

## Alberts wants title to go with his Butkus

By Tim Pearson  
Senior Reporter

After winning the Butkus Award on Saturday in Orlando, Fla., Nebraska outside linebacker Trev Alberts wanted to get out of Florida.

But don't expect that feeling to last.

The Cornhusker All-American will be looking forward to his return to the state for the Orange Bowl in Miami on Jan. 1. By that time, Alberts said he hoped to be close to fully recovered from his elbow injury.

If he is, he said, he will be going into his final game refreshed.

"It felt like a whole year's worth of load was lifted off my back," he said

shortly after he stepped off his plane from Orlando.

"It's good to be in Lincoln. I got tired of hearing the Florida State people down there. It's been a long road trip.

"Now I know how those basketball and baseball players feel. I don't know how they do it."

But Alberts said he was more than happy to endure the fatigue in order to accept the award, which he said represented Nebraska.

"I'm really excited for the state of Nebraska and all of the great linebackers we've had here before who didn't win it," he said. "This represents our team and our defense.

"We've been through a lot of adversity but we finished as the Big Eight's No. 1 defense."

Alberts was one of three finalists for the award, which was voted on by a national panel of 24 sportswriters. Alberts received 100 points. Derrick Brooks of Florida State was second

with 72 points and Jamir Miller of UCLA was third with 44 points.

Winning the award was Alberts' goal. He wasn't going to settle for second or third, he said.

"Obviously, I would have been somewhat disappointed if I didn't win," Alberts said. "But I was honored to be there. This is like icing on the cake."

And it capped off an exceptional season for Alberts.

He had a team-leading 96 tackles and tied a school record with 15 quarterback sacks this season. He was named All-American, the Football News defensive player of the year and the Big Eight defensive player of the year.

But that's not enough for Alberts. He wants a national title with an Orange Bowl victory over Florida State.

Alberts, who is scheduled to have his cast

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removed Monday, said he would try his best to play.

"It feels good," he said. "It's hard to tell how much I'll play right now, but I'm going to do everything I can to repay Coach (Tom) Osborne for what he's done for me in my five years here.

"It's going to be a lot of fun. (Florida State's) a great team."

## Huskers overcome injuries, explode past Wichita State

By Tim Pearson  
Senior Reporter

No pain, no gain.

That seems to be the guiding motto of the Nebraska basketball team after it picked up a 94-72 victory over Wichita State Saturday before a Bob Devaney Sports Center crowd of 12,134.

The Huskers have had to overcome injuries to key players to pick up four-straight wins after a 1-2 start.

Senior forward Bruce Chubick, who grabbed a season-high 12 rebounds, said the bumps and bruises were worth it if the Huskers won.

"As long as we win, it feels good," he said. "(The injuries) hurt a little bit, but it would've hurt a lot worse if we lost."

Playing without senior point guard Jamar Johnson for the second game in a row, the Huskers picked up their defensive intensity a notch.

Nebraska coach Danny Nee said the defensive pressure took the Shockers out of the game.

"I think we can play that level of defense for longer periods of time," he said. "I don't think we can play 40 minutes of defense like that, but I certainly think we can play longer periods of time."

Eric Piatkowski, one of five Huskers in double figures with a team-leading 18 points, said the Huskers were starting to pick up their

intensity.

"It's not easy to go out and play 40 minutes really hard on defense," he said. "I think a lot of guys on the team are starting to understand and realize that every minute we play tough defense, the other team is getting frustrated. It's making us that much better."

Wichita State hung tough with the Huskers throughout the first half. But with the Shockers ahead 37-36, Wichita State went on more than a three-minute scoring drought as the Huskers went on a 12-1 scoring run heading into half-time.

Piatkowski said the Huskers played "real average" against Wichita State, especially in the first half.

"For the first 12 or 13 minutes of the first half, we played even with them," he said. "For us to play even with a team like Wichita State, that's not very good. We need to stick to them like we did at the end of the first half."

Nebraska's surge at the end of the first half didn't carry over to the start of the second half.

The Shockers came within four at 54-50 on a Jamie Arnold basket with 15:48 to go in the game.

But the Huskers slowly increased their lead before blowing it open towards the end.

"It was just a matter of time," Nee said. "We kept coming after them. It was a game of spurts. From the first half on, we made the spurts."

## Johnson hoping to return early

By Mitch Sherman  
Staff Reporter

The broken little finger on Jamar Johnson's right hand, which was scheduled to hold the senior point guard out of action for at least four weeks, may not hold him out as long as expected.

Johnson said Sunday the finger will be re-examined today. Depending on the results of the X-rays, Johnson said he could possibly return to action as soon as Saturday against Michigan State.

"We are going to see if there's any stabilization," he said. "If there is, hopefully I can play Saturday."

"There's still a little pain. But sometimes you have to play with pain. I'm hoping to play, but I still have to get clearance."

Before missing the two games last week against Creighton and Wichita State, Johnson had not missed a start in 64 games.

While awaiting the return of their senior captain, other members of the team have come down with injuries as well.

The Huskers improved their record to 5-2 with a 94-72 win over Wichita State Saturday

afternoon at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, but in the process banged up more than half of the team.

As of Saturday afternoon, the casualty list had reached seven.

In addition to Johnson, the list of injured Huskers includes guards Jaron Boone (hip flexor), Eric Piatkowski (thigh bruise), Erick Strickland (numerous bumps and bruises), forwards Tom Best (flu) and Bruce Chubick (sore elbow).

"If we get any more people hurt," coach Danny Nee said, "we are going to be in trouble."

Nee said the Huskers would be in trouble now, if not for the placement of finals week. He said the team will not practice for two days before resuming preparation for Saturday's game at Michigan State.

Despite the medical status of the Huskers, Piatkowski said, Nebraska considers the Michigan State game crucial.

"Everybody is going to be working hard on finals," Piatkowski said. "But on the other hand, we can't just go and forget about basketball. I think both us and Michigan State are looking at this as a game we have to win."



Staci McKee/DN

### Surrounded

Nebraska's Erick Strickland, left, and Terrance Badgett leave little room for Wichita State's K.C. Hunt during the Cornhuskers' win over the Shockers at the Devaney Sports Center Saturday.

## People rate above honors throughout Stricker's career

By Tim Pearson  
Senior Reporter

Nikki Stricker is a people person when it comes to her volleyball experience at Nebraska.

When Stricker reflects on her four years at Nebraska, she tends to think of the people she's gotten the chance to play with, not her own accomplishments.

And Stricker's accomplishments were nu-

merous this season:

● The Cornhusker setter was named the Big Eight's Player of the Year.

● She set the Nebraska career record for set assists with 3,786.

● She was a two-time All-Big Eight pick.

But the honors don't matter to Stricker now that her career is over.

"I think of the people I've gotten to play with that I've looked up to," she said. "In my freshman year it was Val Novak. Then it was Janet

Kruse and Cris Hall. Last year it was Stephanie (Thater) and Eileen (Shannon).

"There's been so many great players and it was an honor to play with them."

Add Stricker to that list of great players, Nebraska volleyball coach Terry Pettit said.

"Nikki had a great season," he said. "She was the reason we were a Top 20 team. She had her best year in her senior season."

But her senior season ended on a sour note when the Huskers were swept in three games by

Notre Dame in the second round of the NCAA Championships.

"It's disappointing that we didn't play well," Stricker said. "It surprised me that we weren't playing at our best."

"But only one team ends on a win, so I don't look at it as a big black memory. I don't look at it as 'Poor me, we didn't win the Big Eight.' I

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