

Kansas sweeps Husker women

Struggling team looks to future

By Derek Samson
Staff Reporter

After being swept last weekend by Kansas and dropping to 0-8 in Big Eight play, the Nebraska softball team is looking for positives.

And a fresh start. "I think it starts at the top. We're going to start all over again," assistant coach Lori Sippel said. "We're not going to make any big changes or anything. This is not a panic situation by any means."

The Jayhawks, ranked No. 13 in the nation, beat the Cornhuskers 7-0, 4-3 and 7-0 Sunday to complete the four-game sweep. Kansas won Saturday's contest 5-0.

"I think Kansas came out and hit the ball really well. They scored early and we had to play catch-up ball in all but the third game," Sippel said.

Nebraska has been disadvantaged, Sippel said, because of its schedule, which slated the Huskers against Oklahoma State and Kansas — the top two teams in the Big Eight — in back-to-back four-game series.

"Our downfall was that we had to play the number one and number two teams in the region right off," Sippel said. "I'm looking forward to see what happens when they play. I would give a slight edge to Oklahoma State."

In Sunday's three games, the Jayhawks' bats were alive, as they outhit Nebraska 29-9. Husker pitcher Jody Splichal took losses in two of those games, with her record falling to 6-8.

Although the Husker offense only mustered six runs in the final three games, Sippel said the lack of hitting wasn't the team's only problem.

"I think that overall, talking about performances and not wins and losses, it was very disheartening," Sippel said. "We just can't let the losses weigh us down for the future."

Sippel said she couldn't pick out any aspect of Nebraska's play that hurt the Huskers the most against Kansas.

"We definitely have some things we have to improve upon. I'm not going to point my finger at one particular thing and say that caused us to lose four games," she said. "Every part of our game hurt us at sometime this weekend."

The most important thing now for the Huskers, according to Sippel, is that they keep the confidence up so they can bounce back in the upcoming games.

"We can't let it affect us so much that we don't see the light at the end of the tunnel," Sippel said. "What we have to do is focus on ourselves and on the teams coming up."

Nebraska dropped to 11-16 after the losses, but have had many games washed away because of rainouts.

The Huskers were to play a doubleheader at 3 p.m. Tuesday against Creighton in Omaha and then play two at Wichita State on Wednesday.

Nebraska will return to conference play for doubleheaders against Iowa State Saturday and Sunday. The games are set for 1 and 3 p.m. at the Nebraska Softball Complex.

But with the forecast again rainy for this week, Sippel said the Huskers just want to get back onto the field.

"It's possible for us to get back above .500 soon if we can quit getting rained out," Sippel said. "It's not near as frustrating when we aren't playing our best on the field as it is when we can't even get on the field because of the rain."

Tennis

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McDermott said the match showed how Davis has matured as a player.

"(The OU match) was too close for comfort, but Andy came through for us and he has come through in the clutch before," McDermott said. "He has learned how to compete even when he is not playing well."

McDermott said the Huskers would

need that competitive edge as they approach the Big Eight Tournament. The winner of the tournament will advance to the NCAA team championships.

Nebraska will open tournament competition against Oklahoma State.

McDermott said that at this point in the season, there is nothing new to tell the team, and they already know what they have to do.

McDermott said he was hesitant to

predict a Husker victory, but did say he was confident about team's chances.

"If we play well, we can win the tournament," McDermott said. "The whole idea (of the season) is to win the tournament and we're going in with the attitude that if we win, we're going to the NCAAs and if we don't, we're not."

The Big Eight Tournament will be held in Kansas City beginning Friday

and running through Sunday afternoon.

Notes:

● Nebraska finished one vote behind Colorado in a poll among Big Eight men's coaches to predict the winner of the conference tournament. Kansas finished third and Iowa State finished fourth. Oklahoma, the defending champion, was picked to finish fifth.

Alberts

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they're great and I'm not stupid to say I don't want them, but what I really do want us to do well as a team."

Nebraska has gone 27-8-1 in Alberts' three seasons as a Husker, but is 0-3 in bowl games over that same period. Alberts said he wants to change that.

"I want to really see us go undefeated, go into the Orange Bowl and I really want to win the Orange Bowl this year — that's my only goal," he said.

"You can have a terrible team and get a lot of honors, but it doesn't really mean anything, because things that stick with you are Big Eight Championships and national championships."

The team attitude is what has impressed so many people around the

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NU linebacker

Nebraska program, including McBride.

"He probably is the real true veteran of the team," McBride said. "When we have a bad day, he gets upset about it and he's the kind of guy who will talk to the players about it. When we have a good day, he's the guy that's usually involved in it."

"He's the kind of kid that's really never satisfied, and he's always trying to do better."

Alberts said his abilities and desire are rooted in what he has learned from Nebraska outside linebackers coach Tony Samuel.

"He's taught me everything I know. I come from a small town in Iowa, and I didn't know anything when I came here," Alberts said. "He just stuck with me, and he's the whole reason that I am where I am — I really believe that."

Even though the 6-foot-4, 230-

pound Alberts has received some publicity this spring, defensive players have traditionally taken a back seat to their counterparts on the offense for the majority of the headlines.

But, Alberts said, letting such players as Heisman Trophy candidate Calvin Jones and freshman phenomenon Tommie Frazier get most of the attention doesn't bother him or his blackshirt teammates.

"That's part of the game; we don't score touchdowns or those sort of things," he said. "Those are certainly great players and they deserve all the attention they get, and I guess if you were a person that was only worried about your own personal honors, then that might bother you."

"But it doesn't bother me, and I don't think it bothers the rest of the guys, either."

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