

Tennis

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McDermott said Cunningham returned to his home of Australia over the summer.

McDermott said he's trying to stress team unity to avoid last year's attitude problems.

"Sometimes you've got to put aside individual honors for the sake of the team," he said.

McDermott will return five players from last year's team.

Anthony Kotarac returns after winning a Big Eight title with Matthias Mueller at No. 1 doubles last season. Kotarac, a senior from Sidney, Australia, went to nationals and was ranked No. 22 in the country after last season, McDermott said.

McDermott said the rest of the returning players include: Andy Davis, a junior from Scottsdale, Ariz.; Jay Segrist, a senior out of Alliance, Adrian Maizey, a redshirt freshman from Pretoria, South Africa; and Christopher Nielsen, a redshirt sophomore from Sioux Falls, S.D.

In addition, McDermott has brought in five recruits.

Cooper

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Nee repeatedly said Ramos was the missing link — more appropriately, the key — to Nee's program.

If Ramos' ego were a hoop, he would have been great. The basket would have been so big, he wouldn't have missed a shot. But as it was, he was just a ballhandler with a 1950s set shot.

And an attitude.

In 1991 during the Big Eight basketball tournament, Ramos and Nee got into an argument at the team's hotel in Kansas City, Mo. Ramos apparently tried to order an extra steak. Nee told him he couldn't.

While the resentment was rooted much deeper, Ramos and Nee got into a shouting match over the steak.

And Ramos bordered the next plane to Miami and never returned to play for Nebraska.

But can you blame Nee for Ramos's ego? Can you blame him for Ramos's and Farmer's off-the-court dealings with Raymond Peery, who provided the two players with the lavish gifts that blatantly broke NCAA rules two years ago?

Yes and no. Nee didn't tell Ramos and Farmer to seek out those gifts.

But he is responsible for who he recruits. And Nee has admitted that his recruits aren't always top-of-the-line student-athletes.

When Sports Illustrated questioned him about the grades and background of some of his recruits, Nee made an excuse for recruiting players with low academic performances.

He told the magazine in 1991 that he was no Father Flanagan. He was simply trying to build a program with quality basketball players.

In other words, some of his players' high school academic standing didn't matter, as long as they could play basketball.

That excuse doesn't fly anymore. Nee can build his program on the student-athletes like the players remaining on the team and the ones who have preceded them — including Beau Reid, Rich King and Clifford Scales. He doesn't need the players who — for however good they are in basketball — have questionable backgrounds.

And after three-straight NCAA appearances, he can put his program above the players.

But until he does that, he'll have to deal with the egotistical players and the players with questionable backgrounds who leave when they don't get their way.

Nee's right. He's no Father Flanagan.

Right now, that's too bad. He could use a little help from above.

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Osborne

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"He could have probably practiced (Wednesday) if he had to," Osborne said.

Sophomore linebacker Doug Colman hurt his back and left practice early.

Omar Acevedo, a sophomore from Mexico City, has transferred from Division II's Norfolk (Va.) State University, McDermott said. He is the only recruit with intercollegiate experience.

McDermott has signed two players from Sweden, Fredrick Riesback and Henrik Andersson.

He also signed Dino Teparo of Toronto and Geoff Lance, a native of Philadelphia.

McDermott said he will get a glimpse of the team's potential over Labor Day weekend when his players compete individually at the Nebraska Open in Omaha.

The team's attitude seems to be one thing that has improved already over last year, McDermott said.

"We'll need to see after a few matches," McDermott said. "Right now, our number one concern is to work on improvement and to get into good shape by the time the season rolls around."

Although McDermott admits that this will be a rebuilding year for the Huskers, the team will not roll over for opponents, he said.

"It should be an exciting year."

Rutz

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"There were times when the whole thing seemed like it was going so slow and those were the times you just felt like hanging it up," Rutz said. "But I had to overcome those feelings if I was going to come back."

After spending grueling hours in rehab and doing leg exercises and lifting weights, Rutz is on pace to return earlier than expected.

He was not expected to return until mid-October, but Rutz's progress on the field has given him and the Husker coaches hope that he may be able to play sooner.

"Right now, Ben is feeling like he is two weeks ahead of schedule," Sullivan said. "He kind of slowed down in his progress for a week or two before practice began, but now he is picking up again."

Although he may return more quickly than any other player from a similar injury, Rutz said he was not that amazed by his progress.

"I am not that surprised because you just hear of people coming back

from these things faster and faster," Rutz said. "The technology they have is making it go faster and maybe a person's mental approach to it helps speed it along a little bit."

Although he is already able to make cuts on his injured leg with the help of a brace, Rutz said his performance on the field was a long way from where he wanted it to be.

"I can't take any contact, and I can't get the power behind the ball I need when I throw," Rutz said. "My throwing is really what is most affected because I need my back leg to push off and throw."

Rutz said that on Monday he tested at 65 percent of his normal leg strength, so he still had a hard road ahead of him.

Rutz and Sullivan both agree the quarterback will not improve by leaps and bounds but will improve by slow, steady steps until he is back to full speed.

"Ben is a very hard worker and conscientious in his rehab work, so he will come back," Sullivan said. "We just have to make sure he doesn't try to rush it too much and risk a re-injury."

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