

Beck: Seniors provided good chemistry

By Mike Kluck
Staff Reporter

The four seniors on this year's Nebraska women's basketball team know what change is all about.

Maurtice Ivy, Stephanie Bolli, Pam Fiene and Heather Smith closed out their Big Eight careers when Nebraska dropped an 87-84 decision to Kansas Sunday afternoon at the Bicentennial Center in Salina, Kan.

During their careers at Nebraska, the seniors have gone from a seventh-place finish in the Big Eight two years ago to winning the conference's regular-season championship this year.

Nebraska women's basketball coach Angela Beck said the Cornhuskers' recent success has caused major changes in the senior's careers. She said the seniors also went through a transition when she replaced Kelly Hill as the Husker women's coach.

"They have been under two coaches, which is very difficult in a four-year span," Beck said. "They have had to go through a major change and they have stuck with it, and it shows character. With a new coach coming in, they have had to go through an adoption process. I have been very blessed to come to Nebraska and have them adopt to my style and mold into a team in just two years."

Beck said Bolli went through the most dramatic changes during her four-year career. She said Bolli's senior season was typical of the battle

the 5-foot-11 center has fought because she suffered a season-ending knee injury earlier this year against Colorado.

Bolli said her knee injury was a big disappointment because it forced her to go from being a starting player to being a support player and cheerleader on the bench.

"It has been tough to go from an active participant to not being able to contribute at all," Bolli said.

Bolli said her career at Nebraska also was difficult because she had to adjust to being a small inside player. She said her short build made her adjustment to the physical college game difficult.

Smith, a former Husker high-jumper, said a knee injury also set back her career because it forced her to give up competing in track. She said basketball boosted her confidence because it gave her something to do during her junior and senior seasons.

Beck said Smith's age and experience as a national track competitor added maturity to the squad.

Fiene said the biggest adjustment she had to make during her career was adjusting to being a role player. She said although it was hard at first to understand why she wasn't playing, she learned to accept her role.

Beck said Fiene is a "spark plug who gives 110 percent." She said Fiene's determined work ethic helps set the tempo for Nebraska.

Ivy, who was named the Big Eight player of the year this season, said she has been pleased with her accom-

plishments at Nebraska. She said it was extremely satisfying to earn a Big Eight championship this season because she suffered through disappointing freshman and sophomore years.

"I had a lot of expectations and wanted to help the program right away," Ivy said. "I had high expectations my freshman and sophomore year. By my junior year, we had the team I expected, and everything was going the way I wanted it to. I have no complaints with the season, and I just want to go as far in the NCAA as possible."

Beck said the seniors have provided knowledge and experience for Nebraska. She said all four seniors provide the Huskers with good chemistry because they complement each other.

"You have to respect this senior class because they have been able to mold new ideas," Beck said. "Going 20-5 from 11-17 two years ago is a major turnaround. They deserve the respect because they have worked hard and struggled to make this team a national caliber team."

All four seniors said Beck deserves the credit for the Huskers turnaround. Beck's two-year coaching record at Nebraska is 37-18.

"Obviously we have been more successful, and that is because of Coach Beck," Fiene said. "Coach Beck brought in a different attitude and made us used to winning again where before we were used to losing."

Beck said she is trying to build the

women's program as Coach Dean Smith has done at North Carolina. She said she wants to build the program into a powerhouse where each graduating class is replaced by an abundance of young players.

"We never say we are going to replace our seniors," Beck said. "We try to remold, reorganize and restructure our program. Each class has a different thing, so we remold and regroup and build new leaders for the future. In the long run it betters our program."

Beck said this year's senior group has had a tremendous impact on the basketball program and has led the team by setting the tempo.

"The seniors set the tempo, and

then all the kids took off on it," Beck said. "They set the tempo early and set the tempo at practice. The seniors have been through the rough times of the program and have been through a lot."

Beck said the change in the Nebraska program happened because the seniors wanted it to.

Fiene agreed. "We wanted the change to happen, so we just adjusted to her philosophies and attitudes," Fiene said. "As you can see, her rules have helped."

All four seniors said the changes under Beck were worth enduring because they led to a conference championship this season.

Husker men capture ninth swimming, diving conference crown

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vidual medley and the 500- and 1,650-freestyle events.

Nebraska women's coach Ray Huppert said he blames himself for the loss.

"They just beat us," a dejected Huppert said. "It's really difficult because I hate to lose."

Kempf, who was selected as the men's coach of the year, said he was proud of his swimmers.

"I couldn't be more proud right now," Kempf said. "The girls kept pushing and pushing and they did it. The Big Eight championship belongs in Kansas and it's back, hopefully to stay."

The Husker women had two Big Eight champions Saturday night as sophomore Terry Long beat three-time Big Eight Champion and teammate Erin Hurley in the 200-yard breaststroke with a time of 2:23.05. Nebraska also won the 400-yard freestyle relay by edging out Kansas with a 3:27.84 clocking.

The Nebraska men, meanwhile, captured three individual Big Eight crowns.

Sophomore Jaco Kruger defeated defending champion Chuck Jones of Kansas in the 1,650-yard freestyle by shattering the Big Eight record with a 15:31.22 clocking.

Tom Stus, a sophomore from Friendswood, Texas, then became Nebraska's first Big Eight champion in the 200-yard butterfly and sophomore Sean Frampton defended his Big Eight title in the 200-yard breaststroke by winning in a time of 2:02.87.

Beck hopeful Huskers can still get NCAA bid

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to 22-6 on the season, while Kansas advanced to Monday night's final with a 20-9 record.

Beck said despite the loss to Kansas, she still thinks Nebraska will be in the NCAA Tournament.

"I have a high feeling that we'll still be in the NCAA (Tournament)," Beck said.

Beck said the loss to Kansas may even help the Huskers because they will most likely play in the NCAA Tournament's first round on March 16 rather than receiving a bye and playing on March 18. She said she would rather have Nebraska get a game in before the second round of competition begins.

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