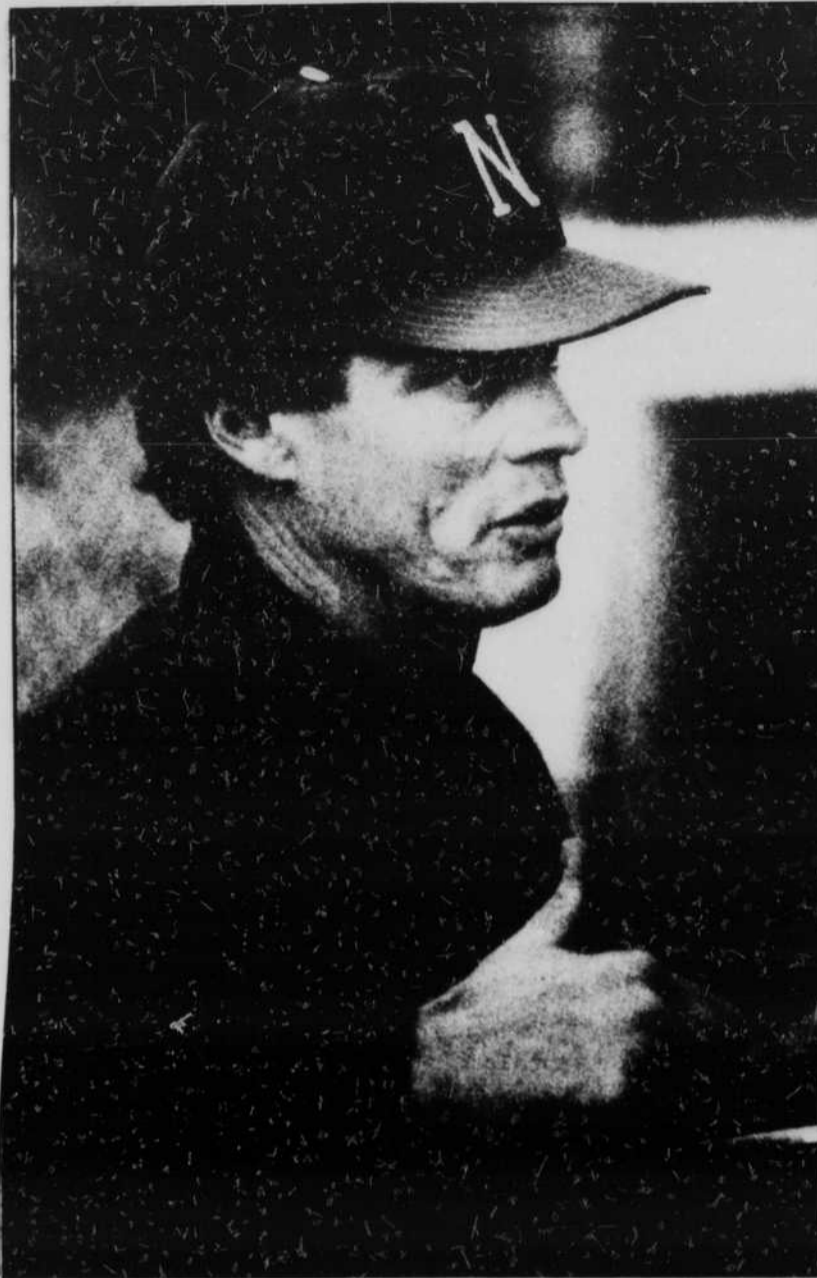


# Sanders says past pro play is beneficial



David Fahleson/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska baseball coach John Sanders explains the finer points of hitting.

By Jerry Guenther  
Staff Reporter

From his high school playing days at Grand Island to the winning tradition he has brought to the Nebraska baseball program, John Sanders knows what it takes to be successful.

Sanders, who took over the Nebraska baseball coaching duties in 1978, has averaged more than 43 wins per season while leading the Cornhuskers to three NCAA regional bids.

His career record of 474-213 ranks first at Nebraska in victories, as does his career winning percentage of .690.

Sanders, who spent the latter half of the 1960s playing professional baseball in the minor leagues, said he credits part of his success to his playing career. He played for the then-Kansas City A's for part of the 1965 season, appearing in one game as a pinch runner for Joe Rudi.

"I was OK, but I wasn't great," Sanders said. "Otherwise, I'd be a retired millionaire."

One team Sanders played for in the minor leagues was Jacksonville, the AAA farm club of the New York Mets. The 1966 Jacksonville team featured Tom Seaver, who later went on to star with the Mets and the Cincinnati Reds.

Sanders said he uses his professional baseball experience to help him in his coaching career at Nebraska.

"I learned at the time that you can learn a lot about the game just analyzing it," Sanders said. "Even during the times when you're not playing."

Sanders' baseball career began in 1964 when he signed a contract with current St. Louis manager Whitey Herzog, who used to be a scout with the A's. He said Herzog went on to have a big impact on his coaching career.

"Whitey was a guy that would take the time to work with an average player to try and make him better," Sanders said.

"I learned a lesson from that and I

try to carry that through today."

Before Sanders signed his professional baseball contract, he was named the Nebraska Prep Athlete of the Year during his senior year at Grand Island High School. He also earned All-State honors in football and basketball, and set a state record in the discus throw.

His talents made him a highly touted recruit in baseball and several other sports.

Bob Devaney, the current Nebraska athletic director who served as the Huskers' football coach from 1962-72, said he offered Sanders a scholarship to play quarterback.

"I knew he was outstanding," Devaney said. "I told him he could play both sports (football and baseball), but he didn't accept a scholarship."

Sanders said he declined Devaney's scholarship offer because he enjoyed baseball more than football. He said he thought he would have a better chance of playing professionally in baseball than any other sport.

Devaney said he did not have any reservations about hiring Sanders even though the Nebraska coach had already turned down one offer to become a Husker. Sanders replaced Tony Sharpe, who retired after the 1977 season.

"There was no doubt in my mind that when Tony retired, John was the man to step in and replace him," Devaney said.

Devaney said Sanders has an optimistic attitude that rubs off on the players who go through the baseball program.

"I'd give a great deal to see John win a Big Eight championship. He works so hard and he deserves it," Devaney said. "It would only be fair, but things in this world do not always work out fairly."

Oklahoma State coach Gary Ward said he has great respect for the Nebraska program. He said he always considers the Huskers a "threat" for the Big Eight championship.

Ward said one factor that might be keeping Sanders from winning a

conference title is the tournament's site. The Big Eight tournament is held annually in Oklahoma City, Okla., which is about 50 miles from Oklahoma State's campus in Stillwater, Okla. Oklahoma State has won eight straight conference titles.

"In essence, it's tough to beat Oklahoma State in the Big Eight tournament since we have an edge from the crowd," Ward said.

Ward said Nebraska's success can be traced to quality coaching and equally good players. He said Sanders does a good job of recruiting despite Nebraska's cold weather.

"I think it would be very difficult to follow in Sanders' footsteps," Ward said. "I don't know if I'd want to."

Wichita State coach Gene Stephenson agreed.

"I think his record speaks for itself," Stephenson said.

Pete O'Brien, a former Nebraska standout who now plays for the Cleveland Indians, said Sanders works on developing confident attitudes in his players. He said that attitude helps on and off the field.

"Coach Sanders works as hard as I've seen anybody in baseball work," O'Brien said. "He tells his players not to let anything get them down."

O'Brien said Sanders' lessons helped him make the major leagues. He said they also helped him in his personal life.

"You're going to find out how good of a manager he's going to be, because he's concerned about the players' personal lives," O'Brien said. "That's a sign of a good manager."

Nebraska outfielder Ken Ramos and shortstop Ken Sirak said Sanders is willing to take time out from his personal life in order to help his players.

"His door is always open," Ramos said. "He treats us just like family."

Sirak agreed.

"He's been like a father away

See SANDERS ON 17

## Renita Robinson prepares to compete in Big 8 indoor track championships

By Darran Fowler  
Staff Reporter

The last major meet of the indoor track season will be the first collegiate competition this year for Nebraska three-time All-America selection Renita Robinson.

Robinson said she is excited about competing in the Big Eight indoor track and field championships this weekend at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. She hasn't competed in a meet since she won the U.S. Olympic Trials exhibition triple jump in July.



ROBINSON

Robinson missed all of the indoor competition leading up to the Big Eight championships because of an injured nerve in her back, which occurred while she was lifting weights. She said her recovery from the injury was a slow and tedious

process because it was in an area that controlled a lot of her movement.

"My flexibility was really hampered by the injury," Robinson said.

But, she said, the long layoff may have worked in her favor.

"I think it's a benefit more than anything," Robinson said. "It makes me more excited for one thing because I haven't competed in so long. Also my adrenaline is really flowing... adrenaline that hasn't been used up in a long time."

Robinson said her excitement isn't based entirely on her return. She said the fact that there is a lot at stake at the conference meet also excites her.

Robinson said the Nebraska women, who have captured every indoor and outdoor Big Eight title of this decade, are looking to cap that string this weekend. She said the entire team can feel pressure because the task won't be easy.

"It's a special year because it can mean 10 years in a row," she said.

"But we have to be very careful. We have to compete at our best in all areas because it doesn't look as favorable as it has in the past."

Nebraska track coach Gary Pepin said Robinson's return is important. He said Robinson, who holds the conference record in the triple jump with a leap of 44-feet, 6-inches, should not be affected by her long layoff.

"Even though she missed a lot of training, she still trained hard through the summer," Pepin said.

He said there is a possibility that Robinson and teammate Joanne Gomez could sweep the Big Eight championships top two spots in the triple jump. He said there is also an outside chance Robinson could place in the long jump.

Robinson said her goal is to improve on her leap of 41-5 that won her the Big Eight championships triple jump title last year. She said she is confident that she can better that mark because she had a sore ankle at this time last year.

## Tennis team to play here this weekend

By Paul Domeier  
Staff Reporter

Professional-level tennis will be played in five collegiate dual matches in Lincoln this weekend, Nebraska men's tennis coach Kerry McDermott said.

McDermott said Wednesday that if people really want to see good collegiate tennis, they should attend Nebraska's matches against Wisconsin, Wichita State and Southwest Missouri State. The matches will take place this weekend at the Woods Park "double-bubble" indoor courts.

Nebraska will open its home spring season by facing Wisconsin at 5 p.m. Friday, then will battle Southwest Missouri State at 9 a.m. Saturday.

The Cornhuskers, 2-2, will close out their weekend by facing Wichita State at 5 p.m. Saturday. Wisconsin will face Southwest Missouri State at 1 p.m. Saturday and Wichita State at 8 a.m. Sunday.

McDermott said he is cautiously optimistic entering the tournament. A 7th-place finish at the 16-team Nevada Bob's Tennis Tournament last weekend in Las Vegas, Nev., prompted his optimism, he said. McDermott criticized his team after the tournament for being inconsistent.

McDermott said he is looking forward to facing Wisconsin because they won the same number of matches as Nebraska last fall in a flighted tournament. He said he is anxious to see how Nebraska's two new players

-- No. 3-singles player Mathias Muller and reserve Joseph Rahme -- fare against Wisconsin. Muller and Rahme joined the team at the start of the second semester.

McDermott said Southwest Missouri State and Wichita State are similar to each other. He said Southwest Missouri State may have a slight talent advantage because of the Bears No. 1-singles player, Hackan Svensson. Svensson has beaten Steven Jung, Nebraska's No. 1-singles player, twice in three-set matches.

"There is potential for a couple of these players to turn pro," he said. "A lot of these players you may see down the road."

Nebraska is anxious to play at home again, McDermott said.

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