

Huskers' Viola continues hot hitting against Bluejays

By Todd Walkenhorst
Staff Reporter

Ali Viola has found her stroke, and she can't think of anything better than getting up to bat. "I'm definitely in a groove," Viola said, "and I can't wait to get to the box."

Never was this more true than Wednesday night when Viola connected on a fastball for a grand slam over the center-field fence in the second inning of the Cornhuskers' second game with Creighton. The shot put the Huskers up 8-0.

"I've hit three or four grand slams," the freshman shortstop said, "but that's my first in college."

Viola's grand slam helped Nebraska defeat in-state rival Creighton 9-1 in the second game of a doubleheader Wednesday night. The game was called after the fifth inning because of Nebraska's eight-run lead.

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ALI VIOLA

Nebraska shortstop

The Bluejays shut out the Huskers in the first game, winning 3-0. Lack of output in the first game concerned Viola.

"We're a very strong offensive team," Viola said. "There's no way we shouldn't score any runs."

The shutout was the second time the Huskers were held scoreless this season. On March 26 the Huskers dropped a 1-0 decision to Sacra-

mento State.

Even with her teammates cold, Viola continued her hot hitting. Viola came into Wednesday's action with a .438 batting average. She went 3 for 6 in two games against the Bluejays with one home run and five RBI.

Viola said she realized that her streaky hitting gives her an advantage against opposing pitchers.

"I'm seeing the ball real well," Viola said. "I'm concentrating on hitting through the ball. When I get up to the plate, I know that I am intimidating the pitchers."

Viola, a 5-foot-4 freshman from Novato, Calif., was one of Coach Rhona Revelle's top recruits last season. She was a two-time player of the year for San Marian High School and was named all-state twice.

While playing for the San Jose Strickers, a summer league team, Viola was named the best rookie and best offensive player in the league.

But she didn't get the chance to show her talents at Nebraska last season.

Viola redshirted last season after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee. Before that season, Revelle had projected Viola to start at shortstop. But her injury caused All-Big Eight performer Tobin Echo-Hawk to move from third base to shortstop.

Last fall, though, Viola finally got the chance to play, and she responded by hitting .404, second on the team.

The Huskers will play host to Iowa State for four games in two days this weekend, playing doubleheaders on both Saturday and Sunday afternoon.

Viola said that she looked forward to playing four games this weekend to help secure the Huskers' shot at post-season play.

"We play two each day," she said. "It will give us a chance to pick up more wins."

Iowa State takes two from Huskers

From Staff Reports

Iowa State snapped Nebraska's four-game winning streak with a double-header sweep Wednesday in Ames, Iowa.

In the first game, the Cyclones' Mark Motzer singled in Dave Konigsmark in the tenth inning for the winning run, giving the Cyclones a 7-6 win.

The Cyclones scored six runs in the fourth inning on their way to a 12-6 win over the Cornhuskers in the second game.

The Huskers fell to 26-16 on the

season and 8-8 in the conference. The Cyclones improved to 16-14.

Nebraska had tied the opener in the ninth on Alvie Shepherd's two-run homer. Darin Erstad also homered for the Cornhuskers, and Konigsmark had a home run for the Cyclones in that game.

David Pollak, 3-1, was the winner in relief while Jonas Armenta, 7-2, took the loss in relief of starter Bob Courter. Armenta pitched four shutout innings before giving up the winning run in the 10th.

In the nightcap, Peter Tremewan and Troy Logan each batted in three,

with both collecting two RBIs in the six-run fourth inning for the Cyclones. Erstad and Scott Wulffing both had home runs for the Huskers.

Erstad now has 14 home runs on the season and is batting .463.

Nathan Trent, 2-1, was the winner and Jeff Strasser, 1-4, was the losing pitcher. Strasser allowed seven earned runs in 3 1/3 innings. Justin Gomes came on and gave up four earned runs in 2 2/3 innings.

The Huskers and Cyclones will meet again this weekend for three games at Buck Beltzer Stadium.

Spring practice finishes with almost no injuries

From Staff Reports

The Nebraska football team escaped its last practice of the spring relatively injury-free, losing only junior fullback Mike Smith with a hip flexor.

Sophomore I-back Todd Uhlir did not practice again because of shoulder problems. Both players' status for Saturday's spring game are uncertain.

Starting junior I-back Lawrence Phillips, as well as freshman free safety

Tray Crayton, sophomore linebacker Sean Noster and junior cornerback Michael Booker, were officially declared out for the remainder of the spring.

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said that he was happy with the developments of his team throughout spring practice.

"A lot of players have made some progress this spring," Osborne said. "We should have a good team next year."

Repeat

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meet, said the field this year was tighter than ever. Stanford, Oklahoma, Penn State, Iowa and Ohio State join Nebraska in Columbus.

"It's going to be close," Allen said. "I see this as the closest competition I've been in for a long time. Any one of the schools that can weather the storm Thursday night can win. Other than that, there is no advantage."

But Allen, despite the parity, said he was still confident.

"If you were to say to me, 'What team is everybody else picking?' I'd say, 'I don't think there is anyone.' I'm picking us, but I don't think there is a consensus."

No. 3 Nebraska — who with a win would tie the NCAA record of nine national titles set by Penn State and Illinois — has faced every team at nationals other than Penn State.

The Huskers are 2-4-1 against the NCAA teams, having lost to Stanford twice, lost to Oklahoma once and beaten the Sooners twice, lost to Ohio State and tied Iowa.

Despite the losing record, Allen said Nebraska just as easily could have won almost every meet it lost. He

said the return of freshman Bill Mulholland would benefit the Huskers at nationals.

Mulholland, who is 23 years old, injured his knee at Nebraska's first meet of the season, Jan. 20-21. Doctors originally expected Mulholland to be on the shelf until mid-summer, but he returned to practice earlier this month and will compete on the pommel horse at nationals.

"If I would have had Mulholland all season," Allen said, "I think we would be the favorite to win the whole thing. Now that he's back, it will help a lot."

A strong senior class led Nebraska to the title a year ago. This season, Nebraska's two seniors, Richard Grace and Rick Kieffer, and junior Jason Christie need to shoulder the load, Allen said.

But, he said, Nebraska will need more than just three strong all-around performances to advance past Thursday. The Huskers' support crew, made up of five freshmen and two sophomores, will be an important piece of the puzzle, Allen said.

"Hopefully, we have seasoned them correctly," he said, "and they'll have the right type of leadership from our upperclassmen."

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