

Cross country team chasing Big 8 win

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

A 47-year drought will be on the line when the Nebraska men's cross country team opens its season Sept. 12.

Nebraska cross country coach Jay Dirksen said the Cornhuskers have an excellent chance of capturing their first Big Eight title since 1940 because they return all seven lettermen from last year's team.

Dirksen said the 1987 Big Eight championship would be the Huskers' first true conference title because the 1940 championships were decided during a two-mile team race around a track.

"It wasn't even true cross country," Dirksen said.

Dirksen said the Huskers will have to contend with Colorado, the 1986 conference champions, and Iowa State for this year's Big Eight championship. He said the Cyclones represent the unknown element in the conference.

"I imagine Iowa State will be pretty good," Dirksen said. "But it's tough to say right now because they always sign international runners."

Dirksen said the Huskers will rely on seniors Jean Verster, Bryan Clark and Jody Fischer to form the nucleus of this

year's team. He said redshirt freshman Joe Kirby, who was sidelined last season with mononucleosis, and freshman Tom Banks could make immediate contributions.

Dirksen said Brian Grier, a transfer from Northwest Missouri State in Maryville, Mo., also could be included among the top seven runners.

"He (Grier) transferred to Nebraska last year, but we didn't know he was here," he said. "He spent the year taking classes, so we're glad to have him."

Dirksen said Nebraska should be able to improve on its 15th-place finish in last year's NCAA meet because the Huskers possess excellent frontrunners. He said the only problem that creates is Nebraska has nine runners for seven varsity spots.

"That's a nice problem," Dirksen said.

Dirksen said Nebraska will prepare for its Big Eight season by facing a non-conference schedule that includes meets against Illinois, Wisconsin and UCLA.

Dirksen said he remains optimistic about the season because the Huskers have the potential to be one of the best cross country teams ever assembled at Nebraska. He said the Huskers will be tough to beat if they live up to their expectations.

"Last year's team was one of the best and we've got a year of experience," Dirksen said. "It's hard to compare teams over the years, but we should be pretty good."



Dirksen

ASU aiming for No. 1

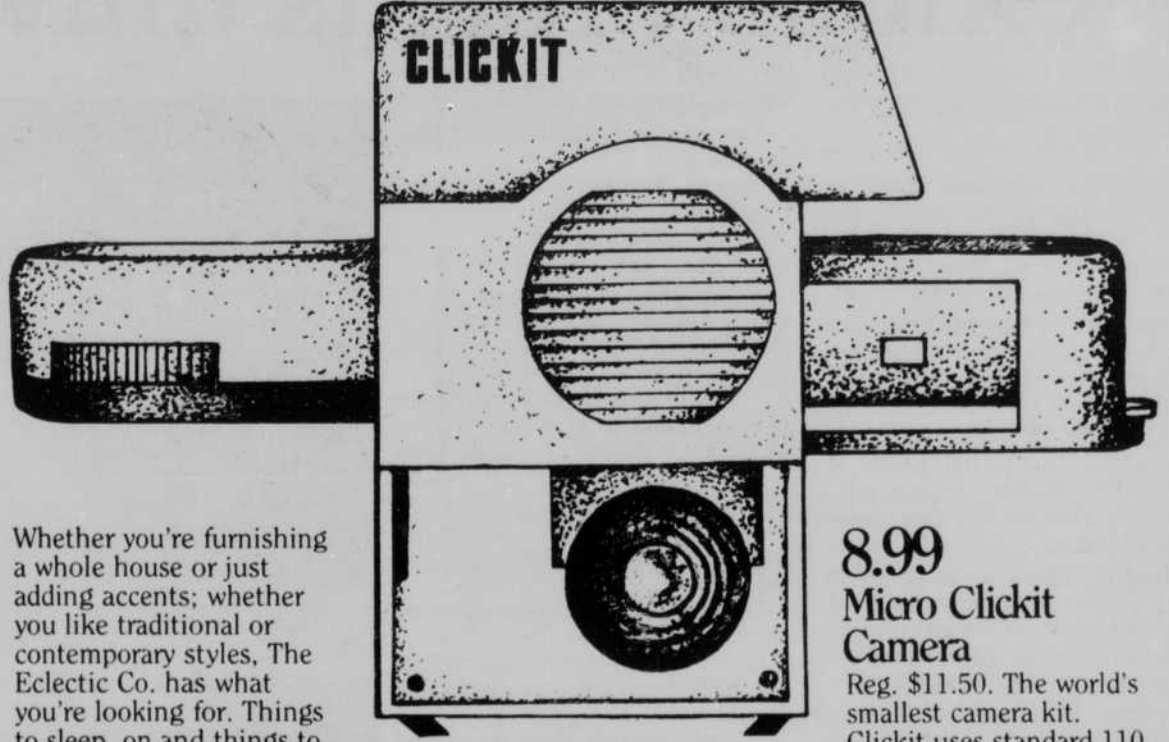
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will compete for the starting job at free safety.

Mike Schuh returns as the Sun Devils' punter. Schuh averaged about 40 yards a punt last season, Cooper

said. The place kicking will be handled by Kent Bostrom, who hit 42-of-45 extra points and 15-of-19 field goal attempts last year. Alan Zendejas is also on hand to continue the long tradition of kickers from his family.

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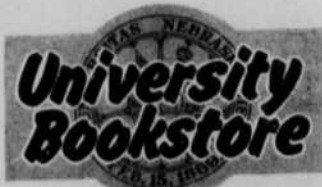


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