



Staci McKee/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's Rich King shoots over Northern Illinois' Donnell Thomas during Monday night's game. King tied the Nebraska record for most points scored in a game with 40 points.

Nebraska avoids nightmare defeat

By John Adkisson
Staff Reporter

The night of Rich King's life almost came with his team's biggest nightmare.

King scored 40 points, tying a Nebraska men's basketball single-game scoring record, and led the Cornhuskers to a comeback 82-73 victory over Northern Illinois on Monday.

A crowd of 13,698 spectators at the Bob Devaney Sports Center watched the Huskers teeter on the

edge of a loss for 35 minutes before they caught the Huskies and tore away with 20-5 run to end the game.

Husker coach Danny Nee lauded King's effort and emphasized the importance of his big man.

"Rich King did a superlative job," Nee said. "We needed that kind of performance, or otherwise Nebraska gets beat."

Despite 17 first-half points, King's presence did not begin to be felt until the second half, by which time the

See KING on 8

NU walk-on stands out

Swimmer turns triathlete

By Erik Unger
Staff Reporter

Sean Larson was glad when swim practice started.

He was tired and needed a break.

He was looking forward to concentrating on swimming. Just swimming, without having to put a lot of miles on the bike or running.

Larson's "off-season" training is swimming for the Nebraska men's swimming and diving team. His "season" begins with the first triathlon of the year.

Larson has competed in 30 triathlons nationwide over the past six years.

Despite swimming all of his life and competing in the 100 and 200 backstroke for the Cornhuskers, Larson, a senior from Omaha, said he has found his greatest success combining his speciality with running and riding a bike in competitive triathlons.

Larson said being a walk-on swimmer doesn't let him showcase his talents, something that triathlons do.

"For once, I stand out," he said. "That's my sport."

He is successful, having never placed lower than third in his age group. Last summer, in his first triathlon in a mountain region, he finished 13th.

About half of his triathlons are in Nebraska. Larson said he usually competes in standard triathlons, which include a one-mile swim, 25-mile bike ride and a 10-kilometer run. His best time is 2 hours, 12 minutes.

But his dream is to compete in the Ironman, the annual Super Bowl of triathlons, which is held in Hawaii. It requires a 2.5-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride and a 26.2-mile run, the equivalent of a marathon.

Larson said he started cycling six years ago, primarily for conditioning. He said he thought that with his swimming background, he could be a successful triathlete.

He started competing soon after and has entered several races in Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas.

Knowing that swimming offers few options after college, Larson said he is hoping to make a career out of triathlons.

"But I'm taking the realistic route," he said. "I'm not good enough yet to go pro and make any money."

Many triathlons include some prize money, usually offering a few hundred dollars to the winner.

That 13th-place finish last season puts him just outside the pro ranks — if a triathlete can finish in the top 10, he is considered good enough to compete professionally.

Until he reaches professional level, Larson said he will continue to swim when not competing in triathlons.

Collegiate swimming differs from triathlons in more than just the training, he said.

"In a swim meet, you are nervous for 10 seconds, but it's over in two minutes," he said.

Triathlons last two hours, so both the preparation and strategy are different, Larson said.

Triathlons are as much a mind

game as a physical activity, he said. Because it's a battle of mental frustration and pain, it's much easier to hold something back, he said.

But being a collegiate swimmer does have its advantages.

Larson said his strong swimming helps him sprint the first 300 yards to separate himself from the pack, where awkward swimming styles can create havoc. Being one of the first out of the water can give a psychological boost, he said.

He said his strong swim and consistent cycling guarantee him a top-10 spot off the bike. But, he said, running is his weak spot — one that swimming doesn't help.

"During the season, I focus on swimming and keep my running to a minimum," he said.

During the off-season, Larson

See SWIMMER on 8



William Lauer/Daily Nebraskan

Sean Larson towels off Friday after competing for Nebraska against Southern Illinois.

Off-season prompts turnaround of women's basketball team

With one week left in the regular season, the Nebraska women's basketball team has proven it is capable of just about anything.

The Cornhuskers began the season by winning their first five games. They captured the title of their own Wimmer's Invitational and won the Ohio State Invite by knocking off the Buckeyes in Columbus, Ohio.

In Big Eight play, Nebraska beat Missouri in Columbia, Mo., for the first time since Angela Beck took over as coach in 1986 and downed Oklahoma State, already the regular-season conference champions by three points.

Three times this season Nebraska has poured it on, scoring 95 points in wins over Robert Morris, Oral Roberts and Oklahoma.

Following last year's six- and seven-game losing streaks, the Huskers have lost back-to-back games only twice this season and will not be swept by any of their Big Eight opponents.

They have not, however, been perfect.

In the Big Eight opener, the Huskers found a way to lose, letting their

lead and the win slip away to Kansas State at home.

At Colorado, where Beck has yet to win, the Huskers turned the ball over 32 times in an 82-69 loss.

In Stillwater, Okla., the Cowgirls beat the Huskers by 22 in the season rematch, and nationally-ranked Iowa ran over Nebraska 80-46 in Iowa City, Iowa.

The key to the turnaround after last season's 10-18 mark and a tie for the worst record in the program's history?

The off-season. Karen Jennings, who earned the Big Eight Co-Newcomer-of-the-Year title and all-Big Eight honorable mention last year as a freshman, got even better over the summer.

Jennings, who led the Huskers in scoring (13.4 points per game) and was second in rebounding (6.6 rpg), is praised constantly by Beck for her work ethic between seasons.

This year, Jennings leads the Huskers and the Big Eight in scoring, averaging 23.1 ppg since conference play began. On Saturday, Jennings'



Chris Hopfensperger

31 points led Nebraska to a crucial 10-point win at Kansas State. The Huskers needed the win to draw even with Colorado and Kansas State in the league race.

Beck also scored big by enticing Meggan Yedsena to sign with Nebraska in November 1989 before the 10-18 record and holding on to her after the Huskers' dismal season.

Yedsena, a Street & Smith, USA Today and Parade Magazine All-American from Mahanoy City, Pa., is the best ball-handler at Nebraska. Her flawless dribbling and surgical passes have helped the Huskers break the pressure that broke their backs all last season.

Those skills have helped Yedsena crack the Nebraska record books as well. Her 149 assists puts her at third

in the Husker single season highs, 10 short of second place.

Yedsena's 81 steals puts her in fourth in that category, one steal out of third and 10 out of second. Leading the category is Diane DeVigna, whose 100 thefts came in a 36-game season.

Backing up the two future All-Americans is a strong cast of role players that have managed to come through when the All-Stars are down.

Sue Hesch, who is second in the Big Eight shooting 60 percent from the floor, helped lead the Huskers to their two tournament championships.

Kelly Hubert grabbed 23 rebounds to keep the Huskers close in a 80-74 overtime loss to Wisconsin.

And Carol Russell, who averaged only 2.2 ppg last season, scored 10 to hold off Kansas in a 69-68 win.

Not surprisingly, after tying Oklahoma for last place in last year's league race, Nebraska was picked to finish sixth in this season's preseason coaches' poll.

But this week the Huskers, 16-9 overall and 7-5 in the Big Eight, are in a three-way tie for second in the league

race with only two games remaining in the regular season.

And no one could ask for two better games to end a close conference race.

Wednesday night, the Huskers will meet Missouri at home. The Tigers, last year's Big Eight champs, are dead last in this year's conference rankings.

They have won only two of their last 14 games and haven't won on the road since a one-point overtime win in early December.

Just ahead of Missouri in the league standings are the Husker's last opponent of the season — Oklahoma.

The Sooners, whose program was nearly cancelled after racking up 7-22 and 2-12 marks last season, are 9-17 and 3-9 this year.

That means Nebraska has a chance to finish with its best mark in the Big Eight since the 1987-88 season, when the Huskers made it to the first round of the NCAA tournament and finished 22-7.

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