

Afterthought led to athletic honor

By Cory Golden
Staff Reporter

When Yvonne van der Kolk came to the United States last year, she had no intention of running cross country. Nor did she plan on being an All-

America selection. In fact, she said she didn't know what the words 'All-America' meant until she earned that honor last season. Yet both things happened when van der Kolk came to Nebraska last year from Hilversum, Netherlands as a freshman.

When she was only 15, American universities began to recruit her, van der Kolk said. And, while she originally replied "no way" to the idea of coming to the United States, she eventually changed her mind.

In April 1988, van der Kolk took a recruiting trip to visit Boston University and Nebraska. The choice was difficult, she said, but she elected to leave the Netherlands in favor of becoming a Cornhusker.

Nebraska assistant track coach Dave Harris recruited van der Kolk to



van der Kolk

run the 800 and 1,500-meter races. Cross country came as an afterthought. Van der Kolk said that originally she wasn't very fond of the idea.

"I was not planning on running cross country at all," she said, "especially because I had a long season in 1988. I had just gone to the world junior track and field championships. I was a bit tired of the whole season."

"Then I came here, and they said, 'Well, are you gonna' run cross country?'"

While she originally declined the offer, van der Kolk finally consented on the condition that she would not run in all of the meets.

Van der Kolk said running cross country wasn't easy at first. She said wasn't sure how she was going to do entering her first meet last season. She finished 12th.

Van der Kolk said her anxieties were prompted by the longer races and flatter courses that are employed in America. She said she was used to running 3-kilometer races, as opposed to the more-traditional 5-kilometer races, over flatter courses.

"It was completely different than the cross country I had run in the Netherlands," van der Kolk said. "There were three big hills. To the

rest of the team it was flat, because they were used to running hills.

"The Netherlands is flatter than Nebraska, so for me it was tough."

But van der Kolk made the adjustments and finished fifth at last year's Big Eight meet.

Then, the newcomer made herself known nationally with a 16th-place finish at the National Collegiate Athletic Association championships. That feat earned her All-America status, but the significance of the moment nearly was lost.

"At first, I didn't know what 'All-American' was," she said. "People said, 'Maybe you're going to be an All-American' and I was like '... What's an All-American?'"

When she found out the honor was bestowed upon the best 25 runners, van der Kolk said she was pleased with the achievement.

"When I found out what 'All-American' was," she said, "I was really happy with that."

Despite her success in cross country, van der Kolk's favorite races are still the 800 and the 1,500. She has personal bests of 2:04.3 in the 800 and 4:13.98 in the 1,500.

Van der Kolk was forced to sit out those events during the outdoor track season last year because of a ham-

string injury suffered at the Big Eight indoor track meet.

This summer, van der Kolk returned to Europe where she ran races in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland. She competed in the Dutch Championships, where she finished third in the 1,500 after resuming practice only a month earlier.

Now, after a short break that has kept her from running cross country this season, van der Kolk said she is gearing up for the Portland Invitational Oct. 14.

Gearing up, that is, in a controlled sense.

"Cross country is not my main goal," van der Kolk said. "I like it, but I'm just building up a base for the outdoor season by running now."

Van der Kolk has been running since she was eight years old. She has competed in two world championships and two European junior championships and had a stint with the Dutch national team.

Van der Kolk said she wants to compete in the European indoor next year, and has set a distant goal of competing in the Olympics.

Cross country coach Jay Dirksen said the Olympics are not a far-fetched dream for van der Kolk. He said van der Kolk is a special talent.

NU football player says team continues to improve, has shot at national title

By Scott Stream
Staff Reporter

As the Nebraska football team continues to progress this season, so will defensive tackle Joe Sims.

Sims, a junior from Sudbury, Mass., said that the Cornhuskers are improving from game to game.

"We have a long way to go before we are satisfied," Sims said. "We are improving each week, especially the younger guys and the older players are coming around."

Sims attended Sudbury's Lincoln High School where he met Mike Croel his junior year. The two have been close friends since, Sims said.

Sims and Croel came to Nebraska together after graduating from high school. Sims said it was nice to have a friend around when he was a freshman because he felt homesick at first. But with being on the football team, Sims said he quickly made new friends.

Sims' major is criminal justice and he said his main concern is to get a college degree. He would like to play professional football, if the opportunity arrives, but he said that he isn't totally counting on it.

"My major concern right now is to keep studying hard and getting good grades," Sims said. "If a team wants to draft me, I might go. But I'm not even sure I want to play professional football after college."

"We are at a point where we're proving we could be a great team that plays great," Sims said.

Sims said he is happy with the way the defense has been playing so far.

Against Utah, the Huskers had some trouble stopping the Utes's passing game, Sims said.

"Steve Mitchell was the best quarterback that I have ever played against," Sims said. "And I've played against (Troy) Aikman and (Steve) Walsh."

The Utes scored toward the end of the game making the score closer than the actual game, Sims said. Sims said that the defense had a mental letdown.

"We were asleep on that last play, but we never will have a physical letdown," Sims said. "No matter what the score, everyone always gives 100 percent."

Sims said the Huskers' chances in the Big Eight were as good as everyone else's, and that he thinks Nebraska has a good chance to finish first.

"If we keep playing the way we have, I think that we will have a good shot at a National title," Sims said. "We just can't be satisfied at this point in the season. We must fine-tune the machine."

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Contact: Internship Office
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NU football tickets on sale this week

A limited number of tickets for Saturday's football game against Kansas State are on sale at the South Stadium ticket office.

Tickets may be purchased from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 4 p.m. They may be charged on Visa or MasterCard.

No tickets remain for Nebraska's game against Colorado on Nov. 4.

...and followed by Scott's Indians with 75 and Van der Kolk with 140. Dirksen praised the effort of van der Kolk, who set a Lake of the Woods course record en route to winning the men's 10-kilometer individual title in 30:11.8.

"He had a tremendous run," Dirksen said. "I knowed really good."

"He didn't run that hard the first half of the race. In fact, he was back a ways — about eighth — at the halfway point."

"But when he turned it on, he blew them away."

Joining van der Kolk as top finishers for the Nebraska men were Frank and James Dirksen and All-American runner Jay Kirby. The Cornhuskers finished third and fourth, with Kirby was fifth.

Kirby had a bad side ache or he would have been 100-odd yards ahead.

Dirksen said he was surprised to see the effort of the younger runners.

Dirksen said the 2000-yard race was a really good test, as Nebraska and Kansas combined to take the race to the 11th place. Iowa's James Krackenberg was the individual title, while Nebraska's Katie Fletcher, a redshirt freshman, placed second.

"Katie Fletcher had a tremendous race. She ran really well," Dirksen said. "There have only been about a dozen people in the five years of the race that have run faster."

"That's outstanding for her second college race."

Dirksen also praised the efforts of Nebraska's Julie Prowse, Michele Marshall, Tracy Smith and Priscilla Bensch. Prowse and Marshall finished third and fourth, while Smith was eighth. Tracy Bensch placed tenth.

Dirksen said he was really impressed with the Nebraska women because they were competing with the boys.