



Butch Ireland/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska basketball recruit Ray Richardson in his dorm room in Harper Hall. Richardson, a transfer from Hiwassee (Tenn.) Junior College, is one of four Cornhusker newcomers.

Basketball zeal amazes Richardson

By Jerry Guenther
Staff Reporter

Call it culture shock — basketball style.

Ray Richardson, one of four Nebraska men's basketball recruits, can tell you all about that.

Richardson, a transfer from Hiwassee (Tenn.) Junior College, said he heard Nebraskans were only interested in football.

After arriving on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus, he soon learned otherwise.

"Football players, teachers, everybody around, has been asking us how we're doing and how practice is going," Richardson said.

The interest Nebraskans have in basketball was a pleasant surprise for Richardson, who grew up in the basketball-crazy state of Indiana.

Now he hopes to surprise some of the fans.

Richardson will get the chance to surprise some fans tonight when the Huskers play the Victoria, Australia,

All-Stars in a 7:35 p.m. game at the Bob Devaney Sports Center Arena.

Richardson, a 6-foot-6 forward who also swings to the guard position, has set two goals for the upcoming season. He said he and his teammates must work hard to reach the goals.

"I want to make it to the NCAA tournament," Richardson said. "And before I leave, I want to win the Big Eight (title)."

"People will say, 'Nebraska will never have a good basketball program,'" he said. "I want to prove them wrong."

Richardson was recruited by such schools as San Diego State, Tennessee, Clemson, Auburn and Miami (Fla.). He said UNL's academics program played a large part in his decision to come here.

"Some of the other schools had good academics," Richardson said, "but you didn't get the one-on-one attention like here."

Although Richardson said he isn't sure what type of role he'll play on this year's team, he said he hopes to

make an impact by getting a lot of rebounds and being a team player.

Another recruit who could make an impact on this year's team is Richardson's roommate, Carl Hayes, a standout at St. Joseph High School in Westchester, Ill., last year. Other Nebraska recruits are Dapreis Owens, a 6-9 forward from Mansfield (Ohio) High School and Eric Dolezal, a 6-3 guard from LaPorte, Ind.

Nebraska coach Danny Nee said this year's recruiting class is solid. All-Star Sports Publications rated Nebraska's incoming class 20th in the nation, ahead of national powers such as Duke, Kansas, Louisville, Villanova and Arizona.

"Nationally, last year's freshman class wasn't rated as high as this one, but they're both equal," Nee said. "We've had two solid recruiting years."

Nee also said the new recruits are capable of challenging for starting positions.

"I don't decide that," Nee said. "The kids do on the floor."

OU's Phillips delivers

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) - Throughout what has been a hectic season for the Oklahoma offense, there has been one constant: Anthony Phillips.

So what else is new?

Phillips, a 6-foot-3, 285-pound senior, has been rock solid for four years. When Phillips was just a freshman, Coach Barry Switzer promised greatness. And the record shows Phillips has done nothing to make Switzer wish he had spoken in less glowing terms.

If Phillips is named to the All-Big Eight team this season, it will be the fourth time. The Oklahoma coaches believe All-America honors await him this year.

As a student, Phillips is a three-time academic All-America and recently was named academic All-Big Eight for the fourth time, a conference record.

Merv Johnson, who recruited Phillips and has coached him the past five years, said it isn't stretching the point to call Phillips the best Oklahoma lineman ever.

"Based on his consistency, his durability... no, I don't think that's an overstatement at all," said Johnson. "I don't know who I'd trade him for as I look back at who we've had here, and we've had some awful good ones."

Phillips began his career at tackle but moved to guard when the coaches revamped the line during his freshman season. They figured Phillips' girth made him better suited for guard. He has proven them right.

In 1986 and 1987, the Oklahoma line was the best in school history. Then three starters graduated, leaving Phillips and center Bob Latham to lead the way.

Latham got hurt three games into the season. Meanwhile, academic and physical casualties to other players on the offensive line left Johnson trying more combinations than a safe-cracker.

Phillips, however, was always there.

"He's been such a leader for us this

year," Johnson said. "The other guys, they all respect him and look up to him. And he hasn't cut himself any slack as far as the way he's worked."

"It's just his personal drive to excel in everything he does. In a very quiet way, he's going to be the best at what he does, whether it's making the highest grade on a test or whatever it might be."

In the Texas game, the Sooners ran over Phillips' right guard spot continuously in the clinching touchdown drive.

When Oklahoma found itself in another tight fit against Colorado, Phillips' number was again called over and over. The same was true two weeks ago against Oklahoma State, when the Sooners drive 80 yards in the fourth quarter to score the winning touchdown.

Phillips said those games bring the most pressure but also are the easiest to play.

"If I do a good job, I thrive on it. It's gratifying to me that they have enough confidence in me to run over my back," he said. "But I think that's pretty natural. I've played in this offense four years and know all the plays. I think I react to it well."

Where would the Sooners have been without him this year?

"I don't know. It's interesting to consider that," said Johnson. "He's really been the catalyst as far as the line is concerned, and maybe even the whole offense."

"You always know how he's going to play. I could grade him for this week's game right now and wouldn't miss by much."

Saturday Phillips will play in his last game at home. The opponent is Nebraska, and the Big Eight title is the prize. A victory would mean Phillips would have gone four years without losing to a conference opponent.

"They've all been big games for our program, and for me," he said. "We've always had great games against Nebraska."

"I think it'll be sad for me in a way, my last home game. But it's a great way to end a college career."

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