

# SPORTS

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## Home run barrage leads Huskers to sweep

By Derek Samson  
Senior Reporter

The bats of the Nebraska softball team, along with the overall performance of Angela Blackwood, was enough to propel it to a doubleheader sweep of Wichita State Thursday night.

The Cornhuskers won 6-0 in the first game and 4-2 in the second after hitting four home runs in the two games.

Blackwood earned the win in the first and the save in the second game to help Nebraska improve to 39-17.

In the first game, Tobin Echo-Hawk put the Huskers on top early with her solo home run in the first inning.

That would prove to be all Blackwood would need, as she pitched her fourth shutout of the year on a three-hit performance.

"She's grown tremendously this year," Nebraska coach Rhonda Revelle said. "When we started the season, it took her probably six or seven games before she could finish a game. Now, she's throwing doubleheaders."

Gloria Von Rentzell scored on Blackwood's single in the third inning to put the Huskers up 2-0. Nebraska, however, stranded the bases loaded, just as it did in the second inning.

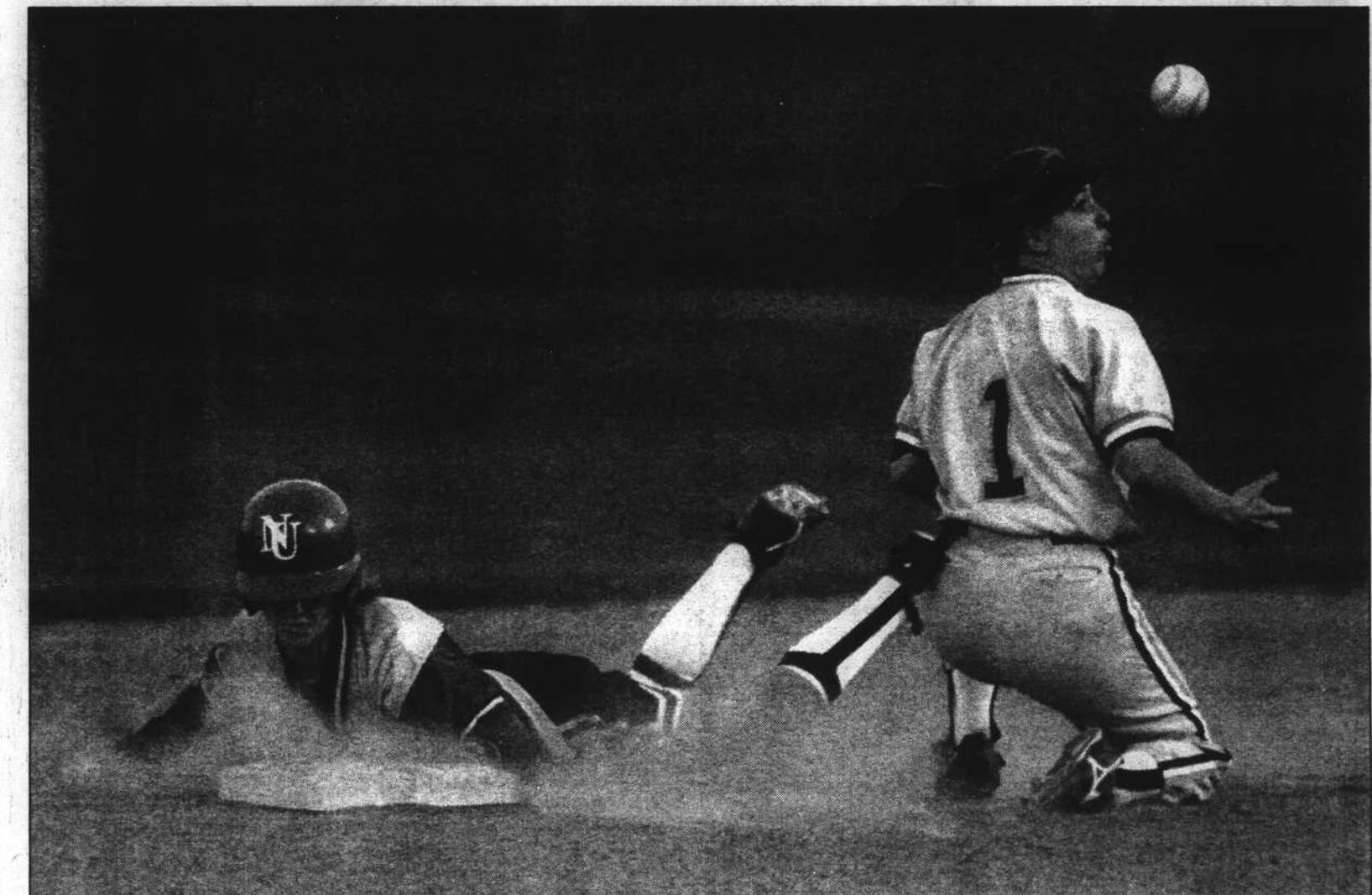
Revelle said the Huskers weren't getting the big hit when they needed to early in the first game.

"I thought we were spreading the hits out a little too much in the first game," Revelle said. "If we could have got a few more back-to-backs, we could have opened that game up pretty quick. But I thought we got the hits when we needed to."

The only threat the Shockers made in the first game came in the fifth inning.

Trailing 2-0, Wichita State loaded the bases with no outs, but Blackwood struck out three consecutive batters to get out of the inning.

Amy Offenbacher added some insurance runs for the Huskers in the



Nebraska's Sandra Brown slides into second base as Wichita State's Ozzie Smith juggles the ball during the second game between the Huskers and Shockers Thursday night. The Huskers won both games by scores of 6-0 and 4-2.

Damon Lee/DN

sixth inning with a two-run home run. Von Rentzell and Echo-Hawk followed Offenbacher's home run with singles and both later scored on Blackwood's double to put Nebraska up 6-0.

In the second game, the Shockers struck first with two runs in the third inning.

Offenbacher answered by leading off Nebraska's third inning with a solo home run. Ali Viola later reached base on a double and scored on Blackwood's single to tie the game 2-2.

Sandra Brown gave Nebraska a 3-2 lead in the fourth inning when her fly ball bounced off the top of the fence before falling over for a home

run.

Nebraska added a run in the sixth inning when Sarah Sinclair scored after Wichita State shortstop Ozzie Smith misjudged a fly ball.

Wichita State made its final threat in the seventh inning when Nebraska pitcher Stacie Stafford walked the first three batters to load the bases.

Blackwood came in for the save and sat down the next three batters — striking out two of them.

"Stacie hadn't thrown for 10 days — period," Revelle said. "I thought

she did fine, but it was a situation where she was ready to come out because she wanted what was best for the team. She knew her timing was a bit off, but she'll be right back for us."

## Senior confidence affects gymnastic team's success

By Trevor Parks  
Staff Reporter

Confidence may have been the biggest reason the Nebraska women's gymnastics team made the NCAA Championships for the first time since 1990 this year.

Now, the Cornhuskers look to carry over that confidence to next year, although they lose four seniors.

Coach Dan Kendig said those seniors were the reason why Nebraska made the trip to the NAAs this year.

"We competed a lot more this year with confidence, and that can be attributed to the fact that we had four seniors," Kendig said. "They had some goals, and if they didn't accomplish them this year, they weren't going to accomplish them."

The Huskers lose Jennifer Hawkinson, Kristi Camp, Nicole Duval and Martha Jenkins, but the cupboard isn't left bare.

Next year, Joy Taylor and Meghan Nicolini will try to fill that senior role. Both are the only two seniors on the team.

Taylor was named a second-team All-American in the uneven bars with a 9.8 at the NCAA meet. Taylor led the Huskers in the all-around with a 38.425.

Overall Nebraska finished 11th with a score of 191.75 at the NAAs.

Also returning are sophomore sensations Shelly Bartlett and Kim DeHaan. Bartlett had a 38.3 in the all-around at the NCAA Championships, and DeHaan scored a 38.25.

Kendig said those four would have to show the leadership that the seniors showed this year.

*"We competed a lot more this year with confidence, and that can be attributed to the fact that we had four seniors."*

DAN KENDIG

Nebraska women's gymnastics coach

"I don't think it is something where we need to tell them what to do and how to do it." Also, medical redshirt freshman Laurie McLaughlin is expected to be healthy by next year.

Kendig said McLaughlin had worked on the uneven bars and balance beam, and it may have been good for her to sit out last year.

"The knowledge and information she picked up by all the meets that she's been to will be helpful," Kendig said. "It's kind of hard to sit and watch because you want to be out there."

The Huskers also have added five recruits for next season.

Kendig said Nebraska signed Jamie Basile from Chicago, Jessica Swift of St. Cloud, Minn., Courtney Brown from Fishers, Ind., Misty Oxford of Kelso, Wash., and Ami Dillman from Katy, Texas.

This season Nebraska handled the pressure, which made it an unforgettable season for Kendig.

## Baseball needs second wind as team falls to fourth place

By Jeff Griesch  
Senior Reporter

It is crunch time for the Nebraska baseball team.

The Cornhuskers, 9-11 in the Big Eight and 27-18 overall, have fallen into a fourth-place tie with Kansas State in the Big Eight.

The Huskers had a chance to move ahead of the Wildcats with a two-game midweek series at Buck Beltzer Stadium, but those games were rained out and not rescheduled.

Nebraska left fielder Darin Erstad said not being able to play the two games against the Wildcats hurt the Huskers' chances at an NCAA Regional bid.

"We sure would have liked to play those games," Erstad said. "More than likely we would have split with them, but at least we would have had one more win."

Erstad said the Huskers' goal was to win 40 games this season, and losing two opportunities to play made that task more difficult.

"It is going to be really tough to get there, but we still have a chance," Erstad said. "Hopefully we can go out and play well and get them."

Nebraska opens a three-game series in Kansas tonight at 7, before returning home for the last six games on its schedule.

Kansas is sixth in the Big Eight with a 7-15 conference record and 16-29 overall.

The Huskers have lost four of their last five games and the usually hot Nebraska hitters have cooled off, batting just .242 during that stretch.

And Nebraska's three, four and five hitters in the lineup have struggled the most.

Erstad's batting average has dropped 26

*"It is going to be really tough to get there, but we still have a chance (to win 40 games)."*

DARIN ERSTAD  
Nebraska left fielder

points from .470 to .444. Cleanup hitter Mel Motley's average has fallen 15 points from .386 to .371. And Todd Sears' average has slipped 27 points from .373 to .346.

Nebraska coach John Sanders said the Huskers would need more production to beat the Jayhawks.

"We need to get our hitting going, and this is a good time to start," Sanders said.

With Nebraska hitters slumping, Sanders said the Huskers' pitching staff may have to pick up the slack.

Craig Sanders should start Friday against Kansas ace Jamie Splittorff. Cody Winget is scheduled to start Saturday against Dan Rude.

John Sanders said he wasn't sure who would start for the Huskers Sunday.

Craig Sanders pitched well against Iowa State last Friday, allowing two earned runs in seven innings.

Winget is coming off the best start of his career and Nebraska's best pitching performance of the season. The senior from Murray, Utah, threw a complete game, two-hit shutout against Iowa State Sunday.

"We expect more good pitching performances," Sanders said. "Cody pitched well last week, and so did Craig."