

# Team's speed makes practice challenging for Cook

By Darran Fowler  
Staff Reporter

From an infielder's perspective, Nebraska third baseman Lori Cook, says playing against this year's Cornhusker softball team's offense would not be a pleasant task.



Cook said she sees the Huskers' speed game, which has produced 123 stolen bases, enough during practice.

At practice, in a drill called the bunting game, the infield challenges the slap hitting, bunting and base stealing that is a large part of the Husker offense.

Cook said she and shortstop Shae Sloan have a hard time throwing out the bunters and slappers at first base. When they don't, the challenge becomes greater.

Catcher Kris Vucurevic tries her

luck at preventing steals during the Husker practice. If she fails, the infielder futilely tries to get the lead runner at second base off the subsequent bunt or slap hit. But, in that scenario, the percentages lie in getting the runner at first.

"We practice against the fastest team in the nation," said Cook, a senior from Napa, Calif. "Few teams run like that. Arizona and Fresno State have a little speed, but nothing with the speed we can put in with our four pinch runners. We're one right after the other. That's nothing I've seen on another team."

In other words, she's glad she's an ally, not the opposition.

"I would hate to play a team like that," she said. "It just gives you more to think about."

Not that Cook, a former left fielder who never played third until her second season at Napa Valley College, doesn't enjoy the added work and pressure that goes with playing the

position. "It keeps you in the game throughout the whole game," she said. "That's one thing I need as a player, is to be into it the whole time."

On offense, Cook is hitting .302 from the Huskers' clean-up position. The Husker co-captain's nine doubles lead the team, and she is second in runs batted in with 20.

Since being humbled at Creighton two weeks ago, when the Huskers were swept 7-0 and 1-0, Nebraska has surged, winning 10 of its last 11 games, including nine straight.

"After Creighton there were a lot of doubts in our minds of what our ability was," Cook said. "We talked about it a lot together and from there we turned it around."

One reason for the renewed confidence was Coach Ron Wolforth's support of the team at a time when the players' attitudes were pessimistic, she said.

"Coach said he was not giving up

on us, and we just pulled through," she said.

With a 31-17 record, Nebraska could be looking at an at-large bid into NCAA postseason play if it fails to win the Big Eight tournament. Thursday, Nebraska rides its streak into the four-day conference tournament in Oklahoma City with the champion automatically qualifying for the NCAAs.

Cook said she doesn't want to mess around with any at-large bid. Winning the Big Eight makes getting into the NCAAs a more deserving honor, she said.

"I'd feel more comfortable winning the Big Eight title," she said. "It just wouldn't feel the same as getting an at-large bid."

If the Huskers make the NCAAs, Nebraska, unbeaten in nine home games this year, would be one of many teams within the region bidding to play first-round home games.

Cook, who along with right fielder

Jill Rishel is one of two Husker seniors, said she welcomes any opportunity to play in front of a home crowd again.

"Playing here would give us a lot of confidence," she said. "Not having lost any home games yet, we would feel pretty good coming back to play here."

**Notes:**

● Nebraska swept this week's Big Eight honors with freshman Sloan named player-of-the-week after going 7 for 17 (.412), including two doubles, a home run, six RBI and four walks. Nebraska junior Stephanie Skegas was named pitcher-of-the-week after earning five wins to up her record to 21-6 this year.

● Nebraska failed to have anyone named first-team All-Big Eight this season. Selected honorable mention were: Deanna Mays, first base; Jill Rishel, outfield; Vucurevic, catcher; Khara Trenka, utility player; and Misti Guenther, designated player.

## Baseball team plays catch-up, falls shy of win

By Paul Domeier  
Senior Reporter

The Nebraska baseball team made a simple blowout a brawling comeback against Creighton on Tuesday night before losing, 16-12.

Most of the spectators left Buck Beltzer Field after the fifth inning, when Creighton led, 12-2. The Bluejays scored three runs in each of the first three innings, chasing Cornhusker pitchers Aaron Bilyeu, who saw his record drop to 2-1, and Armando Garza.

Nebraska's offense came with a walk to Bobby Benjamin and Shawn Buchanan's two-run home run. Creighton added three insurance runs in the top of the sixth off Charlie Colon.

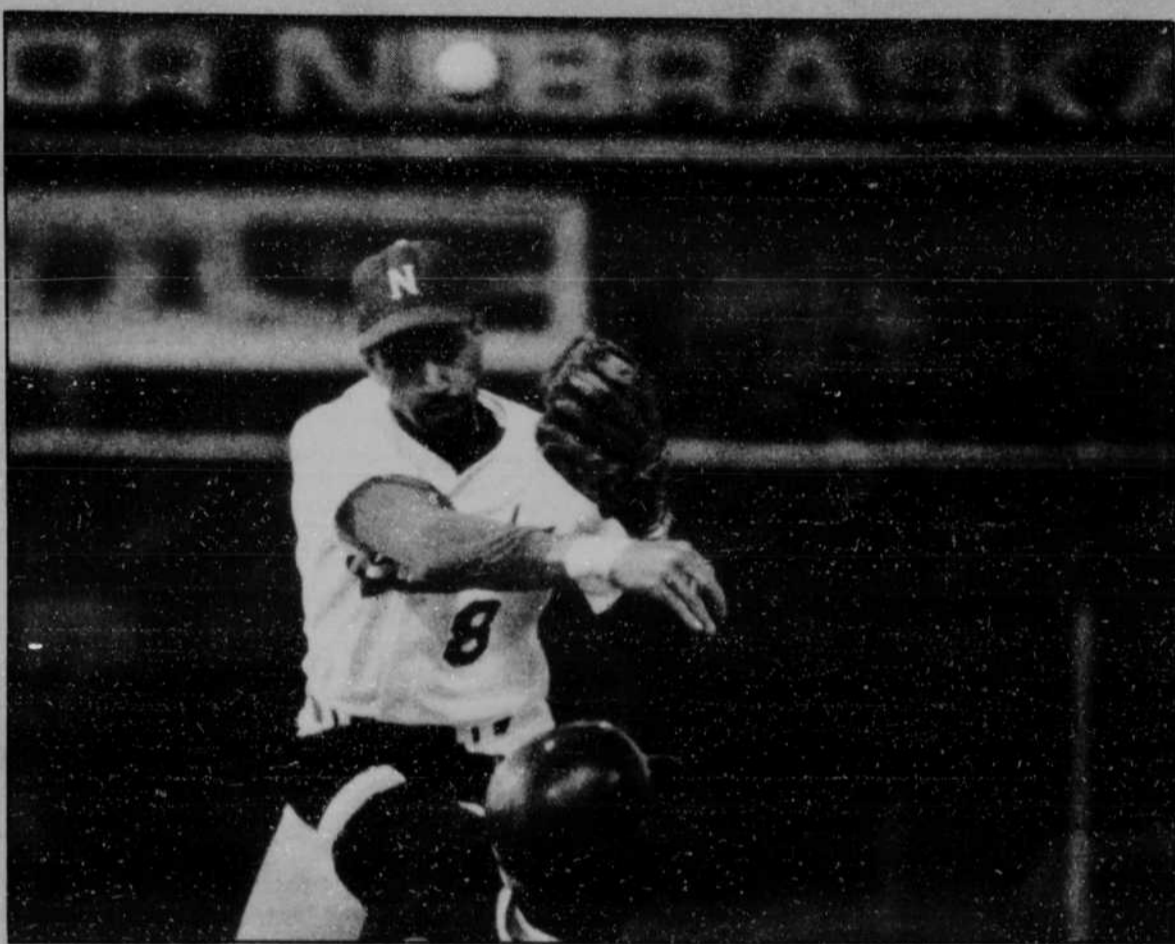
Then things got interesting. In the bottom of the sixth, Benjamin crushed a high, two-run home run off Creighton's Darin Harris, 4-4, to make the score 15-4, and the Husker career home run leader took his time getting around the bases.

Nebraska had scored three more runs in the seventh by the time Benjamin came to the plate. Harris' first pitch sailed behind Benjamin's back, and the Nebraska first baseman stalked to the mound. Both benches cleared, Benjamin and Nebraska assistant coach Steve Gillispie were ejected, and Harris left the game.

"The pitch to Benjamin was very suspicious," Nebraska coach John Sanders said. "You make your determination from there."

Creighton coach Jim Hendry said his pitchers weren't intentionally throwing at the Huskers.

"If anything, the way it all happened, it gave them a life," he



Nebraska shortstop Kevin Jordan attempts to turn a double play against Creighton University on Tuesday night.

William Lauer/Daily Nebraskan

said. The Huskers scored two more runs in the inning and Creighton added one in the top of the eighth, making the score 16-9. Bullpen ace Dave Matranga came in to pitch for Nebraska.

Bluejay reliever Brennan Maley hit Husker pinch-hitter Shaun McGinn with a pitch in the eighth, but McGinn took his base without incident.

Nebraska scored three more times to get within four runs and had two runners on with none out. The Huskers, though, went down

on a strikeout and two fly balls.

In the ninth, Creighton got two runners on with one out. But Dax Jones flew out to right, and Husker shortstop McGinn tagged out Steve Hinton at second on the hidden-ball trick.

Kevin French popped out to start the bottom of the ninth. Sean McKenna came up next, and Eric Kennedy's first pitch struck the Husker in the ribs. McKenna charged the mound, commencing the battle royal. After the bodies were sorted out, McKenna and Kennedy were ejected. A walk

and two ground balls later, Creighton had salvaged the victory.

"It wasn't very fun after the first four or five innings," Hendry said. "I hate to see it get to that."

And Nebraska scored 10 of the last 11 runs, leaving no doubt who has the momentum entering tonight's rematch, which will start at 7 p.m. at Buck Beltzer and will be televised on Nebraska ETV.

"If anything," Hendry said, "they turned it into a positive thing for themselves."

## KC Royals sacrifice fun and patriotism to capitalism, losses

In Kansas City, baseball no longer is America's game -- because of that pervading sense of patriotism associated with hot dogs and apple pie. In Kansas City, America's game is based on that jewel of the Western world -- capitalism.

What once was a sport tarnished only by the spitball, pine tar and the occasional hard-core gambler, now



Chris Hopfensperger

has been polluted with money; so much, in fact, that it has begun to ruin the game for the fans. In order to pay the ridiculously high players' salaries, the once-enjoyable afternoon at the park with a hot dog and a coke now is a major investment.

No team is more guilty of this than the Kansas City Royals, who in an effort to challenge their division rival, the world champion Oakland Athletics, bought up every good player they could find over the off-season and inflated the salaries of everyone else -- hoping to purchase a shot at the World Series.

So far, their penthouse prices have bought only them a seat in the cellar.

In fact, the only team worse than the 6-12 Royals are the perennial losers from Atlanta; the Braves' average salary is only \$435,787 -- a mere pittance compared to the \$821,435 that Kansas City shells out.

Granted, it still is early in the season, but the future isn't exactly bright on the horizon for the Royals, with injuries to Danny Tartabull, shortstop Kurt Stillwell, and Cy Young winner Bret Saberhagen.

Saberhagen, whose status still is in question, could be the last nail in the coffin on the way to an early grave for the Royals.

With Kurt Stillwell, Willie Wilson and Bo Jackson, offense is not the problem. It's the pitching.

Mark and Storm Davis have not lived up to their \$19 million price tag and Mark Gubicza, who still is recovering from his shoulder injury last fall, has an ERA of 8.71, not exactly promising for the future.

But now all the Royals can do is wait, pay those outrageous salaries, and hope that they start crawling out of the grave they have been digging all season.

Hopfensperger is a freshman news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan sports writer and columnist.

## Baseball game attracts athletic celebrities

By Chris Hopfensperger  
Staff Reporter

The stars came out on Monday night to watch the Cornhusker baseball team take on Creighton at Buck Beltzer Field.

A number of athletic celebrities, including Nebraska volleyball players Val Novak and Linda Barsness, basketball player Kelly Lively, and quarterback Mike Grant, came out to watch the Bluejays defeat Nebraska, 16-12.

One of the unexpected spectators, former Cornhusker football

standout Dave Rimington, said he was lucky enough to stumble on to the game while visiting friends in Lincoln.

"I just got back in town tonight, so I thought I'd come out," Rimington said. "I saw the lights so I figured I would come down and check it out."

"I sort of fell into this."

Rimington, a 1983 first-round draft pick of the National Football League's Cincinnati Bengals, had been in Philadelphia, signing a new two-year contract with the Eagles on Monday. The two-time All-

American at center said he is optimistic about his contract and the Eagles' chances next season.

"This is my eighth year coming up, and I never thought I would last this long, but we're a real good football team. Last year we were 11-5, a playoff team," Rimington said. "We've just got to get in the big game."

Also at the game was Creighton basketball coach Tony Barone, a baseball fan in his own right.

"I get to all the games I can," Barone said. "I love baseball, and

I think Jim Henry has put together one of the finest programs in the country here at Creighton."

"College baseball is getting to be as good as the minor leagues with the number of players staying through their junior year."

Barone said he especially enjoys the Creighton-Nebraska rivalry, although he doesn't see it as anything more than any other rivalry.

"It's just the state school playing another in-state school. It's a normal rivalry," Barone said. "Every game is a battle."