

ESPN apologizes for gang accusation

Reporter continues to stand by story

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

ESPN apologized Wednesday for "any embarrassment" their story on Nebraska wingback Abdul Muhammad may have caused the junior from Compton, Calif.

The feature, which initially aired before Nebraska's game at Oklahoma State last Thursday, said Muhammad was a gang member.

"ESPN has concluded that in our recent story on Abdul Muhammad, we were remiss not to include his assertion that he is not a gang member although he associates with friends

who are gang members.

"We presented a compelling story of a young man who grew up in an area where gangs are prevalent and who has overcome many obstacles in pursuing an education and playing football at the University of Nebraska.

"ESPN sincerely apologizes if our omission has caused any embarrassment to Mr. Muhammad, his family or the university."

Chris LaPalca, ESPN vice president of communications, said Wednesday night that the network would air an apology on Thursday's 6 p.m. edition of Sportscenter and again on College Gameday at 10:30 a.m. Saturday. Those are the same time slots in which the story by reporter Shelley Smith aired last week.

"Obviously, this is a matter of a great deal of seriousness," LaPalca said. "We spent the bet-

ter part of the day discussing it.

"(Smith) was very actively involved in our discussions (Wednesday)."

Even though ESPN apologized, Smith stood by her report Wednesday.

Smith, a 1981 University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate, said Muhammad told her he is a gang member, even though he does not take part in gang violence.

"With gangs in L.A., there are different levels of involvement," Smith said. "He said he is not a killer, but he considers himself to be one of them — not a killer but a part of the group."

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think that he is a killer, a drug dealer, a drive-by shootist, or a rapist. People hear the words 'gang member' and sirens go off. There are people in gangs who are not affiliated with violence."

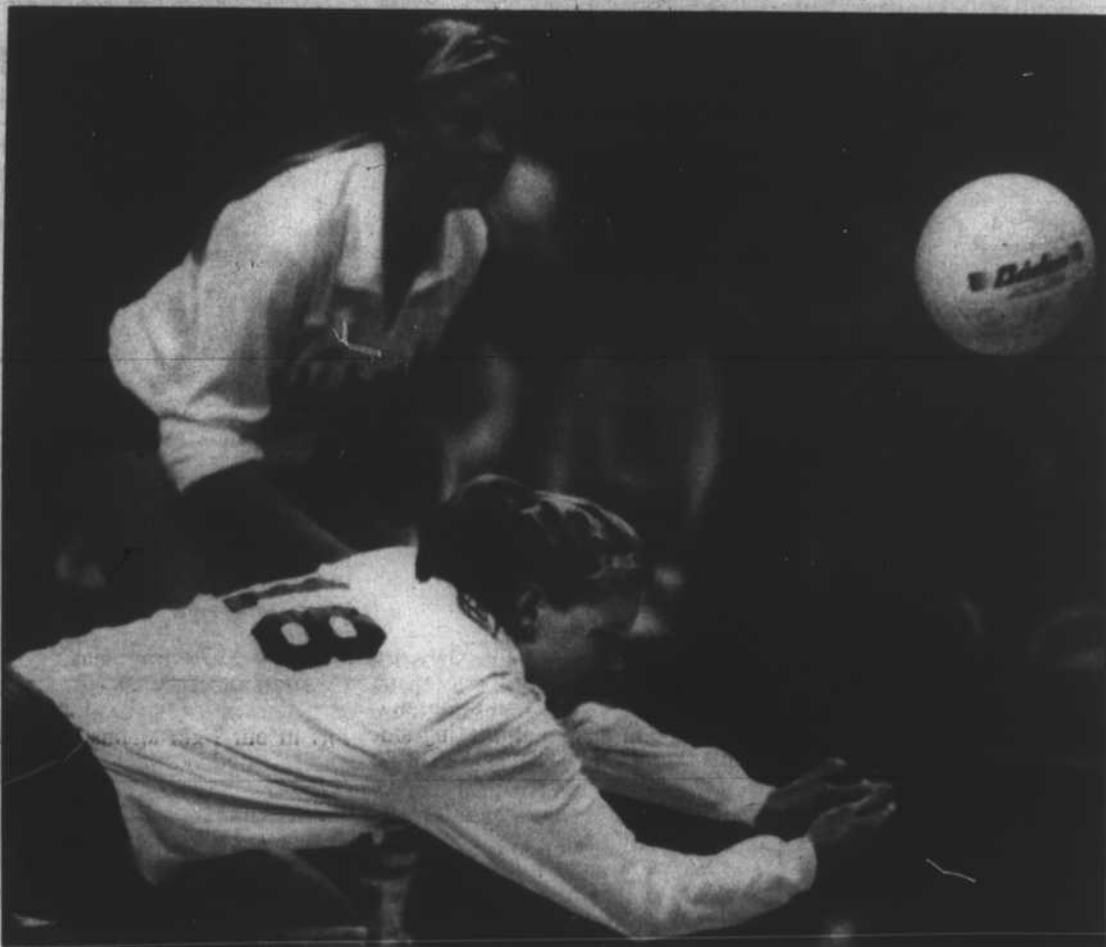
On Tuesday, Muhammad said he told the reporter, off the record, he was not a gang member. Smith said no questions were asked off the record.

"There was an allegation that I turned off the cameras and asked Abdul, off the record, is he a gang member and he said he wasn't," Smith said. "That is a complete lie. It insults my integrity. If in fact that had happened, the whole story would have been different."

Smith also disputed the athletic department's account of why Muhammad was flashing a hand signal in a football media guide photo.

The picture of the Husker offense shows Muhammad, split end Corey Dixon and tight

See ESPN on 8



Nebraska's Allison Weston attempts a dig while Maria Hedbeck looks on during a recent match. Travis Heying/DN

Colorado hands NU second-straight loss

By Tim Pearson
Senior Reporter

The Nebraska volleyball team has owned the top spot in the Big Eight for the last 17 years.

But now after a five-game loss to Colorado Wednesday night — the Huskers' second straight Big Eight loss — the Cornhuskers are experiencing what it's like to be dethroned.

No. 16 Colorado, now 3-0 in conference play, defeated No. 12 Nebraska 15-13, 9-15, 15-12, 5-15, and 15-9 at the Coors Events/Conference Center in Boulder.

Nebraska fell to 2-2 in the conference and 13-3 overall on the season.

The loss to the Buffaloes marked the first time the Huskers had ever lost two straight Big Eight regular season matches.

Husker coach Terry Pettit said on KFOR's post-match radio show that he was pleased with the way his team played.

"I thought we played great," Pettit said. "We really played hard."

"But volleyball's one of those games where the team that plays best at the end wins, and Colorado

played best at the end."

Pettit said the Huskers played much better Wednesday than they did against the Sooners.

"This was like a game of 'Mother, May I,'" he said. "Tonight we took two steps forward, and Oklahoma was one step backward."

"We played probably as well as we had all year."

The first game went back and forth early. But with the Huskers up 7-5, the Buffs started to mount a rally. They rolled off six straight points to take an 11-7 lead.

Nebraska came back and tied it at 13 but Colorado scored the final two points to win the game.

The Huskers rebounded in the second game. With the score tied at seven, Nebraska scored five unanswered points to lead 12-7. The Huskers won the second game on a Jen McFadden block for a point.

In the third game, the Huskers jumped out to an early lead. But the Buffs came storming back, tying the game at six. Colorado then went on an 8-2 scoring run before the Huskers made a late surge, coming within two at 14-12. Colorado

See LOSS on 8

Emphasis on academics attracts 'big man' to Nebraska

By Derek Samson
Staff Reporter

Nebraska's basketball team may just have received one answer to the question of who the Huskers will have as a big man next year.

Leif Nelson, a 6-foot-11, 260-pound center from Riverside, Calif., said Tuesday night in a phone interview that he had given a verbal commitment to play basketball for Nebraska next season.

Nebraska's academic support program was the main reason Nelson chose Nebraska over Penn State, Virginia and Vanderbilt, he said.

"I would have to say the academics

was the most important reason for my decision, with the basketball opportunities coming second," Nelson said. "I took my recruiting trip the fourth and fifth of September and was immediately impressed."

"I was impressed with the people and the all-around program. There is a lot of support at Nebraska for the athletic programs and for the academics."

Nelson joins 6-8 forward Andy Markowski of Ord and 6-7 forward Chad Ideus of Adams, who are scheduled to sign with Nebraska during the Nov. 10-16 early letter-of-intent period. The Cornhusker basketball program still has four more scholarships

available for the 1994-1995 season.

Nelson, who maintains a 3.9 GPA, said he liked the direction the Nebraska basketball program was heading.

"Their basketball program is definitely going in the right direction," he said. "I think now is a good time for me to be part of it. It just seems like it is an all-around situation that will be good for me."

Nebraska's athletic facilities were another main attraction for Nelson.

"Their weight room just blew me away," he said. "All the athletic facilities they have are just the best around, and that means a lot to a school."

John Seydel, Nelson's high school coach at Riverside Arlington, said the

opportunity to play right away also may have influenced Nelson's decision.

Nebraska lost center Amos Gregory, who transferred after last season, and center Derrick Chandler, who graduated.

Herb Baker, a 6-foot-8, 240-pound center, and 6-10, 200-pound Mikki Moore are the Cornhuskers' only big men this season.

"At Nebraska, I know they don't have a real big guy in the middle," Seydel said. "I think he will have an opportunity to come in and play. He wants to contribute as quickly as he possibly can."

During the summer, Nelson was

kept busy with his basketball — gaining some national attention.

In July, Nelson was ranked the ninth-best center at the American Basketball Coaches' Development camp in Michigan. He also made the Las Vegas national high school basketball tournament's all-star team.

"He has a lot of things going for him," Seydel said. "His size and strength are tremendous, and he is a hard-working kid. He needs to work on his speed a little, but he has extremely strong hands, and he is an aggressive rebounder."

See RECRUIT on 8

Chubick should top collar of blue with crown of Jordan

For the last nine years, children have looked up to Michael Jordan as a god and a role model.

I, of course, grew up admiring Ethel Merman. But this isn't about me or my adolescent fantasies, it's about finding another player to sit on the throne left vacant by the retirement of King Mike.

Jordan represented everything great about life and basketball: grace, poise, intelligence and Gatorade.

Without him, we need a new deity to fuel the dreams and provide the model for young fans worldwide.

If we look at the current NBA standouts, the rank of prince of basketball is pretty thin.

Shaquille "Shaq" O'Neal isn't noted as the thinking man's basketball player or even as a particularly graceful player. He's probably most noted

for breaking stuff. So he's out of the running.

Then that brings us to Larry "Uh, how many zeros do you want on the end of your contract?" Johnson. Could the possessor of the richest contract in sports provide the needed respectability to become the Hercules of hoops? No way.

Consider that the last time he was on television, he was cross-dressing. I don't think LJ and his middle-hair part will cut it as the hardcourt lord.

Charles Barkley, you ask? No, I had money on the Suns last season. Forget Sir Chucky.

I think that it's pretty clear who our new ruler of roundball must be. We need to get away from the glitz and glamour of the professional game and get back to the old-fashioned work ethic of college.



Beau Finley

We need someone disciplined, someone the kids can look up to and fans can count on for displaying the guts necessary to win every night.

The bottom line, as Bonnie Tyler so eloquently put it, is we're holding out for a hero. And that hero is our own Bruce "Blue Collar" Chubick.

Granted, "Chewbacca," as I like to call him — but never to his face — isn't in that Jordan mold. He's not really a slashing scorer. In fact, he really never slashes and really doesn't score too much, either. But, dangit,

we need a hero like Chubick.

I would be willing to wager that he's gotten more loose balls than Jordan did. I would even go so far as to say he's lost more skin off his body than Jordan has. Also after having the pleasure of getting an interview from him last year, I'm sure Dr. Floorburn smells much worse than Mike.

Those are three genuine traits we need in the NBA's new hero.

What I'm getting at is that Mike is Mike and Bruce is on the floor. We need to redefine our criteria of greatness. We no longer need the spectacular, we need the grit of real life. We need Bruce.

Bruce's emergence as the "Head Cheese of the Hardcourt" could not have been timed more opportunely.

The United States is currently filling the final two spots for Dream

Team II. This is a perfect time to unveil the heir apparent to King Mike.

Not only would it introduce the world to the new basketball guru, but a Chubick selection would be easier than choosing another player.

First, the U.S. basketball officials wouldn't have to worry about the team's sponsors conflicting with Bruce's endorsements. Bruce's only endorsements are with Ben-Gay and Band-Aid. I doubt either will be Dream Team II sponsors.

Finally, you don't need to worry about trying to get a urine sample out of Bruce for the mandatory drug test. His sample is in an alley downtown. How much more convenience could you ask for?

The need for the ascendancy of

See FINLEY on 8