

Sports

Softball team waits for championship

By Tim Hartmann
and Michelle Willnerd
Staff Reporters

With only four athletes missing from last year's team that finished third in the Women's College World Series, Nebraska softball coach Ron Wolforth said the Cornhuskers are ready to challenge for the national championship.

Wolforth said that Nebraska will be able to compete with preseason favorites UCLA, Texas A&M and Arizona for the national title because the Huskers return seven starters from last year's 53-11 team.

Wolforth said the Huskers will be missing infielders Amy Love, Lori Richins and Rhonda Gorraiz because of graduation. He said pitcher Marylis Handley will also not return because of a career-ending shoulder injury.

"Basically, we have the same ball club," Wolforth said. "This will be a unique year for us. If we are going to compete for No. 1, this will be our year."

Wolforth said Nebraska will turn to the four senior members of this year's team for leadership. The seniors include Leanna Miles, Marge Ogradowicz and pitchers Donna Deardorff and Lori Sipple.

Wolforth said Sipple has been nominated for the Broderick Sports Award, which is equivalent to the Heisman Trophy of women's athletics.

"We have four seniors that are incredibly talented," he said.

Wolforth said Miles will have a major impact because she will employ the "slap bunting" technique.

The slap bunting technique involves running and hitting a pitched ball. The batter stands deep in the batter's box and tries to hit a line-drive by third or first base and then uses speed to reach base safely.

Wolforth said Ogradowicz will also be a valuable player.

"Marge is our best overall athlete, she is the strongest and fastest. Ogradowicz was our most offensive player (last season)," Wolforth said.

Wolforth said the Huskers have few weak spots.

"We have a question mark at third base. Third base is wide open right now," he said. "Besides that, every position is covered. We have a veteran ball club and the only thing that is going to keep us from a national championship is ourselves."

Wolforth said the Huskers also have problems with depth.

"We're not very deep, so if we get a couple of injuries we could be in trouble," Wolforth said.

A new recruit on this year's team is second baseman Jennifer Bialles of Chaffey Junior College in Alta Loma, California.

"She has good speed and she's a heck of a good defensive player," Wolforth said. "She'll be filling in for Lori Richins, which will be no easy task."

Richins was a four time All-Big Eight performer.

The Huskers will begin their fall schedule at the Kansas Fall Invitational in Lawrence, Kan., Sept. 19-20.

Originally, there was a tournament planned in Lincoln on those dates, but that was canceled because of the Farm-



Daily Nebraskan file photo

Nebraska's Jane Kremer (No. 15) receives congratulations from her teammates after hitting a home run against Iowa State last year. The Cornhuskers finished 53-11 last season.

Aid III concert.

Wolforth said the Big Eight, which Nebraska has won four consecutive years, should be an interesting conference this season.

"This is going to be a real strange year in the Big Eight," he said. "Kansas hired a coach (Kalum Haack) who used

to be an assistant coach at Nebraska, so they should play us even tougher than they have in the past. Iowa State finished second in the Big Eight last year, but lost four or five seniors. They had a good recruiting year, so they should be interesting. Oklahoma State recruited one of the top pitchers in the country, but also lost four or five

seniors."

"I would say Kansas and Oklahoma State should be our main challenges in the conference this year," he said.

Oklahoma has a veteran ball club, Wolforth said, but not a strong pitching rotation. Missouri appears to be the weakest team in the conference and should "struggle for a while," he said.

Husker Hostess Interviews

Interviews will be held for football recruiting hostesses on Aug. 31st at 3:30 pm. Please meet in the south stadium second floor auditorium

Interested former hostesses must also interview.

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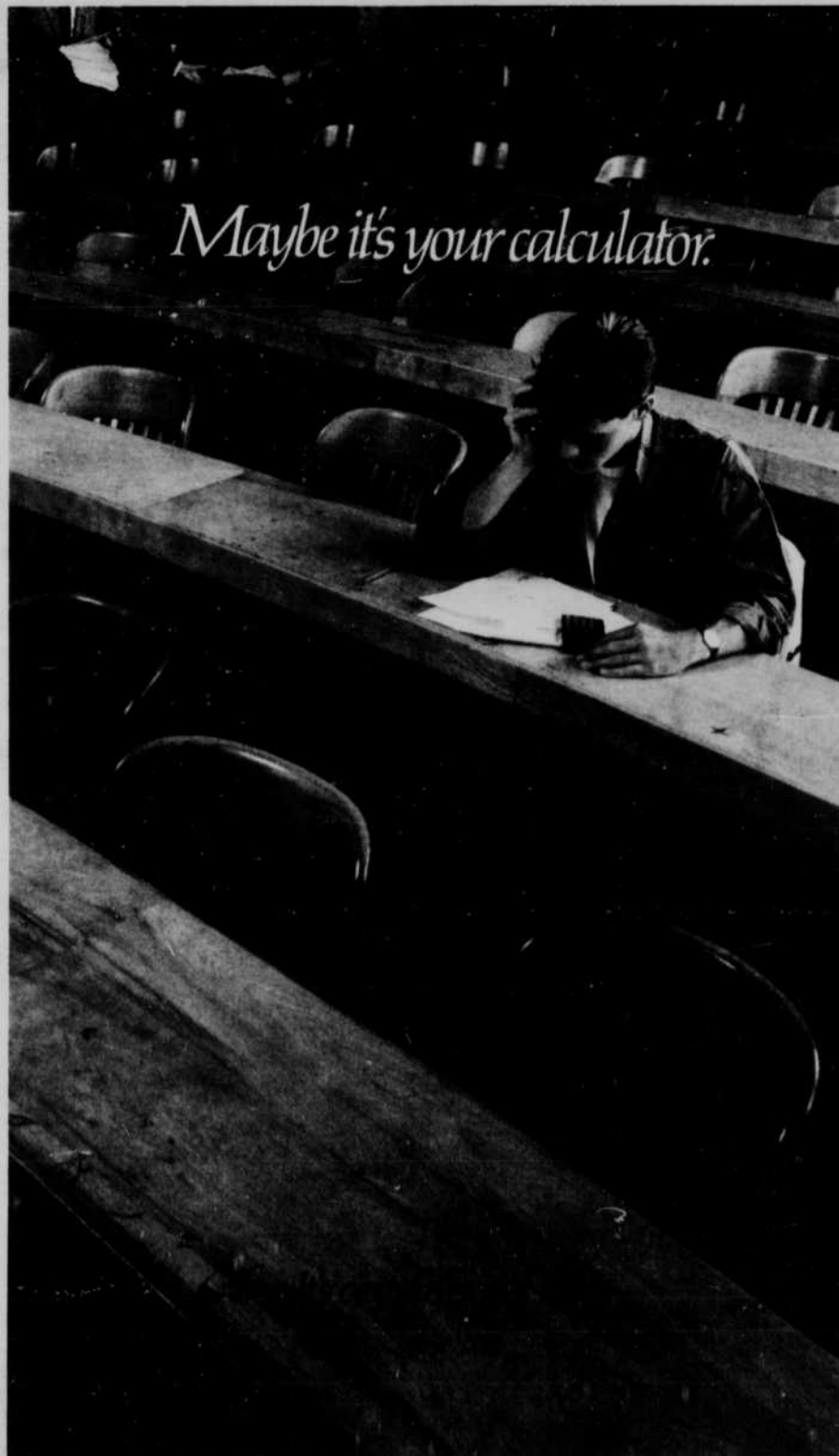
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