

## Hogs in heaven; Devils have blues

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Arkansas won its first national championship Monday night, keeping a president happy and placing its coach where he always felt he belonged.

Scotty Thurman's 3-pointer with 50 seconds left as the shot clock expired gave the Razorbacks a 76-72 victory and deprived Duke, the dominant team of the decade, from a third title in four years.

With President Clinton once again watching his beloved Razorbacks in person, Arkansas came up with a gutty performance to give coach Nolan Richardson a championship ring to wave in front of his critics whom he openly challenged throughout Final Four weekend.

It also offset an unbelievable final college game by Grant Hill, one of three Duke seniors looking for a third title. He engineered an early second-half run that gave the Blue Devils a 10-point lead, but it wasn't enough as the Razorbacks fought back and took the lead for good on Thurman's long jumper.

Richardson, who challenged the media's perception of black coaches throughout the tournament, said the championship was a sweet reward.

"Tonight was like the battle of a couple of heavyweights," he said. "Your turn, my turn, your turn, my turn."

"My turn."

“*Tonight was like the battle of a couple of heavyweights. Your turn, my turn, your turn, my turn. My turn.*”

—Richardson,  
Arkansas coach

Indeed, it was Richardson's turn after nearly 13 years of coaching.

This was the Razorbacks' first championship game appearance in their fifth Final Four.

Richardson brought Arkansas to the 1990 national semifinals where they were beaten by Duke. He was in search of what he called his coaching triple crown — he won the junior college national title with Western Texas in 1980 and the NIT with Tulsa the next season.

The Razorbacks got him that third title by overcoming poor shooting with tenacious defense that forced Duke into 23 turnovers. The defense was at its best when Arkansas rebounded from the 48-38 deficit with a 16-4 run. Duke went four minutes without scoring and in that span the Blue Devils missed five shots and committed five turnovers.

## Husker football official accepts job at Kansas

By Derek Samson  
Senior Reporter

Nebraska recruiting coordinator and administrative assistant Dave Gillespie resigned Monday to accept a similar job at the University of Kansas.



Gillespie

Gillespie, who has been a recruiting coordinator for eight years at Nebraska, will be the recruiting coordinator and assistant coach for the Jayhawks.

Gillespie was also Nebraska's assistant athletic director in charge of football for the past year.

Gillespie, who was first offered the job at Kansas about 10 days ago, said the decision was not easy.

"I've been looking for an opportunity to get on the field, and when this opening came up, I took it," he said. "It is very difficult to leave Nebraska. I just felt like the opportunity to reach my goals was there, and I could not pass that up."

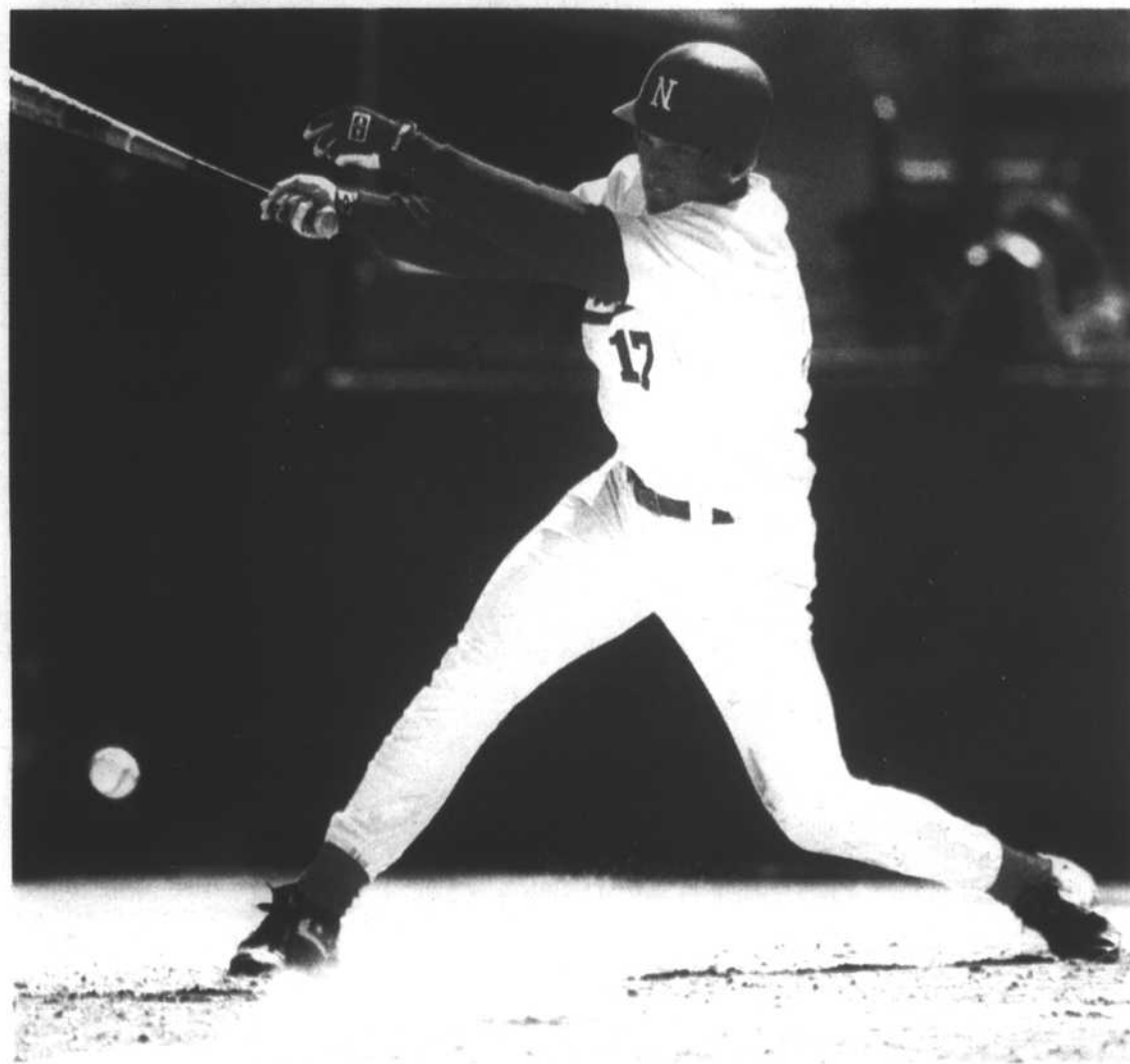
Coach Tom Osborne said Gillespie was looking for a different role from what he had at Nebraska.

"We're sorry to lose Dave because he has been a valuable part of our program," he said. "In my discussions with Dave, he wanted to coach. With the rule changes, he just wasn't going to be able to coach here. We wanted to keep him here for recruiting purposes, but he wanted to be involved with the coaching."

Gillespie confirmed that the chance to coach was the deciding factor in his decision.

"The coaching aspect is something I've always wanted to do and be part of," he said. "I've always wanted to

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Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska's Darin Erstad hits a ball into the dirt during the Cornhuskers' win over Oklahoma State on Sunday.

## One stroke at a time Husker looks to better hitting performance

By Jeff Griesch  
Senior Editor

In the fourth inning of Nebraska's game with Oklahoma State on Sunday, left fielder Darin Erstad launched a line-drive rocket from his bat that landed just beyond the 330-foot sign in right field.

The ball landed almost before Erstad finished following through on his swing.

Despite the speed with which the ball left Buck Beltzer Field, Erstad said, his swing still wasn't perfect as the ball hit just a few inches above the handle of his maroon-and-gold bat.

And like his home run swing on Sunday, Erstad, a preseason All-American selection, is finding life, as the marquee man in the middle of the Nebraska batting order, less than perfect.

“*The key for me is just to stay patient and disciplined and lay off the breaking stuff.*”

—Erstad  
left fielder

Despite hitting .351 through Nebraska's first 31 games, Erstad said he expected to be performing even better at this point in the season.

"I really expected to be hitting above .400," Erstad said. "But I haven't gotten to see too many good pitches to hit. I started getting a little frustrated."

Last season, opposing pitchers didn't concentrate as much on shutting down Erstad because they had to worry about slowing down another All-American, Marc

Sagmoen.

But with Sagmoen gone, and Troy Brohawn — the Big Eight's first-team designated hitter last year — out of the lineup with a broken foot until this weekend, the opposition could afford to be careful with Erstad.

"I think I saw five fastballs all weekend," Erstad said of Nebraska's three-game series with Oklahoma State. "It was all just breaking balls and off-speed stuff,

See ERSTAD on 8

## New baseball season brings changes, second chances

When I woke up Sunday morning, I prayed and gave thanks.

It was just a coincidence that it was Easter.

I was giving thanks to the gods of baseball for bringing the renewal of life that comes with the new season.

Opening Day arrived Sunday and the devout gathered around televisions and watched from their recliners, couches and kitchen tables as Cincinnati and St. Louis launched another crusade.

It didn't take St. Louis's first batter, Ray Lankford, long to provide the first phenomenal feat of the new season by sending a 3-2 pitch from Jose Rijo into the heavens.

It was the first time that a leadoff hitter had belted a home run since 1986, when Dwight Evans homered to begin the Red Sox's season.

But long before Lankford connected to ensure himself a spot in the hallowed record books of baseball, a dark cloud had already begun to form over Opening Day.

First, Marge Schott, the dog-lov-

ing, player-hating owner of the Reds, took public relations and team promotions to new depths by saying the game between her Reds and the Cardinals didn't mean anything.

Schott decided Sunday's game was just some kind of final exhibition game rather than the first regular season game and wasn't afraid to tell everybody that the "real" opening day was Monday, not Sunday.

It looked like the fans believed Ms. Schott because Riverfront Stadium was half-empty.

Not only did the fans seem to think Opening Day really was Monday, the Reds looked like they were saving themselves for Monday as they lost to the Cards 6-4.

Schott, who was suspended from the controls of the Reds last year for making racially insensitive remarks, obviously didn't use her spare time to learn how to think before she shot her mouth off, and it cost her again.

Along with getting the Reds off on the wrong foot, Schott's remarks were a promotional disaster for all of ma-



Jeff  
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jeor-league baseball.

The owners had appeared to be unified in promoting a new image for the game by adding new divisions and more playoff teams.

Management is trying to bring baseball into the 1990s by making the game more exciting and attractive to fans. But how is Joe Fan supposed to get excited about baseball if the owners say the games don't mean anything?

From now on, maybe Schott should let her ugly dog Schotzie do the talking.

While Schott takes the early lead for the dumbest move by an owner, Los Angeles Dodger outfielder Darryl Strawberry may have the honor for the most morose move by a player for

the entire season.

For 24 hours this weekend, Strawberry was lost.

OK, maybe I am being too generous because we all know that Straw has been way out there since his last years with the Mets.

Despite his less than perfect past, Straw appeared to have things turned around with a stronger back, a new wife — one without all the cuts and bruises that go along with years of marriage to Straw — and a positive outlook.

But when Straw woke up Sunday morning, he apparently forgot to look at his calendar and didn't realize he was supposed to be at an exhibition game in Anaheim, Calif.

Maybe Straw thought the game was optional. After all, it didn't count against the Dodgers record.

Or perhaps Straw heard Schott's comments and decided he would wait until the real Opening Day to start playing baseball.

Regardless of the reason, Strawberry will be extremely fortunate to

have a job Tuesday.

The Dodgers are young and talented, and they don't need an overpaid, underproductive veteran to set a bad example in the clubhouse.

The Dodgers have been more than patient with their hometown boy. But with his latest unexcused absence, Straw should be expelled.

It's just too bad Marge Schott can't be fired or released like Strawberry. Call me a purist but if Strawberry and Schott can't muster at least a little enthusiasm about the new season and a new era for baseball, maybe they shouldn't be part of the game.

But the worshipers that give offerings at the altar of major-league baseball are a forgiving group.

They will give Straw and Schott one more chance because baseball is all about forgiving and forgetting and starting over.

Just look at Steve Howe.

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