

Handicapped stadium seating almost ready

By Stacey McKenzie
Staff Reporter

Construction on alternative seating in Memorial Stadium for wheelchair-bound spectators will be completed for the first Nebraska football game Saturday, said Joe Selig, athletic department ticket manager.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln handicapped students will be given priority for the future seating. Any remaining seats will be sold to the handicapped general public.

The 12 to 14 seats will cost the regular ticket price of \$18.50 and will be located in the lower part of section one in the northeast stadium. They

will be equipped with an electronic lift and additional seating for one attendant for each handicapped spectator.

In the past, about 50 to 60 wheelchair-bound spectators have observed stadium activity on the ground below the north stadium.

The new seating has caused mixed reactions, Selig said.

"Some people think it's great, and some prefer the north stadium," he said.

Most of the non-students who have attended football games for years probably will opt for the seating in the north stadium, he said.

Handicapped spectators may prefer the north stadium because they are

protected from the wind, rain and sun, said Christy Horn, coordinator of UNL handicapped student services. The new seats aren't protected, she said.

"They've also been sitting down there for years" and wouldn't want break that tradition, she said.

The Association of Students of the University of Nebraska has been working for better seating for the handicapped for about two years, said ASUN President Phil Gosch.

"While I think we need to applaud the athletic department for this first step, there should be facilities of this nature for all handicapped individuals," he said.

The effort to obtain better seating has taken two years because of drawbacks to the plan, he said.

"It (handicapped seating) is expensive to construct and, at the same time, they've limited seat capacity," Gosch said.

To construct the handicapped seating, 55 regular seats have been removed, Selig said. The new seating's cost is estimated at \$20,000 to \$25,000, he said.

Six handicapped students have bought football tickets, Horn said.

Because of summer break, Horn said she had difficulty contacting students about the new seating but

predicted that almost all the wheelchair-bound students would opt for the seating.

About 400 handicapped students attend UNL, Horn said, and about 60 are in wheelchairs.

Horn said she is not as concerned about football seating as she is about accessible classrooms. However, the students who have reserved the seating are very excited about it, she said.

Still, many handicapped students prefer to stay home and watch the game on television to avoid exposure to the sun and the cold, she said.

Other handicapped students still are warming up to the idea, she said.

They are saying "let's look and see what kind of a deal it is," she said.



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