

Husker women lose to Athletes in Action

Player's return doesn't bring win

By Chris Hopfensperger
Senior Editor

Meggan Yedsena had two points and no rebounds in the Cornhuskers' 98-85 loss to Athletes In Action Wednesday night. But she finished the game with a steal, seven assists and — most importantly — 32 minutes.

With five minutes remaining in the first half, Yedsena crashed to the court. She pounded on the floor in pain, before being carried off. For the rest of the half she sat on the bench with her ankle wrapped in ice.

On the court, Athletes In Action went from three points ahead to as many as 10. Nebraska trailed 54-46 at halftime.

The future was cloudy for the Huskers.

"Our season would be quite different without her," Nebraska women's basketball coach Angela Beck said.

But as halftime wound down, Yedsena joined the rest of the Huskers in drills.

With Yedsena on the floor, Nebraska battled back to close the gap to four. But her presence was not enough to shut down the outside shooting of Jennifer Azzi.

Azzi, who led the Athletes In Action team with 40 points, finished the game 6 of 9 from three-point range.

It was a career night for the All-American who graduated from Stanford in 1990.

"Usually, anywhere from 15 to 25 is my range," she said. "The most I've ever scored is 31."

Trailing by 10, Nebraska's Karen Jennings went on a rampage. The 6-foot-2 junior scored 10 straight points. Grabbing an errant three-point attempt from Yedsena, Jennings put the ball in to cut the lead to four.

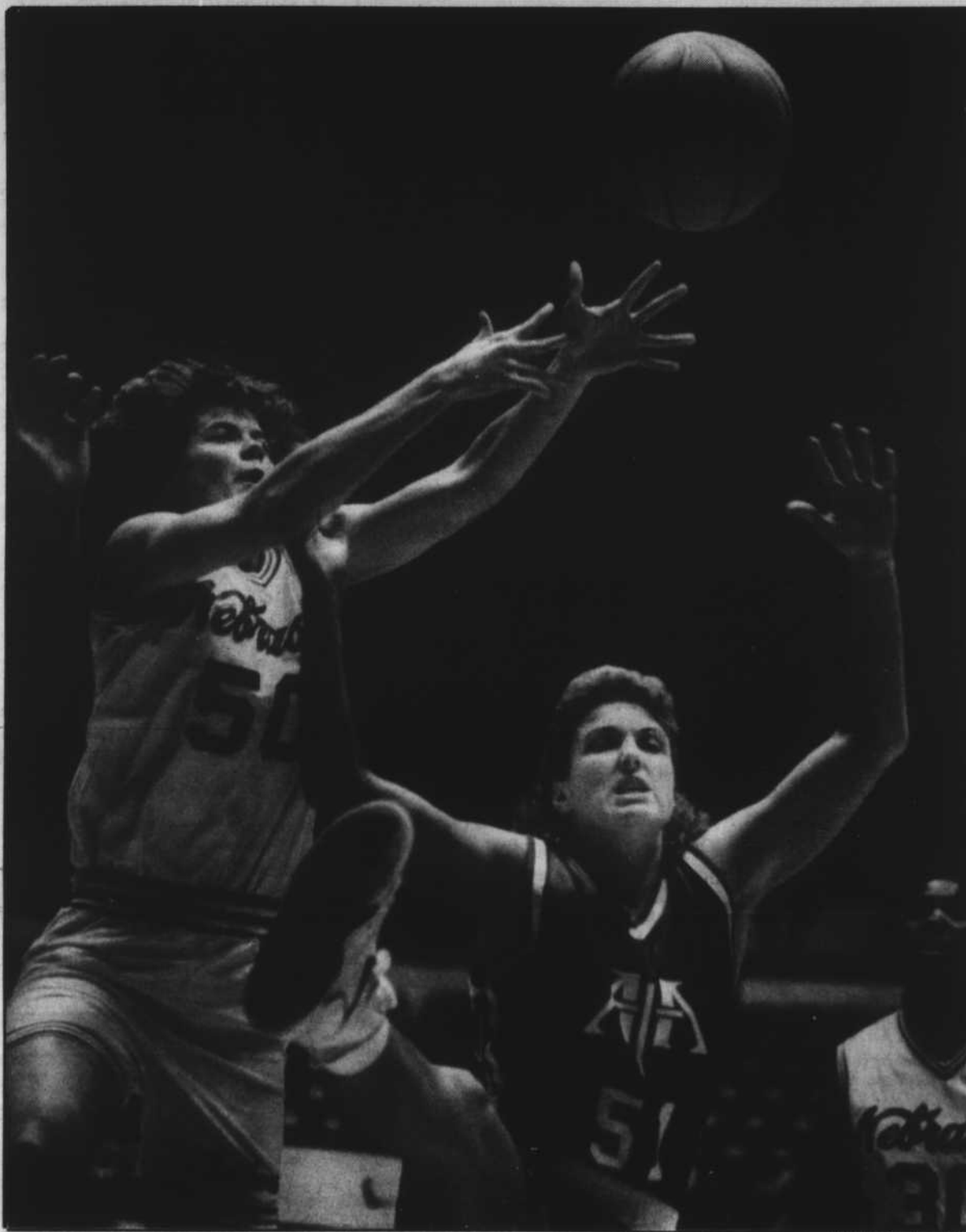
Azzi responded with two three-pointers to put Athletes In Action up 90-83.

Athletes In Action finished the game with a 10-2 run for the final margin.

The game was closer than the score indicated, Azzi said.

"I think we played well tonight," she said. "Had we been off we would have lost."

See ATHLETES on 14



Michelle Paulman/DN

Nebraska's Kristi Anderson tosses a rebound over Kay Konerza of the Athletes in Action touring team during the Huskers' 98-85 loss in exhibition game action Wednesday night. Nebraska coach Angela Beck said Husker trouble with the transition game contributed to the loss.

European guard opts for road life

By John Adkisson
Staff Reporter

Jennifer Azzi traded life in Europe for life on the American road.

Now she's a road warrior.

Azzi, the former Stanford women's basketball guard who led the Cardinal to a national title in 1990, scored 40 points Wednesday night and led Athletes in Action to a 98-85 exhibition win against Nebraska.

Just a year ago, Azzi was playing professional basketball in Italy and hating every minute of it.

"I guess I wasn't ready for the mentality over there," Azzi said. "You live and die through the way you play on the court, and I can't stand that. There's more to me than basketball."

Coming out of college in 1990, Azzi looked like a sure bet to star in Europe or anywhere else. She received the Naismith Player of the Year award and broke virtually every Stanford record in her senior year.

But it didn't take long for her to realize that Europe wasn't the place for her career to blossom, and she left after her first season.

"It's just that you're in another country, you don't speak the language," she said. "And our team was losing when I came over there, so there was that pressure."

After the European disappointment, it took a call from Athletes in Action Coach Marcia Burton to lure her back into organized basketball.

"She called this year, and I wanted something different," Azzi said. "I didn't want the hardcore pressure, competitive, earn-your-money type job."

Now, as the point guard for Athletes in Action, Azzi is traveling across the country. The Nebraska stop Wednesday was the 10th of a 21-game trip in November for the team, which represents Campus Crusade for Christ.

Azzi said she doesn't mind the travel.

"It's just been great," Azzi said. "I've told different people that it's the

See AZZI on 14

Phog should roll into Devaney Sports Center

Perhaps the sign floating atop Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence, Kan., Saturday night said it all:

"BEWARE OF THE PHOG"

At first, I admit, it left me utterly phoggy. What phog? I didn't see any phog — much less fog — before Kansas' exhibition with High Five America.

No, my ignorance was washed away when I realized that it was the F.C. "Phog" Allen Fieldhouse, named after the winningest coach in Kansas basketball history.

The phog was the essence of "Phog" Allen, who took Dr. James Naismith's invention and transformed it into 24 conference titles and one national title in the first half of this century. The phog was the spirit of those — Ted Owens, the second-winningest Kansas coach; Larry Brown and Roy Williams — who have carried it into modern Kansas basketball success.

I thought back to good 'ol Lincoln. The basketball arena wasn't named after Joe Cipriano or the infamous Moe Iba. No, it was named after a very good football coach, Bob Devaney.

More importantly Saturday night, I found out the "phog" was the spirit

of the crowd and the eerie, tranquil, barnhouse feeling of Allen Fieldhouse. All that tradition, all that spirit, all that "phog" was packed into one arena.

In short, the phog was something much more than Dead Dog Alley.



Todd Cooper

I found that out while waiting approximately one hour to watch all this tradition packed into one bitter, cruel battle with archrival High Five America.

I had never seen fans hate a touring exhibition team the way the Jayhawk supporters despised High Five. With a passion, some Kansas fans gave High Five the high one as they entered the fieldhouse.

This scene was unbelievable. More than 10,000 fans packed Allen field house to see an exhibition. I was told 15,000 of the same Hawk-wild fans packed Kansas' first practice at midnight Oct. 15.

I remember going to midnight madness at the Bob Devaney Sports Center three years ago. Approximately 2,000 fans attended and watched a tired, ragged team battle in an intrasquad scrimmage.

Monday night, approximately 7,000 fans packed Devaneyland to watch the Huskers battle the same High Fivers (not so despised, after all). Not bad, but not quite the same as Kansas.

But my awe-struck feeling was compounded Saturday with a glossy gaze at the Jayhawk cheerleaders' coordinated cheers.

The only time I've noticed the cheerleaders at Nebraska athletic contests is when that giddy gang of guys collaborated for a geeky group high-five.

That gaze Saturday night was interrupted by an incredibly automatic, coordinated shout of "Roy." The fans went into an uproar when Roy Williams, the classiest coach in the Big Eight, trotted onto the arena floor.

For some reason, I've never quite heard Danny Nee's first name muttered in unison. Bisyllabic first names aren't conducive to chants.

Anyway, Williams greeted their shouts with waves and smiles. He turned to the crowd and threw out two rather flashy "sixth man" t-shirts, then handed the third shirt to a man in a wheelchair at courtside.

I've seen Dead Dog Alley T-shirts, and the hounds that wear them. Enough said.

The Jayhawks came out to an uproar comparable to Memorial Stadium on Saturdays in Lincoln. In unison, the fans rose and stood through the national anthem.

The anthem was followed by Kansas' traditional, tranquil and rather eerie "Rock Chalk Jayhawk" chant. It was more rhythmic than the Seminole War chant, more methodical than that chop, and more melodious than a Neil Sedaka song.

Let's just say I only know the words to "Dear Old Nebraska U."

I remember five guys in wigs and Hawaiian shirts doing that last year in Lincoln.

Now in a stupor, I became even more befuddled when newspapers were passed my way. The entire student section rattled and waved their papers, mocking the evil High Fivers.

I stood with the students as High Five controlled the tip-off. High Five's rather coordinated, well-executed offense was interrupted by Kansas fans' chants of "defense." When Alonzo Jamison scored the first hoop,

I sat down, obviously, remembering Lincoln. All I could see from then on was a rather large heinie.

Nope, the Kansas fans didn't take a seat after the first hoop. They remained standing for the entire first half.

I've seen Husker fans stand and stretch at halftime.

I simply couldn't stand it anymore Saturday night. My friends and I left that game at halftime.

To tell the truth, I had had enough of the phog. My head was cloudy. This was unlike anything I had ever seen before. It was beyond gimmicks and glitz. It was something Husker hoops fans could aspire to.

It was an essence.

It was tradition.

It was phog.

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