

Players pressured to close Kansas' lead

By Paul Domeier
Senior Reporter

Nebraska men's tennis coach Kerry McDermott said his players realized last weekend the importance of every individual match in conference action.

The Cornhuskers started Big Eight play by beating Missouri, 9-0, and losing to Kansas, 5-4. Kansas has swept Missouri and Iowa State, giving the Jayhawks a 10-point lead over Nebraska for the conference title.

"We can't afford to give up points at this time, especially this week-

end," McDermott said.

The Huskers will play Iowa State and Colorado on Friday and Saturday at the Cather-Pound courts. Both matches will start at 10 a.m.

"I just can't believe Kansas beat Iowa State 9-0," he said. "That makes it a lot tougher on us."

This weekend the Jayhawks have the same chance to put pressure on the Huskers, playing Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, Nebraska's opponents next weekend. But the Huskers can return the favor by badly beating Colorado, Kansas' last conference foe.

McDermott said he occasionally stresses to his team its position in the Big Eight, though he wants the players to concentrate on their own efforts.

And motivation is no problem. McDermott said he feels like going back onto the court and playing.

"Heck, if I feel that way, I'm sure they feel that way," he said.

In addition to losing to Kansas, Iowa State has beaten Missouri, 9-0. McDermott said that after looking at the results of the Kansas-Iowa State dual, the Cyclones could have taken two matches.

Former Husker Mark Naprstek is playing No. 3 singles for the Cyclones. McDermott said he is glad Naprstek, who transferred after last season, is fitting in better at Iowa State than he did at Nebraska, where he did not crack the lineup.

"I think some players don't respect me as a coach," McDermott said. "Then they don't feel like a part of the team."

He said Naprstek has related better to the Iowa State coach.

Colorado has lost twice in the Big Eight, 8-1 to Oklahoma and 5-4 to Oklahoma State. The Huskers and Buffaloes split two duals last fall.

"They're as good as we are if we're not playing well," McDermott said.

The Huskers should at least win 7-2, he said. Anything less would open the door for Kansas, he said. The Jayhawks go to Boulder, Colo., next weekend.

Nebraska gets to play its last four duals at home. McDermott said less travel always is better, and playing in Lincoln could make a difference in the conference.

"It should help us, especially with the closeness of the competition," he said.

Big Eight once scraped sky in poll, foundations now in danger of collapse

The blueprint was simple. Great coaches like Billy Tubbs, Norm Stewart and Larry Brown provided the foundation. Great big men like Steve Stipanovich, Wayman Tisdale and Danny Manning latched onto the coaches and became the framework.

Mookie Blaylock, Anthony Peeler



Paul Domeier

and other great guards and forwards filled in the walls, and the glossy finishings were an NCAA championship for Kansas and national-recognition for the Big Eight as one of the nation's top-five conferences.

The Big Eight scraped the sky this

year when Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma held the top-three spots in The Associated Press men's basketball poll. The foundations of the conference's glorious structure, though, are shaking, and the Big Eight is in danger of collapsing into the second-rate conference it was a decade ago.

The walls and framework have to be replaced every two or four years, and now the foundation is cracking. Three Big Eight coaches have left since the end of the year, and a fourth program may be put on probation.

First look back to the conference pre-Stipanovich days, and remember how lousy the good ol' days were. Overrated coaches like Ted Owens, Jack Hartman and Joe Cipriano were the only nationally known names, and the occasional All-America selection always was a guard, like Darnell Valentine and Rolando Blackman.

The annual excuse for being bad

was that football dominated and no one cared about hoops, so the conference could not be great in both sports.

But the league is great, and the conference broke its attendance record this season. Only a lack of coaching ability could cause the Big Eight to drop back to Sun Belt or Missouri Valley conference status.

The Big Eight big three is tottering. Oklahoma, Missouri and Kansas were bounced early in the NCAA tournament, and those three probably won't see the top-10 again for years.

Missouri started the collapse in mid-season. When playing well this season, the Tigers were the best team in the country.

But Peeler all but disappeared and Mizzou lost its last three games to Notre Dame, Colorado and Northern Iowa.

Tiger regulars Lee Coward, Nathan

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Graham brothers' friendship will last longer than their Cornhusker careers

By Sara Bauder
Staff Reporter

Friends until the end. That is how twin brothers Frank and Harald Graham describe their relationship. The end of their college track careers is near, and their last home meet as Cornhuskers is Saturday at Ed Weir Track.

The meet, they say, will be a "goodbye" run for their family, friends and fans.

How does it feel to have only one meet left in Lincoln?

"Amen," Frank said.

Harald, though, was more conservative. Collegiate competition, he said, is so intense that he and his brother are looking forward to competing after college, when team scores and conference meets do not add pressure to races.

Frank and Harald, both distance runners, have lived together for all 24

years of their lives. Their closeness, they say, has helped them develop athletically.

Frank said they often will dream the same things, and Harald said they have the same kinds of goals and ideas.

"The other night, we both had bad dreams about fire," Harald said. "Except Frank, the capitalist, was making money with the fire, and I was losing my portfolio."

The two started their track careers together, as pole vaulters when they were freshmen at Nebraska City. Harald said all the tracksters, regardless of their events, had to do conditioning runs.

"We were always the last ones out of the lockerroom and the first ones back," Harald said. "So they decided we should become distance runners."

Harald became a steeplechaser when he arrived at Nebraska, but Frank

did not learn the event then because of an injury. Instead, Frank ran other distance races.

This year, both Grahams are steeplechasers.

Harald said his goals are to qualify for the national meet and place in the top four this season. Frank said he just wants to qualify for the meet.

Harald's long-term goal is to make it to the 1991 Olympic trials in the steeplechase. He plans to work in graphic design for a printer in Germany after graduating in May.

Frank will marry fellow trackster Lisa Darley in August, then student teach as he works toward graduating in December 1990.

Both Grahams plan to keep running when their college careers end, in road races with fast times as their only goal.

Whatever they do, they say, they will stay "friends 'til the end."

Coach: Team needs win to build momentum

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

After missing out on a record-setting performance, the Nebraska women's golf team will travel to Columbia, Mo., to compete in the Missouri invitational this weekend.

Nebraska women's golf coach Robin Scherer said she is looking forward to the competition because the Cornhuskers are coming off their best performance of their spring season. Nebraska won the Hawkeye invitational over Spring Break by shooting a 925 total, which was its second-best team score in history.

The Huskers recorded their best team score during the NU women's invitational last fall, when they fin-

ished with a 918 mark.

Scherer said Nebraska wants to continue to perform well when it competes in the Missouri meet Saturday and Sunday at the par-72, 6,100-yard A.L. Gustin Jr. course. Saturday's portion of the invitational begins at 10 a.m., with Sunday's action starting at 9 a.m.

Joining Nebraska and Missouri for the 36-hole competition are Dartmouth, Southwest Missouri State, Mississippi, Northeast Missouri State and Southern Illinois-Carbondale.

Scherer said Nebraska "opened some eyes" by winning the Hawkeye invitational in near-record fashion. She said the Huskers must win the Missouri invitational if they want to continue to build momentum for the

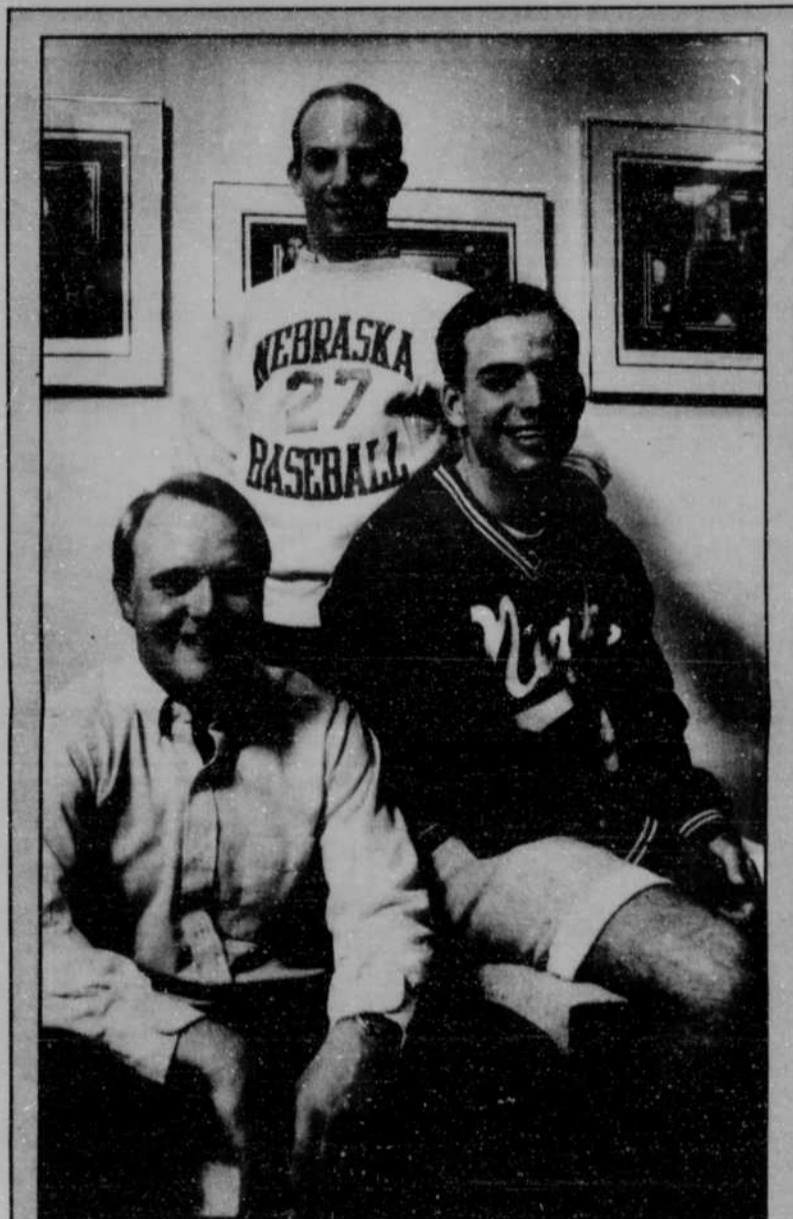
upcoming Big Eight tournaments.

The Big Eight tournament will be held April 21-24 in Lawrence, Kan.

Scherer said Nebraska has to be the favorite entering the Missouri invitational. She said the Huskers main competition will come from Missouri, which finished second to Purdue at the 1987-88 meet.

Missouri is led by Barb Blanchar, a senior from Columbia who was the individual medalist during the 1987-88 meet. Blanchar has a team-best 78.5 stroke average this season.

"Barb Blanchar . . . what can I say?" Scott said. "She continues to play well. She won the tournament the last time we had it, and it would be great to go out with another win right here in her hometown."



William Lauer/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska junior varsity football coach Shane Thorell (front left) poses for a picture with his cousins, Greg (front) and Billy (back right).

Thorells, Cornhuskers benefit from family ties

By John Adkisson
Staff Reporter

Many high school seniors are afraid that their first year in college will be one of loneliness and homesickness.

But Billy Thorell wasn't one of them. He felt like he was coming home.

Billy joined his older brother, Greg, and cousin, Shane, when he came to Nebraska two years ago from Denver. Billy's arrival was a double homecoming of sorts, as it united the Thorell's bloodlines and also strengthened the family's ties with Nebraska's athletic program.

Billy and Greg play for the Cornhusker baseball team. Billy is a switch-hitting outfielder, and Greg plays second and third base. Shane coaches Nebraska's junior varsity football team.

Shane said the situation has its benefits.

"I've gotten to know them both

a lot better," he said.

The three agreed that they have grown much closer since Greg and Billy arrived in Nebraska.

"Shane has helped me out a lot," Billy said. "You can get homesick pretty easily your first year, and I spent a lot of time talking to him."

Greg and Billy were high school standouts in three sports at Denver's Thomas Jefferson High School. In football, Billy played quarterback and Greg was a wide receiver.

Although they had a coaching connection at Nebraska, Greg and Billy were not recruited to play football in college, and opted instead for baseball.

"Neither of us are very big, so we probably would've had trouble playing (football) at Nebraska," Billy said.

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