

Piatkowski works hard for higher draft spot

By Derek Samson
Staff Reporter

All that former Nebraska forward Eric Piatkowski has to do now is sit back and wait.

But the waiting may be the hardest part. Piatkowski has spent the past month on the road, working out for different NBA teams in hopes to improve his stock in the June 29 NBA draft.

"Everywhere I went was a little different," Piatkowski said. "Usually I worked out for a hour to an hour and a half. Then I went through different interviews with the coaching staff and front offices. It's been exciting, but I'm tired of all the traveling. I'm ready for the 29th to be here."

Piatkowski didn't do anything to hurt his chances when he was named the Most Valuable Player of the Desert Classic in Phoenix in May.

"A lot of people told me it helped out a lot," Piatkowski said. "The top seniors that will be in the draft were there, so it was a big tournament. To me, I'll just wait and see on the 29th if that helped or not. It might have helped a lot or it might have been just hogwash."

The MVP award came after the 6-foot-7-inch Piatkowski capped off his career with an outstanding senior season.

Piatkowski averaged 20.6 points a game, led Nebraska to the Big Eight tournament title, earned the tournament's MVP and was selected All-Big Eight for the second consecutive year.

There is no surprise that Piatkowski is expected to be a first-round selection in the draft.

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—Piatkowski
Former NU basketball player

But for now, Piatkowski is keeping his options open and doesn't want to predict where he will go in next week's draft.

"Right now I don't feel much like trying to guess who will take me or where I'll probably go," he said. "I don't have any preferences. I'm staying really open-minded because I can't make the final decision. All I can do is try to impress people as much as I can."

Part of Piatkowski's low-keyed approach stems back to the various NBA teams' approach to him.

"Nobody wants to tip their hat to anyone," he said. "They don't want you to know what they're thinking. It's all pretty secretive right now, so I just have to wait until the draft to see what kind of a impression I made."

What kind of an impression does Piatkowski think he made?

"To this point I feel confident that I have done everything to help myself on the 29th," he said. "I am confident and excited about what I have done so far. Now I just have to sit back and see what happens on the 29th."



Courtesy of NU Sports Information
Eric Piatkowski, Nebraska's leading scorer each of the last three seasons, will likely be a first-round pick in this year's NBA draft, held on Wednesday.

UNL international students focus on soccer's World Cup

By Derek Samson
Staff Reporter

The United States has a world of eyes looking upon it during the current World Cup competition it is hosting.

The 24-team World Cup, being played at various sites around the United States, is drawing particular interest from some University of Nebraska-Lincoln students.

Maria Villalobos from Chihuahua, Mexico, knows she isn't the only member of her family that is following the competition. Mexico is currently 0-1 in the Group E bracket.

"My mom really likes football (soccer) and gets really excited when the games are going on," Villalobos said. "She is especially excited now that it's the World Cup. In Mexico, we have a lot of soccer teams and we play all year round."

"Then when an event such as the World Cup comes around, everyone is interested. When Mexico participates in an event like this, it is very big and everyone follows our team."

The United States is currently 0-0-1 in Group A following a 1-1 tie with Switzerland Saturday.

UNL junior Dan Farley said the United States should be proud of its effort in the World Cup.

"We don't seem to take soccer as seriously here as they do in some of those other countries," he said. "I think it's a good sign for the training and the athletes here that we're right up there hanging with some of those teams."

"To some of those teams that we are playing, they have the support of their entire country and it's probably the biggest sporting event for them ever."

India, which is not competing for

the World Cup title, is trying to get to the level that the U.S. is at, according to UNL student and India native Kamalakar Vuggumudi.

"It (soccer) is quite popular in our big cities," he said. "But we're not up to the world's standards in competing. It makes a country proud to see a team in there and we wish we had a team playing now, but the basic skills are lacking in India. It's very popular, but there isn't enough money to start a good program."

Ana Cillero, a Spanish teacher at UNL, said her home country of Spain was as used to be on top of the soccer world as Nebraska football fans were with nine-win seasons.

"We are accustomed to this competition and the teams from Spain win it quite often," she said. "(If Spain wins it this year) It will be talked about for probably a week. They will remember it forever, but there are too

many problems in Spain.

"Other topics are much more important right now. If they win it, it will be a relief — a breath of fresh air. It would be something to make the people happy for a while."

Spain is presently 0-0-1 in Group C.

Some students don't have the luxury of cheering for their country in the World Cup.

Malaysia, which has soccer leagues throughout the year, did not qualify for the World Cup competition.

Senior business major Sun Tay said Malaysia would erupt with excitement if it ever had the opportunity to play for the World Cup.

"It's the biggest sport ever in Malaysia, so it would be like a holiday," he said. "We watch every night of the World Cup and there is a time difference of 12-14 hours, so we stay awake until sometimes four in the morning

watching. So soccer is the most popular sport there."

Tay is from Johor, one of Malaysia's 13 states, each of which competes in a semi-pro league.

"Every state has their own team and they all play each other," Tay said. "Singapore also has a team in it and those 14 teams draw big numbers of people when they play."

But whether this World Cup competition will spur the popularity of soccer in the United States is yet to be seen.

"There are a lot more people who are starting to follow it and the World Cup will only help that following," Nebraska gymnast Nicole Duvall said. "Personally, I don't find it as exciting as other contact sports and I think a lot of other people think the same way. I think that is why it will never have the following that football does in this country."