

Bluejays fly past Nebraska's baseball team

Bluejays batting game not affected by cold, heats up ball diamond

By Jeff Griesch
Staff Reporter

The air was cold, but the Creighton Bluejay bats were hot as the Bluejays defeated the Cornhusker baseball team 19-1 on Wednesday at Buck Beltzer Field.

The playing conditions were anything but ideal, as the temperature dipped into the low 30s as the game ended.

"I prefer not to play at all under these conditions," Bluejays coach Todd Wenberg said. "We wanted to reschedule this game, but sometimes you have to play under less than perfect conditions."

Before the game, Wenberg was concerned about the effects the cold weather may have on the health of his players.

"My first responsibility is the health of our players," Wenberg said. "Personally, I have a problem putting someone like Chad McConnell on the field knowing he's going to be a first-round draft choice and might blow a hamstring because of the cold."

The Bluejays took their frustrations about playing in the cold out on Nebraska pitchers, pounding out 19 runs on 16 hits off four Husker pitchers, including a three-run homer by Bobby Langer.

Six Creighton pitchers combined to hold the Huskers to just one run on two hits. One of the hits was a solo home run by Jeff Lesniewicz in the ninth inning.

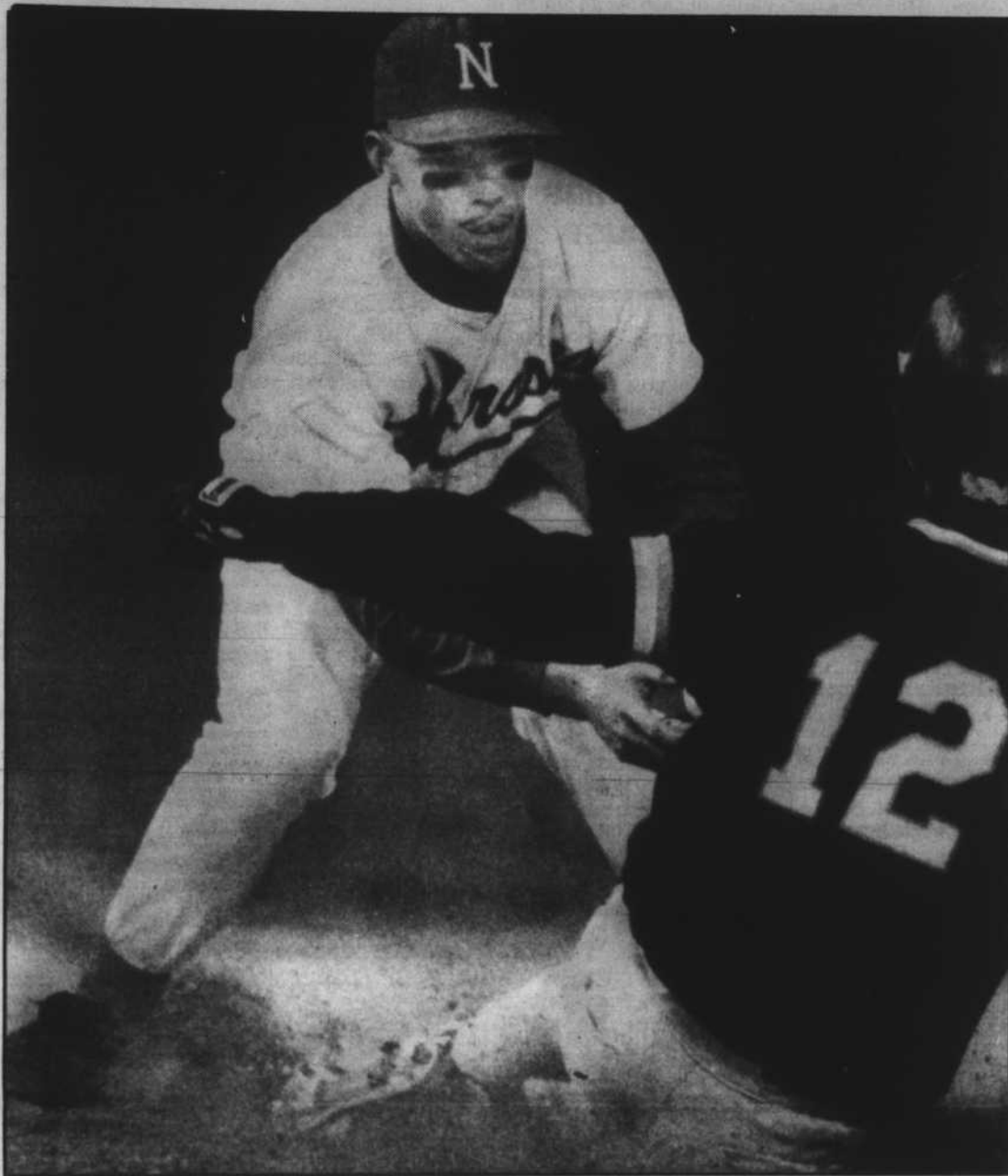
Despite the cold, the Bluejays came ready to play.

"Once you start playing you forget about the weather," Creighton centerfielder Rick Freehling said.

"We're always fired up to play here in Lincoln," designated hitter Bobby Langer said. "We always want to beat Nebraska because a lot of people watch the rivalry."

The cold presented some unique problems to Langer as the DH.

"You just do anything you can to keep warm between innings," Langer said. "I usually jog out to the fence to keep loose."



Al Schaben/DN

Nebraska second baseman Darin Petersen tags Creighton's Chad McConnell out Wednesday night at Buck Beltzer Field.

Huskers shelled by Creighton hits

By Peter Theoharis
Staff Reporter

Creighton bats warmed up a chilly Wednesday night as the Bluejays rolled to a 19-1 victory over Nebraska.

With temperatures in the low 30s, by the end of the game, the Bluejays pounded out 16 hits to drop the Cornhuskers to 18-9.

Mike Zajeski got the start for Nebraska and proceeded to strike eight consecutive strikes and strike out the first two Bluejay batters.

But, using tips from Coach Todd Wenberg, the Bluejays quickly caught on to Zajeski and forced the Husker starter from the game in the third inning.

"I charted all of Zajeski's pitches in Fresno (at the Pepsi/Johnny Quick Classic)," Wenberg said. "He showed some big consistencies in throwing the same pitches with the same count. Our kids took advantage of that."

With Wenberg's scouting of Zajeski, Creighton collared Zajeski with eight earned runs on seven hits.

Todd Mosser came in to replace Zajeski in the third. The lefthander was greeted with an RBI single by Rick Freehling and a three-run home run by Bob Langer.

By the end of the inning the 16-8-1 Bluejays had tallied nine runs on the board to grab a 10-0 lead. The third inning was pleasing to the designated hitter, Langer, who went 2 for 5 with five RBI in the game.

"This is the most runs we've scored in an inning this year," Langer said. "We scored five or six with two outs."

While the Bluejays were able to heat up their bats, the ones used by the Huskers never did thaw out.

Nebraska picked up two hits, with Jeff Lesniewicz's home run in the ninth giving the Huskers their only run.

“This is the most runs we've scored this year. We scored five or six with two outs.”

Langer
Creighton baseball player

"The elements didn't bother (Creighton)," Nebraska coach John Sanders said. "Evidently it bothered us to some degree."

Sanders said Creighton dominated Nebraska in every aspect of the game. "(Creighton) really did the job," Sanders said. "I didn't expect that, and I don't know if they expected that either."

Creighton's pitching duties were handled by six Bluejays.

Mike Browning, Brian O'Brien and Aaron Puffer each pitched two innings of scoreless baseball. Bryan Gillis and Brian Fassbender shut out the Huskers for one inning each, while Dave Dutton gave up a home run in his one inning of work.

The use of six pitchers was due in large part to the weather, according to Wenberg.

"We adjusted our pitching," Wenberg said. "We wouldn't allow anybody to go 40 or 50 pitches or more than two innings. We did what is best for the kids."

The Bluejays played an error-free game while the Huskers committed five errors.

Sanders said that the Huskers have to move on from this situation. They won't receive a great deal of time to recuperate, with Evansville coming to Buck Beltzer for a four-game series this weekend.

"We can't sit and say we got whipped and that we won't rebound," Sanders said. "The fact is we're 18-9 and 3-1 in the (Big Eight Conference)."

"If it helps us down the road, then that's great."

Softball team wins two

By Robert Birkeland
Staff Reporter

Coming home was a good remedy to the Nebraska women's softball team's pitching problems.

In their home opener, the Cornhuskers swept Drake 1-0 and 7-1 in a double header Wednesday at the Nebraska Softball Complex.

The Huskers increased their record to 8-15, while the Bulldogs fell to 7-7.

“If we ever get our pitching and defense solved we will immediately begin to beat some people.”

Wolforth
NU women's softball coach

Nebraska coach Ron Wolforth said pitching and defense had been a problem all season for the Huskers. He said he was pleasantly surprised with the team's performance.

"It is always nice to have back-to-back performances like that," Wolforth said. "I thought we played above average today."

In both games, Nebraska was led by freshman pitchers Lisa Shandy and Emily Mannon.

Both Shandy and Mannon set career high strike-out records with five strike outs in each of the games they started.

Shandy improved her record 5-8 after her first-game shutout, and she earned a save when she replaced Mannon in the second game after Mannon was hit by a line drive.

Mannon's record increased to 3-6

after she pitched five and one-third innings in the second game.

Wolforth said Shandy is a very experienced pitcher and has played against some of the best competition in the country.

Wolforth said he was surprised at Shandy's rough start this season.

He said the Huskers have had true trouble hitting the ball and that if the season were over today, the team's .260 batting average would be one of the highest in school history.

"Our problems begin when our at bat is over," Wolforth said. "If we ever get our pitching and defense solved we will immediately begin to beat some people."

In the first game, Amy Killman moved into second place on the all-time Nebraska stolen base list with 50 stolen bases.

The Huskers stole only four bases in each game, and their only run in the first game was set up by a steal by Misty Guenther in the first inning.

Nebraska's offensive drought ended in the bottom of the sixth inning during the second game when they scored four runs on six consecutive singles.

Wolforth said he was surprised by the lack of offense in the first game.

Wolforth said Davidson and Guenther are two of the country's best hitters.

Davidson leads the team in batting average of .385 and is followed by Guenther (.342) and Jody Spilchal with an average of .333.

Wolforth said the Huskers took some pride in being at home and went after Drake more than they had other teams this year.

"We are not a horrible team, we are a team that is about ready to happen," he said. "We have to get it going in the next 30 days."



Michelle Paulman/DN

Drake's Tami Lasley reacts to Nebraska's Shae Sloan after Sloan tapped her on the head with the ball at second base as Heidi Hoganson looks on. The Cornhuskers swept Drake 1-0 and 7-1 Wednesday at the NU Softball Complex.