

# NU official criticizes decision to drop Sooner women's basketball program

By Jeff Apel  
Senior Editor

Barb Hibner, Nebraska assistant athletic director in charge of women's athletics, expressed shock when she learned that Oklahoma dropped its women's basketball program Wednesday.

Hibner said she was surprised by the decision because the Sooners did not give any indication that they were thinking about dropping the program. Oklahoma officials said the program was dropped because it failed to develop any type of fan following.

The Sooners drew an average of 100 fans for each of their home contests last season. Hibner said attendance problems do not take any of the sting away from Oklahoma's decision.

"We're shocked," Hibner said. "It shows that we better come down to reality because no matter what we do, we have to be cautious."

Hibner said she didn't take Oklahoma's decision lightly. The Women's Basketball Coaches Association also didn't take it lightly, as it issued a strong statement which blasted Sooner officials.

The association also said it was considering filing for an injunction to temporarily prohibit the program from being dropped.

"It seems in my 11 years at Nebraska the Big Eight has had its highs and lows," Hibner said. "The highs have been the accomplishments of

the scholar athletes, and the lows have been the noticeable declines in female administrators and decisions like this.

"This is my lowest point," Hibner said Oklahoma's move may set a dangerous precedent. The move placed the Sooners in an elite class, as they are now the only Big Eight school which does not have a women's basketball team. Oklahoma also is one of

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only 15 Division I schools that do not field a women's basketball team.

Hibner said both of those figures could increase.

"Unfortunately, I think others might follow," she said. "It's loud and clear. It's obvious that they (high-ranking officials) are scrutinizing."

"What it comes down to is the mentality of the program. If you don't win, you might be dropped."

Hibner said she has trouble understanding the decision because Oklahoma officials indicated that they may replace the basketball program with a

women's soccer team. She said that move is an ill-advised one because soccer is an expensive sport.

The Oklahoma women's basketball program had an annual budget of \$1.3 million. Sooner officials said that money now would be distributed among the school's women's track, gymnastics, volleyball, softball, tennis and golf teams. It also would be distributed among the soccer program if it is added.

Hibner said there are better ways to save money than drop a program.

"Buy new uniforms once every three years instead of every year or reduce travel," she said, "but don't just drop a program all together."

"Don't just throw the baby out the window."

Hibner said Oklahoma athletes will take little consolation in the fact that their scholarships will be honored. Sooner officials announced that they will fulfill scholarship guarantees and the contract of Coach Valerie Goodwin-Colbert.

Hibner said a free education is not worth a premature end to a collegiate career.

"They're student-athletes, and they want to compete," she said. "I hope they're being given all the support they need, because right now they have to be devastated."

Hibner said she doesn't expect Oklahoma's action to prompt any sport suspensions at Nebraska.

"I don't think we have that kind of mentality," she said.

## NU

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Creighton before a four-game series at Oklahoma next weekend. The

Sooners are a perennial Big Eight power, but Anderson said he feels good about the upcoming trip.

"If we come out with the attitude we had today, we're going to get a lot more wins," he said.

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