

Visitors impressed with big-time athletic tour

My brother and I recently took two uncles and two cousins on a tour of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

My relatives wanted to see a big-time school with big-time stuff.

And since they're from New York, Virginia and Connecticut, they wanted to see things they rarely see — big-time football, rodeos and pig-rustlers.

My cousin from Buffalo wanted to see a rodeo. I told him he really didn't want to see a rodeo. He wanted to see real live pig rustlers. I told him he really didn't want to see real live pig rustlers.

I tried to tell him he really didn't want to see spring football. He really wanted to see spring football.

So off we jaunted to Memorial Stadium. Filled with geeky Husker pride, my cousin sported a corn cob hat, orange fluorescent shorts and goofy socks and shoes. He looked like a big-time Husker fan as we entered the stadium.

And even though he fit in with the khaki-clad coaches that were observing a pre-scrimmage clinic, we decided not to take part.

With time to kill, I decided to show the relatives the campus. Being the professional tour guide that I am, I showed them the alpha-



Todd Cooper

bet sculpture in front of CBA, the spaceship and that Mueller tower thing.

Sensing boredom from the troopers, I decided to show them all the real big-time stuff. We took a shortcut to the Campus Recreation Center and stopped in the football barn, a.k.a. Cook Pavillion.

My uncle, shocked at the dimensions of the barn, declared in disbelief:

"So this is big-time athletics."

I didn't have much to say about the barn. It was big. It had turf. You get a heck of a shock if you touch any metal stuff in there.

Oh, and it cost big-time bucks to build, I said. Since the Huskers have made some sort of bowl game every year since 1900 and they've lost every one, they decided to build a barn so they could simulate bowl conditions.

And I told them the Huskers practice for every bowl game in the barn. They turn up the

heat. They play tapes of fans really loud.

They still lose bowl games.

But that's just part of big-time athletics, I reasoned.

After trying to shock my dorky cousin as we left the barn, (He was already upset because he thought he might see pig rustlers and rodeo clowns in the barn), we decided to go back to the outdoor barn.

We went by the largest weight room in the world.

Big-time athletics, big-time bucks, I said.

We went into the locker room where some big brute lineman (who shall remain numberless and nameless) walked by. My cousin mocked the big brute.

I told him he couldn't mock a big brute because big brutes are a part of big-time athletics.

Turner Gill just happened to be walking out at the time. My cousins murmured, "Was that Turner Gill?" I said yep, and he was our last big-time, big-play quarterback.

As we took our seats, I told my relatives that it had been a long time since we saw big plays from a quarterback like Gill.

I also made sure that they knew it would be

the only time we would be able to get a big-time seat at the 50-yard line of Memorial Stadium.

I filled the big void that a spring scrimmage can create by boasting about Nebraska's big-time program for a while. I told my relatives that, at the spring game the next week, 25,000 fans dressed exactly like my dorkily clad cousin would watch an intrasquad scrimmage. And I told them that 76,112 fans make Memorial Stadium the third-largest populated area in the state on Saturdays in the fall. And those fans have for 175 straight games.

They got some big laughs out of that. We watched the Huskers beat each other up for a while. It was big-time excitement.

Between the big-time plays and the big-time hits, my uncle took a big-time nap.

Taking that as a hint, I decided we should leave this big-time stuff behind us.

As we were leaving, Tony Farmer pulled into the stadium in his lush, black 1985 BMW.

My uncle gazed in disbelief at the BMW:

"Now that's big-time athletics."

Cooper is a freshman news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan sports staff reporter.

Defense

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Jones said he saw being thrust into action as a redshirt freshman more as opportunity than pressure. Outside linebackers David White and Trev Alberts are rehabilitating injuries and were unable to practice this spring.

And Jones said more experienced players, like returning starter Travis Hill, provide leadership.

"Travis Hill helps me out a lot," Jones said. "He's the one I look up to for advice and I try to pattern his

technique."

Hill, who had two sacks, said he has tried to encourage the younger players this spring.

"I really don't see myself as being a leader," Hill said. "On the field I see myself doing more motivating than anything.

"This summer, I'm going to work really hard and, hopefully, these younger guys will see me working really hard and will do the same."

Despite catching two running backs from behind Saturday, Hill said he needs to work on his speed.

"Right now, I run a 4.72 in the 40 and I'd like to improve that," Hill said.

But Hill said natural instinct takes over when he tracks down stray running backs.

"That's football," Hill said. "That's me out there playing football. I know my technique, but I think I'm more of a football player than a technician."

Hill said that while his younger teammates are competing for top positions, one thing is missing.

"Unification," Hill said. "We have to unify. Right now in spring, there's a lot of competition — everybody's fighting for that travel spot because we have some vacancies.

"But, we have the talent to fill those vacancies."

Huskers seeded fifth of six

Cuddeford: Big 8 win possible

By John Adkisson
Staff Reporter

Michelle Cuddeford's games are numbered.

Cuddeford, a senior second baseman for the Nebraska softball team, is hoping to extend her collegiate career by helping the Cornhuskers win the Big Eight Tournament this weekend in Oklahoma City.

Nebraska has been rained out of nine games this season, and for that reason Cuddeford said her senior season has flown by quickly.

"It seems like 'Where'd the season go?'" Cuddeford said. "But playing my last college game hasn't really crossed my mind yet."

If Nebraska does not win the conference tournament, its season will be finished. The 21-16 Huskers, fifth

seed in the six-team tourney, will play Iowa State in a 3 p.m. first-round game Friday at Hall of Fame Stadium.

A graduate of Lincoln High School, Cuddeford spent two years at Kearney State before transferring to Nebraska in 1989. She earned a spot in the starting lineup and this year is one of only two Nebraska seniors along with pitcher Stephanie Skegas.

Cuddeford said she has felt no pressure being in a leadership role.

"Stephanie and I, since we both transferred, are different kind of leaders," she said. "But everybody on this team is a leader in one way or another."

This year, Cuddeford has established herself as a dominant presence at the plate. As the No. 3 batter in the

Nebraska lineup, she is hitting .273 and leads the team in doubles with six.

But the Huskers have struggled, posting a 3-5 Big Eight record, their worst conference mark since coach Ron Wolforth took over five years ago.

"In no way do I think our record reflects our season," Cuddeford said. "We've been a different team in practice than we have been in games."

Despite Nebraska's conference woes, Cuddeford said the Huskers have a good chance to win this weekend's tournament and receive an automatic NCAA Tournament berth.

"You have to be confident," she said. "This whole team is going in there with the attitude that we have as good a chance to win as anybody."

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Nebraska signs California star

The Nebraska softball team has signed a pitcher that Cornhusker coach Ron Wolforth called "the top recruit this year."

The recruit, Lisa Shandy of Norwalk, Calif., has helped the Gordon Panthers win consecutive 18-and-under Amateur Softball Association National Championships.

"It is hard to say yet what she will mean to our program," Wolforth said in a press release, "but when a pitcher comes in from an ASA National Championship team, she has the potential to get us back into the nation's top 20."

Injured fan forgives fling

CINCINNATI (AP) — The grade-school teacher injured by Rob Dibble's latest outburst is in a forgiving mood, but there was no indication Tuesday whether the National League would be so accommodating.

The Cincinnati Reds reliever could be punished by league president Bill White for hurling a baseball into the stands after a poor outing in Sunday's 4-3 victory over the Chicago Cubs.

The ball hit first-grade teacher Meg Porter on the elbow. The injury has forced Porter, 27, to get medical treatment and miss two days of work.

Her lawyer said that Porter and her husband expect compensation for the bills and the missed work. But they don't hold a grudge.

"She has a medical bill and a couple of days off work," lawyer Don Moore said. "I don't think they have any great animosity towards Rob Dibble.

I don't think they're that type of people. They're nice people that just went to a ballgame."

Dibble's fling Sunday came moments after he completed his worst performance of the season, giving up five hits and two runs in the last two innings. He got Ryne Sandberg on a called third strike to end the game, received the baseball and congratulations from catcher Joe Oliver. As teammates came on the field, Dibble turned and heaved the ball into the center field stands.

Strike the Gold lives up to lineage

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Call it horse sense.

Trainer Nick Zito just knew he had to keep a 2-year-old named Strike the Gold, who was going to be sold away from him.

"I don't want to lose this horse," Zito told co-owner B. Giles Brophy after being informed last summer the colt was to be sold in January by Calumet Farm, another owner.

At the time, the son of Alydar had not even raced.

On Saturday, Strike the Gold will start in the Kentucky Derby as a leading contender based on his upset of Fly So Free in the Blue Grass Stakes.

In September, Brophy and two friends put together a package deal with J.T. Lundy, then president of Calumet, and bought Strike the Gold, five yearling fillies and a yearling colt.

Two of the fillies are by Seattle Slew, the 1977 Triple Crown champion, and two are by Alydar. The other is by Danzig out of the champion race mare Davona Dale. The yearling colt is by Alydar.

Strike the Gold got to the races on Oct. 11 when he finished ninth in a



six-furlong maiden event at Belmont Park. In his next start, he finished fifth in a maiden race at Aqueduct, then concluded his 2-year-old campaign with a victory. He won a maiden race by 8 1/2 lengths at Aqueduct on Nov. 15, the day Alydar died.

While Strike the Gold's performance did not strike up any public enthusiasm, Zito thought he had a Derby horse because of "the way he was working, his sire and his breeding.

"He looked like his father." Alydar won several major stakes in his career and became a top sire, but he is best remembered for finishing second to Affirmed in the 1978 Triple Crown races.

Strike the Gold finished third in a seven-furlong allowance on Jan. 26 at Gulfstream Park, then finished second in another allowance on Feb. 23 at Gulfstream — beaten 1 3/4 lengths by Cahill Road, who won the Wood Memorial but is out of the Derby with a leg injury.

On March 16, Strike the Gold, who was eighth after three-quarters of a mile, closed to finish second one length behind Fly So Free in the Florida Derby.

"The champ (2-year-old champion Fly So Free) reached back, but if he keeps reaching back too many times with this horse, sooner or later we'll catch up to him," Zito said at the time.

Strike the Gold caught and passed Fly So Free in the Blue Grass, beating him by three lengths.

"He's peaking just right," said Zito, whose Thirty Six Red finished ninth in last year's Derby.