

Hobbled Huskers limp toward game

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

Want to know how bad the Nebraska football team's injury problems have gotten?

So bad that instead of beginning his weekly press conference Tuesday with the usual statement regarding the upcoming game, Cornhusker football coach Tom Osborne let Nebraska's head trainer, George Sullivan, do the talking.

"Quit asking Tom the questions," Sullivan said, drawing laughs from the gathered media. "Let me answer them."

But Sullivan didn't have all the solutions to the Huskers' growing injury problem as they prepare for Colorado State.

As of Tuesday afternoon, I-Back Calvin Jones (knee) and linebacker Dontá Jones (knee) were listed as very doubtful for the game Saturday.

Outside linebacker Bruce Moore (pulled groin) and wingback Abdul Muhammad (knee and ankle) are questionable for Colorado State.

The list of banged up players who are probable for Saturday include quarterback Tommie Frazier (ankle), left tackle Lance Lundberg (back), right tackle Zach Wiegart (knee and ankle) and fullback Cory Schlesinger (ankle).

Osborne said the outside linebacker position has been hit hard by injuries.

"The (pass) rush bothers us right now," Osborne said. "Trev Alberts, Dwayne Harris

and Jerad Higman are the only three guys right now who are healthy."

Osborne does have plenty of I-backs prepared to play Saturday if Calvin Jones can't go, he said.

But freshman Lawrence Phillips' 138-yard performance against UCLA did not earn him sole possession of the No. 2 spot on the depth chart, Osborne said. Damon Benning, Clinton Childs and Jeff Makovicka are all close, he said.

"It's a very difficult situation," Osborne said. "They all have talent. They all can do some things that the others can't do quite as well."

“Quit asking Tom the questions. Let me answer them.”

— Sullivan
Nebraska's head trainer

Although Benning and Phillips have seen the majority of the playing time, Osborne said, Childs and Makovicka are on the same level.

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Rams facing brutal year, coach says

By Derek Samson
Staff Reporter

Sonny Lubick had a tough task ahead of him when he accepted the job as Colorado State football coach.

Lubick was stepping into a program that had been hit hard by the firing of Earl Bruce.

With that in the past, Lubick had to look forward to a schedule that listed seven bowl teams.

"It was difficult," Lubick said. "There were some areas of concern. A lot of people were upset about Coach Bruce, and there were other factors that just kind of compounded the problems. One thing that made it easier on me was that the players were always positive."

"I can't say that they were always competitive, but they always stayed extremely positive."

The departure of Bruce, who was fired after allegations of abusing his players, left Colorado State wondering how Lubick would adjust.

Colorado State interim athletic director David Aimes, who replaced Corey Johnson Sept. 1, said he could see a difference in the players' actions.

"The players responded to Coach Lubick real well," Aimes said. "The feeling about Coach Lubick is real good right now. There was a time after Coach Bruce that the feelings were somewhat disgruntled."

"I think those feelings have passed. Coach Lubick has gained a lot of respect with a lot of people."

Lubick answered the coaching call for the Rams after being defensive coordinator at the University of Miami the past four seasons. The Rams defeated Air Force 8-5 a week after losing to Oregon 23-9. Last week, Colorado State nearly upset BYU, but fell short 27-22.

See LUBICK on 8

Stricker helps teammates make switch

Setter uses tough play as example

By Tim Pearson
Senior Reporter

When Nikki Stricker began her freshman season at Nebraska in 1990, Val Novak, then a senior setter with the Cornhuskers, helped her make the transition from high school to college volleyball.

Now Stricker hopes to do the same with the four freshmen on this year's team.

With three of the freshmen seeing significant playing time, Stricker, a senior out of Lincoln East, hopes to set an example for them to follow.

"Val Novak was setting my freshman year, and she took me under her wing," Stricker said. "Everybody on this team takes care of each other."

Novak, now a Husker interim assistant coach, said she can tell a difference between the Stricker of four years ago and now.

"In her freshman year, Nikki played middle blocker," Novak said. "Now she's turned into more of a leader as a setter."

Stricker, an All-Big Eight performer last season, said she hopes her play will help the freshmen fit more easily into the Husker program.

"My goal is to play as aggressively as I can," she said. "I don't want them to be thinking out on the court."

"I just want them to go out and play."

Stricker's aggressive play at setter has been a factor in the Huskers' 9-0 start.

She has played in every game this season and has reaped the benefits by being named Big Eight Player of the Week in the second week of the season. Stricker has also been named Most Valuable

Player at both the Penn State Invitational and the Arby's Classics.

Stricker was named to the All-Tournament team at the Firstier Invitational this weekend. She also set a career-high in set assists against Georgia with 85.

But the individual honors don't mean much to Stricker right now. She said her focus isn't on individual honors but rather on team performance.

In Stricker's first year at Nebraska, the Huskers made it to the NCAA Final Four. She's hoping for another appearance this year.

"This team's a lot of fun," she said. "This is a great team."

"We're going to the Final Four."

The team will be strengthened once junior middle blocker Kim Tonniges and senior outside hitter Laura Luther are at full strength, Stricker said.

"Without them, everybody takes more responsibility," she said. "We're looking forward to getting them back because we need them in the lineup."

Stricker said the addition of Novak, a two-time All-American setter, to the Nebraska coaching staff has helped her improve her setting.

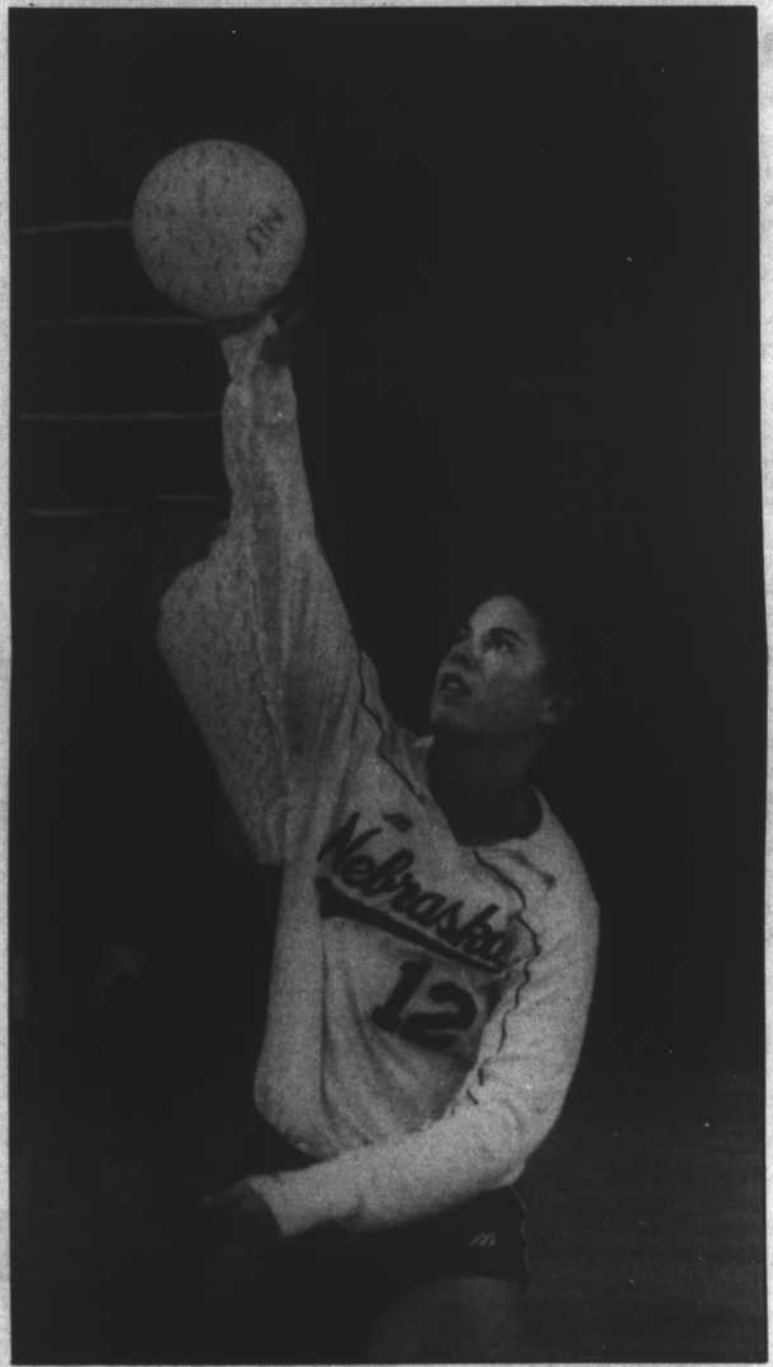
"We work out twice a week," Stricker said. "She notices the little things I do with my hands."

"She's helped me out because she's been there, and she knows how to do it."

Junior setter Christy Johnson's decision to redshirt this year has also helped Stricker, she said. Last season Stricker was the starting setter with junior Christy Johnson as her back-up. Johnson even started a couple of matches last season.

"I can't compare last year to this year," Stricker said. "With Christy redshirting, it takes a little pressure off, but it also puts more pressure on me to perform."

"But that's my job — to perform."



Kiley Timperley/DN

Nebraska setter Nikki Stricker serves the ball Saturday.

Baseball needs a man who can put game back together

If you've been in heaven for the past couple of weeks, because of the fabulous pennant races the baseball gods have decided to grant their devout worshippers this season, let me bring you back down to earth for a while.

On the field, baseball is healthy. Fans are being treated to highlight after highlight and excitement on top of excitement because of the pennant races in all four divisions.

National League expansion has given millions of baseball freaks in Florida and Colorado something to cheer about.

In fact, the Marlins and the Rockies will probably escape finishing last in their divisions.

In the stands, baseball is also enjoying great success. Attendance records are being shattered in many cities, and fans in New York have watched the Yankees make a run at the American League East title.

Fans are so excited in New York that officials can't even keep the spectators off the field. And the fans have actually assured the Yankees of two wins because of their unruly actions.

But life in the front office is not as healthy as it is on the field.

Baseball has been wandering aimlessly since the bad boys of baseball — the owners — canned their own boss, commissioner Fay Vincent, nearly a year ago.

Since then, the owners have accomplished one thing: voting on Sept. 9 to realign the leagues for next season.

The decision to realign was amazingly painless, considering that the only time the owners had ever agreed on anything was when they voted to oust Vincent.

The owners voted 27-1 to realign, with the only dissenting vote coming from the Texas Rangers.

But before the owners even had a



Jeff Griesch

chance to pat themselves on the back for finally making a decision, more than half of them raised another issue that threatens to rock the economic foundations of the game.

While the big-market owners made realignment their first priority for next season, small-market clubs are tired of being denied their pieces of the television revenue pie.

San Diego, Houston, Florida, Pittsburgh and Montreal initiated a move that threatens to guarantee only 87 games on television next season.

Cincinnati, St. Louis, San Francisco and seven American League teams made the move because they

are fighting for television revenue in order to survive.

The television revenue base in baseball is biased in favor of the large-market teams.

While National League teams with local superstations share 25 percent, American League teams only have to share 20 percent of their local cable money.

The rest of the teams — mostly small-market clubs — want a 40-60 or 50-50 cut of the deal. But right now, that's a fantasy.

Clubs in New York, Atlanta and Chicago are getting rich on television deals with local superstations and don't want to share any more money.

Understandably, greed often prevents a man from seeing the wisdom of parting with some of his money now in order to reap greater rewards later — but the large-market owners need to realize that they must share if the league is to remain healthy.

And the new small-market coalition, including Pittsburgh, Houston, Kansas City, Minnesota and Milwaukee among others, has given an ultimatum to their large-market colleagues: Give us our money, or you won't see our games on television.

The small-market teams have threatened to blackout any of their games played on superstations like WTBS, WGN and WWOR. That would take away the large-market teams' major source of revenue.

While this blackout doesn't seem like much on paper, it threatens to keep about 600 games off of television screens tuned to WTBS, WGN and WWOR.

That equals about 56,000 commercials that wouldn't be seen by viewers, and a loss of the major source of revenue and programming to the

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