

Consistency, home court wins give Sooners successful season

Coach gives credit to good-luck outfit for latest victories

By Trevor Parks
Staff Reporter

After three consecutive wins over teams ranked in the top 20, Oklahoma coach Kelvin Sampson took Sunday off to go on a recruiting trip.

But Sampson made sure he didn't miss the chance to speak to the media during the Big Eight coaches' weekly teleconference Monday.

Sampson answered questions in midair, while he was on board a plane returning to Oklahoma City.

The first-year Sooner coach had nothing but good things to say through a static connection.

He said his team had done a great job during this crucial stretch of the season.

"We didn't sit back and have any illusions," Sampson said. "The thing

I'm most proud of is that our team stayed consistent."

The No. 16 Sooners have been consistently good as shown by their 21-6 record.

Oklahoma is also third in the Big Eight with an 8-4 record.

After beating then-No. 9 Missouri 94-89 last Saturday, Oklahoma then beat No. 1 Kansas 76-73 two days later and continued the winning streak by beating No. 18 Oklahoma State 82-74 Saturday.

Winning those three games at home left the Sooners with a 15-0 record in Norman this year.

That marked the fifth time in the 20-year history of the Lloyd Noble Center that the Sooners had gone undefeated.

Also Oklahoma improved to 5-0 at home against No. 1 ranked teams.

The Sooners have defeated UNLV, Arizona, Missouri, and Kansas twice in that streak.

Last year, Oklahoma struggled at home, going only 9-5 in Norman.

Sampson said his first season at the Lloyd Noble Center had been a memorable one.

"Playing at Lloyd Noble was a tremendous advantage," Sampson said. "I'm starting to realize that it is some place special."

One other thing that helped Sampson over the stretch was being a little superstitious.

Over the three-game stretch Sampson has worn a blue denim shirt with khaki slacks.

He said he didn't intend to change that in the future.

"I'm not sure I should pack anything else," Sampson said. "I don't need it off the court, but I do need it on the court."

Sampson said he might need his good-luck outfit as the Sooners play two more games against ranked teams — Iowa State and Missouri — to close out the regular season.

Oklahoma has struggled on the road, going only 2-4 in road games this year.

No matter what happens in those games, Sampson said he was happy with the way his team had progressed.

"It's fun to watch us develop," Sampson said. "We're playing to our ability level, and that is my goal, to get us as close to that as possible."

Despite injuries, team succeeds at tournament

By Jeff Griesch
Senior Reporter

The Nebraska baseball team delivered some big hits in San Diego this weekend, but the Cornhuskers took some hits too.

Outfielder Mel Motley unleashed the Cornhuskers' biggest blow when he connected on a 3-run home run in the seventh inning to beat Oklahoma State 6-5.

Motley's homer gave the Cowboys their first loss of the season after an 11-0 start.

Even more impressive than what the Huskers did against Oklahoma State was who they did it without.

The Huskers beat the Cowboys without Darin Erstad, Todd Sears and David Crain, and Coach John Sanders said the Huskers proved something to him Sunday.

"It shows that we are on the road to having a team with some mentally tough people," Sanders said. "We found reasons for winning instead of excuses to lose."

Crain was the first Husker to leave the Arthur Gallagher Tournament.

The senior catcher suffered a concussion in the opening game Friday against New Mexico State.

The Lobos' Andre Champagne collided with Crain while trying to score from third on a ground ball to shortstop Darin Petersen.

Crain blocked the plate and Petersen's throw was in time to beat Champagne, but the blow knocked Crain out of the game.

He was taken to the hospital Friday and released. He still had a headache after Saturday's games and returned to the hospital Saturday night.

Patrick Johnson took over for Crain and made the all-tournament team.

Johnson, a sophomore catcher from Salt Lake City, Utah, went 7 for 16 at the plate with two runs scored.

"Patrick Johnson filled in and did an excellent job," Sanders said.

Freshman first baseman Todd Sears suffered a concussion after being hit on an attempted pickoff play, in the seventh inning of a 6-1 loss to San Diego State, Saturday night.

Sears hit his first career home run in a 10-2 win over Southern Utah and a game-winning homer in the seventh inning of a 6-5 victory over the Aztecs earlier Saturday.

He was taken to the hospital and released early Sunday morning, but he missed the Oklahoma State game.

Sears didn't take the only hit of the weekend either.

Darin Erstad was also injured against San Diego State while diving for a ball in left field.

Erstad continued to play, and hit a home run to prevent a shutout Saturday night, but he missed Sunday's game against the Cowboys because of a bruised right shoulder.

Right-handed pitcher Sergio Betancourt was the first Husker to leave Saturday's second game with the Aztecs after feeling something pop in his right elbow.

Betancourt took himself out of the game with a strained right arm.

Sanders said he was happy to see the Huskers rebound from the injuries.

"I think we have the potential to have a team with more depth than we have had in the past," Sanders said. "We had some guys step up, and that is definitely a positive sign."

Owners, players still indoors as baseball strike continues

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (AP)—The warm and sunny afternoon was perfect for baseball, but the baseball strike, which completed its 200th day, kept major leaguers indoors as talks resumed Monday.

In Florida, the Philadelphia Phillies canceled their exhibition opener Friday against the Baltimore Orioles, the only team refusing to hire replacement players.

Atlanta Braves president Stan Kasten said there was no chance owners would drop their plan to use replacements, who vary from older minor leaguers to retired major leaguers.

"Until we have a deal, that's what we're going to continue to do," Kasten said. "We're not going to close down. If you do that, there are not going to

be jobs for ushers, ticket takers, parking lot attendants, front office people."

The bargaining session was the first devoted to the issues since Feb. 7, when President Clinton summoned both sides to the White House.

"I don't want to set any deadline because there's enough pressure as it is," Selig said before meeting with union head Donald Fehr and mediator W.J. Usery.

The main issue was the owners' demand for a luxury tax.

At the White House meeting, Usery suggested a compromise of a 50-percent luxury tax on the portion of payrolls above \$40 million. Owners said they reluctantly would accept, but the players said it would act as a salary cap.

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"So, struggle on because we can do all things through Christ which strengthens us." Phil. 1:13