Blackshirts reload, aim at 1995 national title

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

In his first three years as a Cornhusker, outside linebacker Dwayne Harris was never listed at the top of the depth chart.

Harris

But heading into next fall, no other Nebraska football player will have a bigger hole to fill than Harris.

Harris, who recorded eight sacks and 22 tackles in limited playing time last year, will replace Butkus Award winner Trev Alberts.

"I don't feel a lot of pressure," Harris said. "We have a lot of people who are going to come and fill in."

While filling in last season, Harris performed well.

> ***I think our defense will be a whole hell of a lot better than last year. That last game was like a stepping stone, because we plan on being back there next year.***
>
> *— Harris*
> *NU outside linebacker*

When Alberts was on the sidelines after dislocating his elbow in the first quarter of Nebraska's 21-7 win over Oklahoma, Harris stepped in and recorded a career-high seven tackles, four quarterback hurries and three sacks.

The 6-foot-2-inch, 220-pound senior from Bessemer, Ala., was awarded the ABC player of the game award and named the Big Eight defensive player of the week for his efforts.

Harris said he was not just looking for award-winning performances next year.

"I will contribute my part, and the other guys will do their jobs, too," Harris said. "It's not going to depend on one person."

Linebacker Ed Stewart, who will be a senior in the fall, said the Huskers were more comfortable this spring in the 4-3 defense than last spring, when the defense was first implemented.

"It puts us in better situations when we go against passing teams," Stewart said. "Part of my job is to drop back into coverage, and that's something we didn't have before the new defense. I end up covering wide receivers on pass routes, and that adds to the effectiveness of the pass defense."

Any doubts about the quality of the Huskers' defense were erased in the Orange Bowl, Stewart said. Nebraska limited Florida State's offense to 333 yards. The Blackshirts held the Seminoles to a season-low 18 points and sacked Heisman Trophy winner Charlie Ward five times.

One of those sacks came courtesy of Harris, who nailed Ward for a 7-yard loss.

The Huskers are building on the Orange Bowl game this spring, Harris said.

"That game gave us a lot of recognition," he said. "I think it showed people that we are not a team that is just going to be run over."

See **DEFENSE** on 8

NU to hobble into regional meet

Coach says team will be hurting in every event

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

If Nebraska women's gymnastics coach Dan Kendig had his way, the Cornhuskers would have had an extra week to prepare for this weekend's Midwest Regional competition.

Hawkinson

After scoring a season-high 193.6 points at the Big Eight Championships in Lincoln on March 26, the Huskers appeared to be in top form and cruising toward the regional meet, which begins at 9 p.m. Saturday in Tempe, Ariz.

But after an injury to junior Martha Jenkins, Nebraska is hurting for gymnasts.

Jenkins, who set the school record in the vault at the Big Eight meet, severely sprained her ankle Monday when she fell off the balance beam in practice. Kendig said Jenkins would not compete in Tempe.

"We're a little beat up right now," Kendig said. "We'll be hurting in every event, but mostly on the floor exercise."

The floor exercise problems are compounded by Nicole Duval's ankle injury. Duval was injured on March 19 while competing in Ames, Iowa, and sat out of the Big Eight Championships. Duval will not compete in the floor exercise this weekend, Kendig said.

"It's a positive that she's been able to come back," Kendig said. "She'll go in three events, but she's not 100 percent."

On the bright side, Duval's absence in the floor exercise will allow junior Jennifer Hawkinson to compete in the all-around. Two weeks ago, Hawkinson won the all-around Big Eight title with a score of 38.925.

Hawkinson, who was competing in the all-around for the first time this year at the Big Eight meet, was named the Big Eight gymnast of the month for March.

"She'll do a great job," Kendig said. "We're not making any excuses, and I still feel we have a very good chance to advance to nationals."

In order to make the national meet, the Huskers will have to finish among the top 12 teams in the nation's five regional meets. Each of the regional winners qualify for the national meet, along with seven at-large teams. The national meet will be held April 21-24 in Salt Lake City.

"I feel if we hit, we'll go," Kendig said. "This team has been steering toward this meet all year."

Nebraska will compete against Utah, Arizona State, Brigham Young, Utah State, Arizona and Oklahoma at the regional meet.

Kendig said the Huskers wanted a top three finish in Tempe, but fourth place might be good enough to qualify for the national meet.

"It's a tough regional," he said. "One regional should get four teams, and it could be ours. But we would like to take third to be safe."

Kiley Timperley/DN

Nebraska's Nicole Duval prepares to dismount off the vault during a meet earlier this year. Duval, who injured an ankle March 19, will return to compete in three events as the Husker women's gymnastics team competes in the regional meet Saturday.

Gymnastics men healthy, expecting regional win

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's gymnastics team does not need a great performance this weekend at the West Regional in Colorado Springs, Colo., to qualify for the national meet.

Allen

But Coach Francis Allen said he would not be pleased unless the Huskers won.

"We don't want to come in second or third," he said. "We should win. We have the best team, and that means we should come out a winner."

But if the Huskers do not win, they can still qualify for the national meet as long as they finish in the top three at the regional meet.

"We have to qualify," Allen said. "That's the most important thing."

The Huskers are in a position to experience a letdown after their stellar performance at the Big Eight Championships on March 25, Allen said, but they need to stay focused.

"We may have been too good at Big Eights," he said. "With that type of score and hitting that many routines, it is hard to improve, but we can. We're that good."

Nebraska scored a season-high 287.775 — the fifth best all-time score — at the Big Eight meet, while hitting 94 percent of its routines.

"I don't want to be flat going into regionals," Allen said. "And one good thing is with all these seniors, they are experienced, and we should avoid being flat."

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>
> *— Allen*
> *NU men's gymnastics coach*

The Huskers will compete against Oklahoma, UCLA, Stanford, California-Berkeley and New Mexico in Colorado Springs this weekend.

Oklahoma and Stanford have beaten the Huskers this year, and the Cardinal has topped Nebraska in each of the last two national meets.

However, Allen said, he's glad to be in Nebraska's position. The judges know the Huskers are ranked No. 1, Allen said, and can't keep it out of their minds.

"They see that we are No. 1, and we are almost a whole point ahead of everybody else," Allen said. "So they try to phase it out, but it's there in the back of their minds."

In every meet since March 5, when the Huskers lost to Stanford in Palo Alto, Calif., Nebraska has improved. Allen said the Huskers' steady progress had put them in their best shape of the year.

"That's your goal, to be healthy at this time of year," he said. "We have done that. We are even healthier now, with Che (Bowers) back, than we were going into Big Eights."

NU baseball team rallies, beats UNK in ninth inning

By Trevor Parks
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska baseball team got all it could handle in a 5-4 win over the University of Nebraska-Kearney Thursday night at Buck Beltzer Field.

After scoring two runs in the bottom of the eighth to tie the game, the 16-16 Cornhuskers scored the winning run when junior second baseman Scott Wulfing knocked in senior third baseman Derek Dukart with a single in the ninth.

Nebraska baseball coach John Sanders said he was a little concerned when the Huskers trailed 4-2.

"We were down two runs late," Sanders said. "Our players had no fear and came out with good competitiveness."

In the top of the eighth, UNK scored twice to take a 4-2 lead. With two UNK runners on base, shortstop Mike Asche stroked a double to right center, scoring both.

The Huskers rallied to tie the score in the eighth when sophomore first baseman Alvie Shepherd hit a double to right center, scoring senior right fielder Matt McKay and senior third baseman Derek Dukart.

The Huskers had jumped out to a 2-0 lead by scoring once in the third inning and once in the fourth.

In the third inning, Jed Dalton walked with one out and then stole second and third to get into scoring position. Then, sophomore outfielder Darin Erstad scored Dalton with an RBI single down the right field line.

Wulfing led off the fourth with a home run over the scoreboard in left.

After retiring 13 straight batters, Husker pitcher Chris Bauer struggled in the sixth, allowing the Lopers to tie the score 2-2.

Senior pitcher Mike Bellows, who improved his record to 5-1, relieved Bauer. After Asche, the first batter he faced, hit into a fielder's choice that scored third baseman Rob Nye, Bellows retired the side.

"This was a good game," Sanders said. "Every win is big right now."