

Defensive line enters spring with thin ranks

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

Nose tackle Terry Connealy, who will be a senior in the fall, was the only starting defensive lineman with game experience heading into spring ball.

As if that wasn't enough, Connealy had shoulder surgery on Jan. 4 and is missing spring practices this season.



Connealy

That leaves Nebraska with no returning starters on the defense's interior line and just two linemen with limited game experience.

So is it sweating time for the defensive line? No, it's time to shine, junior nose tackle Christian Peter said.

"We lost three of our top four guys (on the line), and we have to fill in," Peter said.

"A lot of us young guys can step up and fill in. That's what we need to have, and it starts with

the way we practice this spring."

Peter said the younger defensive linemen could have used Connealy's leadership this spring. The Huskers lost five pass rushers — Kevin Ramackers, Trev Alberts, Bruce Moore, Billy Wade and David Noonan — to graduation.

"That hurts us a lot not to have Terry in there," Peter said. "Terry is our leader. We all look up to him, and we really wish he could be in here during spring practice."

Connealy said he would like to be playing as well.

"I was on the verge of being able to practice in the spring, but we didn't want to risk any-

"We lost three of our top four guys, and we have to fill in. A lot of us young guys can step up and fill in."

—Christian Peter
junior nose tackle

thing," Connealy said. "I'd sure like to be out there, but there's the possibility of hurting it (the shoulder) worse. It's a lot better for me to be out in the spring than in the fall."

The newcomers know what needs to be done, Peter said, and are putting in the time now to be ready in the fall.

"We're working really hard as a unit," he said. "We want to get some good depth and really come together as a unit. The young guys can step it up, and we'll be ready for the fall when it comes."

Connealy said spring practices were important only for the younger linemen trying to play their way into a vacant position.

"Spring ball is real important for everybody, especially with the new defenses that get thrown in," Connealy said. "It is very important for the players with a little less experience to get in there in the spring and show the coaches what they can do. But everybody needs to improve during this time."

For Connealy, that makes having to watch spring practices especially difficult.

"It's pretty hard just sitting there and watching," he said. "You want to get in the action, but you just can't. I'm really looking forward to getting back, and I think I'm pretty close to it. It will be nice to get back going again."

Jason Pesterfield enters the spring as the starting defensive tackle, while Dwayne Harris was listed as the first-string left outside linebacker.

Donta Jones, who started eight games last season on the left side, lines up this spring at the starting right outside linebacker position.

Peter said he had seen a notable difference in the way the defensive line had been practicing this spring compared to last year.

Gymnasts peaking at right time, Allen says

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

Nebraska men's gymnastics coach Francis Allen finally thinks his team is ready for the national meet.

And it's just in time.

After a season full of average scores and numerous injuries, Allen said, the Huskers are back into the swing of things and ready for the postseason.

Nebraska posted its fifth highest score in team history at the Big Eight

Championships on March 25. Allen



Allen

said the 287.775 points would be difficult to improve on, but the Huskers could equal the performance.

"We're cruising," Allen said. "We're getting healthier, and the guys look the best they have all year."

The key to Nebraska's success, he

said, may lie in the routines of seniors Sumner Darling and Che Bowers. Both have been bothered by nagging injuries all year.

"Sumner Darling and Che Bowers are going to scare some people if they are healthy," Allen said. "Those two guys are top gymnasts, and if they are close to full strength, you never know where I might use them."

The Huskers will compete in the West Regional at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., on Saturday at 7 p.m.

The No. 1 Huskers will face Oklahoma, UCLA, Stanford, California-Berkeley and New Mexico. Allen said he expected Nebraska and Oklahoma to advance to the national meet, but the third team was a toss-up.

"UCLA and Stanford are both right there," he said. "I really can't say one team has an edge."

He said Nebraska would be especially motivated to go against Stanford. The Cardinals have beaten out the Huskers for the national title each of the last two years.

Student tickets now available

From Staff Reports

Nebraska football season tickets for full-time UNL students went on sale Monday.

Students may pick up season ticket applications at the Memorial Stadium ticket office, the administration building (room 110) and the East Campus Union information desk.

Students must turn in the applications along with a check, cash or money order for \$73 for students and \$146 for spouses to the Memorial Stadium ticket office between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. today through Friday to enter the spring lottery.



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Gillespie

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get into the coaching, and then when the new (NCAA) regulations came in, it heightened the chance of leaving."

Gillespie said his long history with Nebraska made the decision to leave even more difficult.

Gillespie played I-back for the Huskers, earned letters from 1974 through 1976 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in education in 1977.

He was a graduate assistant for Nebraska, was a head football coach at Lincoln High School and Hastings High School, and eventually returned to UNL to become a graduate assistant to the recruiting coordinator in 1985.

"Nebraska is a great place, and you just don't take any opportunity that comes along," he said.

Osborne said Nebraska was looking for someone who would solely prefer recruiting and administrative duties and hoped to find a replacement "fairly soon."

"We're really looking for someone primarily on an administrative track," he said. "We want someone that's been around the ballpark in recruiting. Fifty percent of it will be administrative."

Erstad

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and I never really got a chance to see my pitch."

All of the off-speed pitches have kept Erstad off balance, he said, and he still hasn't become completely comfortable at the plate.

Other players might enjoy being this uncomfortable. Along with his .351 batting average, Erstad leads the Huskers with 8 home runs and 29 RBI and is second on the team in stolen bases with six. He also had a 20-game hitting streak earlier this season.

"The key for me is just to stay patient and disciplined and lay off the breaking stuff," Erstad said. "It shouldn't be too tough for me because once I get used to seeing a lot of off-speed stuff it will be easier to let it go."

Husker coach John Sanders agreed. "It will help him because if you get a chance to see a lot of looks you can learn from the experience," Sanders said. "He will adjust, and it will make him a more disciplined hitter."