

Disabled are able to play Group sports basketball and blisters

By Mary Nell Westbrook
Staff Reporter

Handicapped students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln don't have to just sit at home, said Lydell Otley, vice president of Lincoln's Handicapped Recreational Services.

"We don't want to be home bodies," Otley said. The informal group of disabled people who make up HRS play basketball, tennis, softball, pool, bowling and other sports despite their handicaps.

"You have to learn to play a sport all over again," Otley said.

Although no UNL students are currently members, Otley said, he would welcome the additional members to boost the club's declining membership.

The group, which was originally geared toward competitive team

sports, had about 320 members at its peak, he said. Now only 20 members remain, he said.

The club began about 1975. It has since turned its emphasis to recreational sports.

But this change has not lessened the physical demands of participants, he said.

It takes about a year for a handicapped person to get their hands broken in from pushing the wheels of the chair so fast, he said.

"You get some serious blisters at first," he said.

Playing basketball from a wheelchair is harder than playing on foot. HRS proved this when it invited Nebraska football alumni to play wheelchair basketball against its team.

Athletes such as I.M. Hipp, Jarvis Redwine and Junior Miller lost to HRS in the exhibition game.

"We pretty much waxed them," Otley said.

The HRS team even gave the Husker alumni 25 points to start, he said.

A sport has special rules for the handicapped people playing. In tennis, the ball is allowed one extra bounce. In basketball a person gets two pushes of the wheelchair wheels for every dribble.

Nancy Garrett, HRS president, is the only woman in the group now. She said she felt like "the new kid on the block."

"I went in cold turkey, not knowing anyone," she said. "It's a lot of fun."

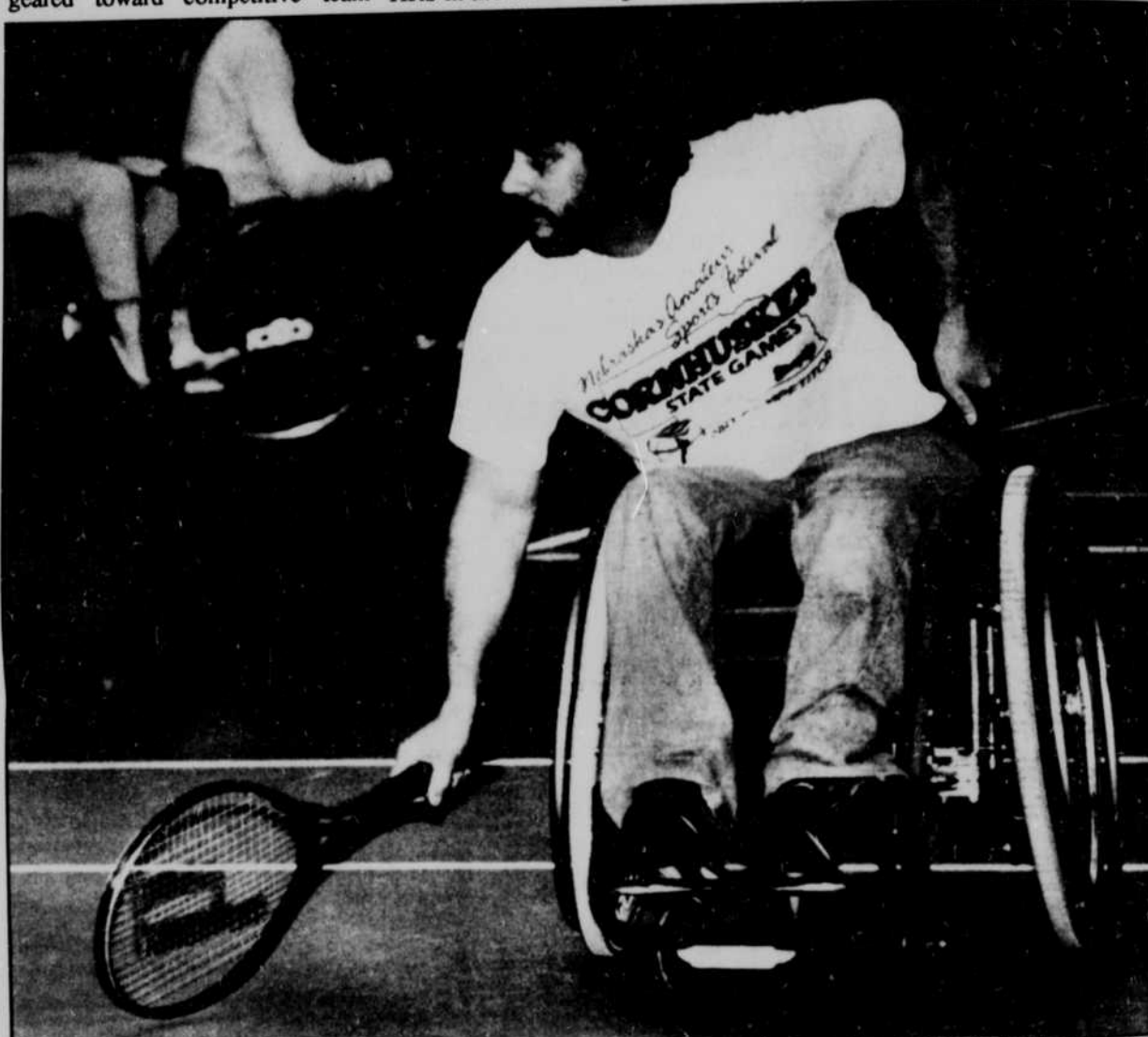
Some handicapped people "get on a self-pity routine," Garrett said. "They feel like it's a dead-end street." Otley said the Lincoln Wheely

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Connie Sheehan/Daily Nebraskan

Darryl Rahn watches as teammate Lydell Otley hooks the ball for an attempted two points during an intramural basketball game.



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Lydell "Oats" Otley follows through on a backhand during tennis doubles warmups.

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