the ball and score points. If we don't score points, I feel it's my fault."

"Now I'm looking at it that I can't do everything. All I can do is quarterback and be a leader."

Taylor said he recently watched a tape of the Sugar Bowl telecast, which helped him learn how to accept criticism.

"The announcers were pretty hard on me the first half," he said.

Taylor said the announcers made comments about him trying to do too much and not making correct reads.

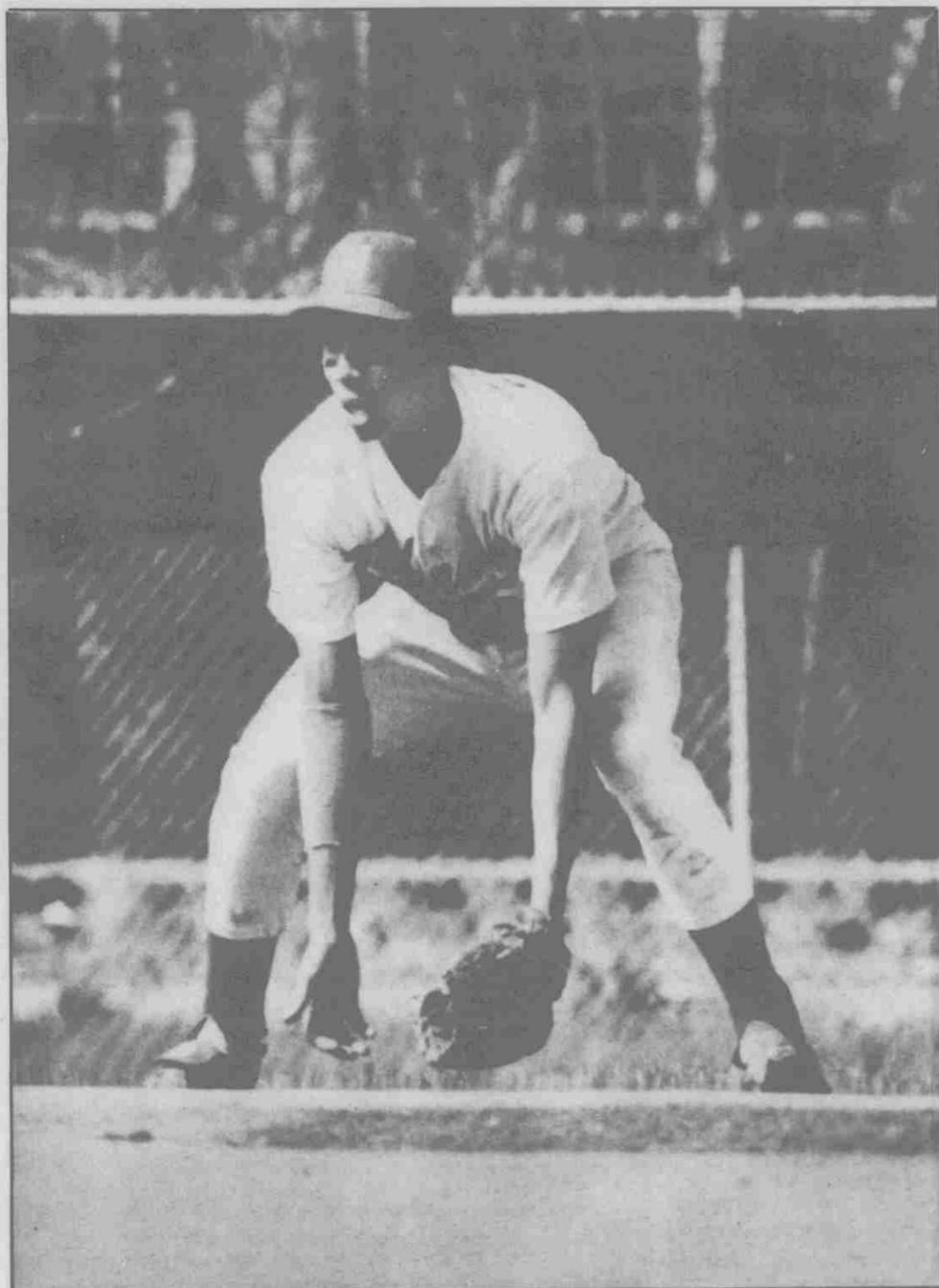
Taylor said Coach Tom Osborne should be credited for handling that situation well, pulling him out and letting him regain his composure.

"I really appreciate the way Coach Osborne has brought me along," he said.

Taylor said he wanted to play varsity early in his freshman season.

"That's why it's good to have a coach like Coach Osborne, who has been here for years and knows what happens to a player who gets thrown in there too early," Taylor said.

"I wanted to play, but I wasn't ready to play. It's a good thing I didn't rush it . . . But things worked out pretty well. I had a good freshman year and a good sophomore year, and I've been doing well in the spring. Things are slowly picking up. Sooner or later, I'm going to get there, and when I get there we're going to be on top."



Doug Carroll/Daily Nebraskan

Looking out for No. 1

Nebraska shortstop Ken Sirak waits to field a grounder hit against the Cornhuskers during their game against Oral Roberts University Saturday. Nebraska will play Northwest Missouri State today in preparation for a four-game series against No. 1-ranked Oklahoma State in Stillwater, Okla.