

SPORTS

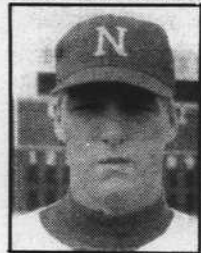
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UNL player tabbed top draft pick

By Jeff Griesch
Senior Reporter

Darin Erstad has finished one season No. 1. In his first year as a punter and place kicker for the Nebraska football team, Erstad earned a national championship ring while averaging more than 40 yards per punt.



Erstad With football behind him, Erstad is now looking toward his first love — baseball. And he may be looking at another No. 1. The junior outfielder from Jamestown, N.D., has been picked as the top professional prospect in college baseball by Baseball America.

He was also named to the Collegiate Baseball pre-season All-American team and projected as the Big Eight player of the year.

"You can't believe everything you read or hear," Erstad said. "It doesn't matter. It's still all preseason stuff."

Last season, Erstad hit .317 with 12 home runs and 52 RBI. Although he hit two more homers than he did in his freshman season, his batting average fell 22 points and he drove in two fewer runs.

"I am embarrassed the way last season went. My personal goal is always to have better stats each year," Erstad said. "Last year, for the first time in my life, my numbers were worse than the year before."

Erstad said his struggles last year were caused by inexperience.

Although Erstad's numbers were down during the season, he rebounded to hit .340 with wooden bats this summer and was named most valuable player of the Cape Cod League.

Erstad's performance grabbed the attention of scouts during the summer.

"I would say I am getting at least two phone calls a night from scouts and agents who want to know what my plans are," Erstad said. "The biggest thing they want to know is whether I am going to play football next year."

Good question.

"If I get drafted where I am projected to get drafted, then I am going to sign and focus all my attention on playing professional baseball," Erstad said. "If there was any way I could work it out without hurting my baseball, then I would love to do it, but I think it would be impossible."



Jeff Haller/DN

Karen Jennings smiles while being interviewed Wednesday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. The former Husker All-American will have her number retired Sunday.

Husker All-American to retire jersey

By Trevor Parks
Staff Reporter

In 1989, Karen Jennings could only dream about what might be in her future.

Now, two years after finishing a stellar career with the Nebraska women's basketball team, Jennings will have her No. 51 jersey retired Sunday when the Cornhuskers play Iowa State at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Jennings, who played at Nebraska from 1989-93, said Coach Angela Beck had a great influence on where she is today.

"Coach Beck always dared me to dream," Jennings said. "When I first got here I didn't know if I was going to be an All-American, but she really felt I could."

Jennings, who was an All-American in 1992-93, finished her career as the Huskers' all-time leading scorer.

In her career at Nebraska, Jennings scored 2,405 points and holds six school records.

The three-time All-Big Eight performer said she enjoyed leading the Huskers to their

second NCAA appearance and first win in the NCAAs in school history in 1993.

"The people that I played with and worked with here were phenomenal," Jennings said. Her parents also played an important role in her development.

"I've always had a great support system," Jennings said. "They've always encouraged me to give my best no matter what I do."

That support helped lead Jennings to where she is today.

Last year, she played professional women's basketball in France.

Now, Jennings works as a physical therapy aid at Knortz and Snyder Physical Therapy at 70th and Van Dorn streets.

She is also a supplementary instructor of biology at the Hewitt Athletic Academic Center and is a mentor/tutor in the student-athlete program.

At the end of February, Jennings is hoping to extend her playing career one final time at a tryout for the Pan American Games in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

But Jennings will put her future aspira-

Back Home

Former Nebraska All-American Karen Jennings was named as one of 20 women invited to the USA Basketball Pan American Games Women's Basketball Team Trials Wednesday.

Karen Jennings' career statistics at Nebraska:

Year	FG-FGA	FT-FTA	TP	Avg.
1989-90	157-298	60-101	374	13.4
1990-91	236-413	102-137	574	20.5
1991-92	337-559	129-165	810	25.3
1992-93	251-456	135-167	647	20.9
Career	981-1,726	426-570	2,405	20.2

tions aside this Sunday.

She will be back on the floor with some of her former teammates.

Meggan Yedsena, Kim Yancey, Carol

See JENNINGS on 8

Wrestling team hopes to surpass success of 1993

The Nebraska wrestling team hasn't been to Stillwater, Okla., since 1993.

And the Cornhuskers left Stillwater with a convincing 39-12 win over Oklahoma State.

The win marked Husker coach Tim Neumann's first-ever victory against Oklahoma State, home or away.

On Friday night, the Huskers will attempt to do it again. But the scenario is somewhat different.

Perennial power Oklahoma State is ranked No. 2 this year. In 1993, the Cowboys were on probation, and many of their top wrestlers were redshirted.

Last year the Cowboys won the national title with all those redshirts from the previous year winning national titles.

Oklahoma State had three individual national champs. Alan Fried won at 142 pounds. The unbeatable Pat Smith won at 158 pounds. And Mark Branch won at 167 pounds.

Nebraska, on the other hand, finished with a less-than-sterling 29th-place finish at the NCAA

Championships.

Finishing 29th wasn't exactly as good as finishing third, which the Huskers did in 1993.

If only the Huskers could return to 1993.

But they are making their way back. After losing a national champion and seven starters, Neumann had to reload going into last season.

He now has the foundation on which to build.

Against Oklahoma State and Oklahoma this weekend, Neumann will send four freshmen, four sophomores and two juniors into battle.

This was a far cry from two years ago. In 1993, he sent a senior-laden team down to Stillwater.

But Neumann has rebuilt his team into being a title contender again this season.

Since that record-setting 1993 season, the road has been bumpy. But Neumann and the Huskers have endured.

He replaced 118-pound All-American John Buxton with another NCAA qualifier, Scott



Tim Pearson

Gonyo. Gonyo is gone this year, but in his place is the tandem of Brad Canoyer and Darin Giese. Canoyer and Giese have combined for a 38-17 record, which is comparable to Gonyo's record of 32-11.

Neumann had to replace 126-pound Tony Purler, his sole national champion in 1993. He found Steve Baer, who came on strong last year and has a 24-5 record this year.

Frank Velazquez returned from that 1993 team and was 24-3 last season. Jason Reitmeier and Tony DeAnda have combined to replace Velazquez, who is back as a student

assistant this year.

All-American Mike Eierman returned last year and battled Justin Ware for the spot at 142 pounds. Ware had a 27-8 record and finished strong, but after the spring semester, Ware dropped out of school.

Lucky for Neumann that he had Eierman and Joe Stephens in backup. Stephens competed in the NCAAs in 1992, and Eierman was an All-American as a sophomore in 1993.

Neumann counted on two freshmen last year at 150 and 158 pounds. Jason Kraft and Temoer-Terry filled the spots more than adequately.

Kraft is splitting time with Mike Roller at 158 this year, and Terry is 23-1 and ranked fourth in the nation at 150.

Chad Nelson returned at 167 pounds, but was lost for the season with an injured anterior cruciate ligament last season. But this season he's back, splitting time with Erik Josephson.

Ever since Corey Olson graduated in 1993, Neumann hasn't

found anybody of Olson's caliber at 177 pounds.

Ryan Tobin wrestled at 177 last year and finished at .500.

But that was no comparison to Olson, who finished with a 115-28 record at Nebraska.

Now Neumann is turning to Kenny Mbah at 177 pounds. Mbah is a cousin of former Kansas City Chiefs running back Christian Okoye; Mbah has a 13-12 record so far this season.

Tobin and Tolly Thompson round out the Huskers' lineup at 190 pounds and heavyweight.

And Neumann is hoping that the mix of youth and experience adds up to a top-five finish at nationals.

And he started to reap the fruits on Wednesday, when he found out that his team had moved up to third in the national rankings.

And when was the last time his team was ranked that high?

You got it. Two years ago in 1993.

Pearson is a junior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.