

Maturity may help inexperienced Huskers

By Mark Derowitsch
Senior Reporter

With the loss of Nebraska's top two strong safeties, the Cornhuskers' secondary may seem vulnerable.

But Nebraska secondary coach George Darlington said the loss of Brian Washington and Jeff Tomjack, who both used up their eligibility last season, isn't as devastating as it appears. He said Reggie Cooper, a freshman from



Fryar

Slidell, La., who recorded seven tackles and broke up three passes last season, will help fill the void left by Washington and Tomjack.

"Reggie was a freshman on the varsity last year and he played behind Washington and Tomjack," Darlington said. "So playing won't be foreign to him."

Nebraska cornerback Lorenzo Hicks said Cooper, who is backed up by juniors Wendell Wooten and Scott Vampola, is adjusting well to being the No. 1 strong safety.

"He's a very mature guy for his years," Hicks said. "He's learning, playing well and fitting in. He's big,

fast, strong, and he likes to hit."

Darlington said the remaining positions in the secondary also appear to be solid as they each return experienced players.

Darlington said two-year letterman Mark Blazek returns to his starting free safety position, but will miss most of the spring because of a hamstring injury. He said Tim Jackson, a transfer from Coffeyville (Kan.) Junior College who began his collegiate career at Kansas State, has been filling in for Blazek.

Darlington said the free safety has the most to prove of any positions in the defensive backfield.

"It's the position where we have

some of the less experienced players," Darlington said. "With Mark Blazek missing most of the spring practice, it will give the other guys some work."

Darlington said Nebraska will have ample depth at the cornerback position this season. He said the absence of Charles Fryar, who was being held out of spring practice because of academic or disciplinary reasons but has since returned, allowed Tahaun Lewis, John Custard, Jon Crippen and Cartier Walker to gain valuable playing experience.

Darlington said Lewis, Custard, Crippen and Walker will see plenty of playing time this fall.

"We could put three or four returning starters back there," Darlington said.

Hicks said the Huskers' experience will show up once the season starts.

"Overall, I think we have a lot of maturity," Hicks said. "I'm not going to say a lot of experience because we don't have a lot of guys who played a whole lot. But we have a lot of older guys back there."

Track teams finish second in Oregon Invite

By Kyle Schurman
Staff Reporter

A second-place finish by the Nebraska men's and women's track teams at the Pepsi Track Invitational Saturday in Eugene, Ore., didn't disappoint Cornhusker coach Gary Pepin.

Pepin said the Nebraska men's performance was impressive because the other three teams at the meet were very talented. Oregon won the men's portion of the meet with 191 points, followed by the Huskers with 185, Louisiana State with 157 Washington State with 113.

Oregon also won the women's portion of the meet by tallying 170 points. Nebraska finished second with 157 points, and LSU and Washington State finished third and fourth with 151 and 105 points.

Pepin said the strength of the meet was demonstrated by Oregon and Washington State's second- and third-place finishes in the men's portion of the Pacific Ten Conference outdoor championships last season. He said the Pac Ten is one of the strongest conferences in collegiate

track. "Oregon has traditionally been one of the top 10 teams in dual meets in the U.S. since 1970," Pepin said. "Several times they've been dual meet champions."

'That meet was really helpful for our coaching staff and the kids. It was probably one of the best meets we've been in since I've been here'

—Pepin

Pepin said Marc Rexroad, Joe Kirby and Bob Jelks led the Nebraska men. Kirby set a school record while winning the 5,000-meter run in 14 minutes, 13 seconds. Rexroad, a Lincoln East graduate, moved to second on the Nebraska all-time outdoor high-jump list with a leap of 7-foot-2 1/4, and Jelks ran the 200 in 21.07,

moving him to fourth on the all-time list.

"We had good competitive efforts up and down the line," Pepin said.

Pepin said the Nebraska men were at a disadvantage because most of them had competed in only one outdoor meet before Saturday. He said the Huskers were also at a disadvantage because they had no one to compete in the hammer throw, an event which "is very popular in the West."

"We were at a disadvantage in the hammer throw," Pepin said. "We automatically lost points there right off the bat."

Pepin said the Oregon women were also very talented because they finished ninth at last season's NCAA outdoor championships.

But he said Nebraska didn't perform well at the meet.

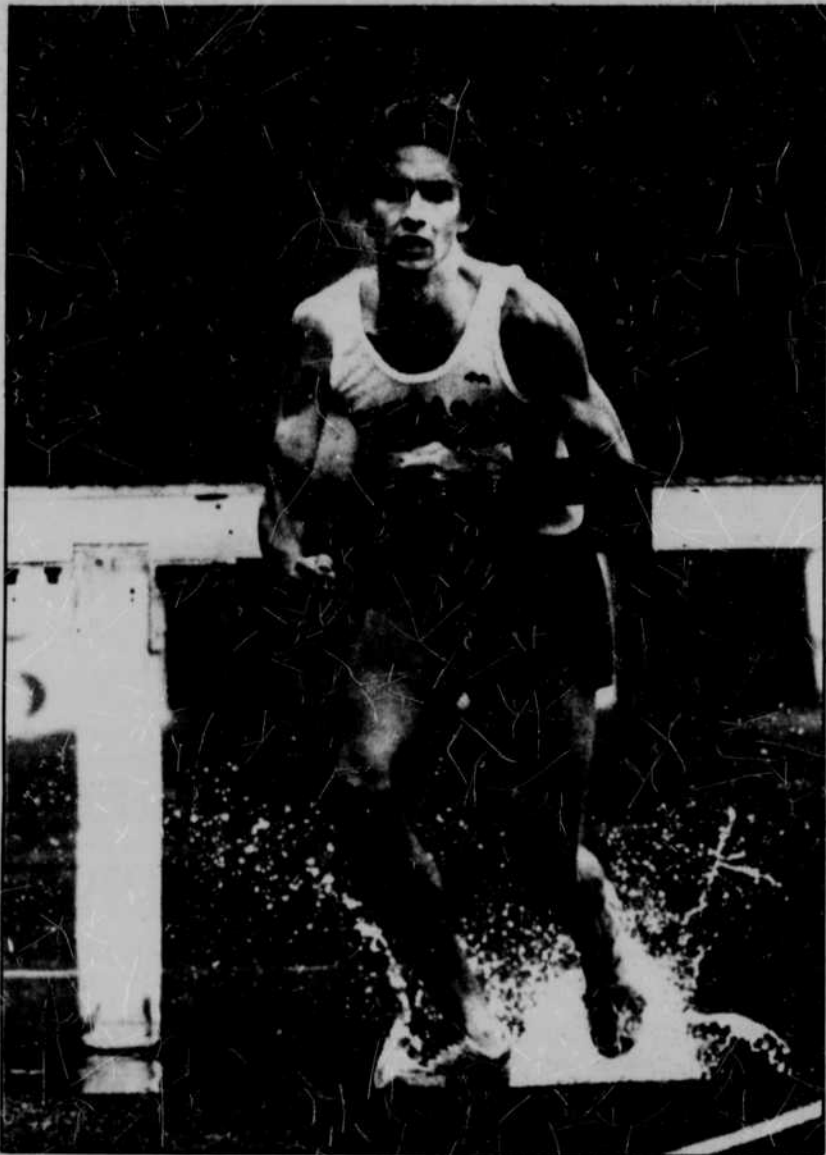
Juliet Prowse was the lone Husker to qualify for the NCAA Championships. Prowse ran a 9:21.67 in the 3,000. Tammy Thurman jumped 6-2 to set a school record in the high jump.

Pepin said Michelle Milling, who won the 400, and Jean Monter, who was second in the discus and shot put, also performed well for Nebraska.

Pepin said the Husker women need to improve in the long jump, triple jump and the 100 hurdles.

Nearly 5,000 fans attended the invitational, Pepin said. He said the fans created a great meet for Nebraska to participate in.

"That meet was really helpful for our coaching staff and the kids," Pepin said. "It was probably one of the best meets we've been in since I've been here. The spectators were great and it was a great meet on a great surface."



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