

SPORTS WEEKEND

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SPORTS HUMOR



Beau Finley

O.J. verdict, Cochran's suit shocked nation

For the rest of my life, I will remember where I was at noon on Oct. 2, 1995.

I was loitering at Taco Bell.

But that doesn't mean that I was not acutely aware of the O.J. verdict and the reaction it spawned.

Frankly, I have little opinion of the trial's outcome but, as a law student, I am forced to deal with it daily.

Ya see, all of my non-law dork friends would continuously come up to me and ask:

"Hey, Beau, you're in law school. You cover sports. You've spent time in prison. What do ya think of this O.J. stuff?"

I typically blow off such questions. But the fact that people would be interested in my opinion compelled me to at least watch the verdict.

But as Mookie (my gerbil, confidant, and personal trainer) and I watched, all I could pay attention to was Johnnie Cochran's powder blue suit.

Now, I'm not a fashion critic, but what the hell, man?

My color-blind uncle, who wears jumpsuits with a white belt, could have chosen a better suit in the dark with his eyelids sewn shut while breaking a pinata.

In short, the case didn't fit, they had to acquit, and Johnnie's threads looked like (expletive).

I couldn't tell if Big John lacked taste or if he was just trying to appeal to the jury's known affinity for attorneys who look like a Robin's egg.

Anyway, watching O.J. brought me back to those days of my youth when I'd watch the "Juice" run for Buffalo and San Francisco.

He was truly one of the greatest players I ever had the opportunity to watch.

And the teams he played for may have been some of the friggin' worst teams I've ever seen play.

But back to the point of this column: Regardless of how we view the verdict, we need to accept it. Our judicial system is the cornerstone of our society and the principal guardian of our civil liberties. Without it our very way of life may be doomed to irreparable chaos and social division.

Or ... ya know, maybe not. I read that on the back of a Cracker Jacks box.

Husker Swimming Update: Head Coach Cal Bentz said the Huskers have had an outstanding set of fall workouts and he is very optimistic about the upcoming year.

In fact, Bentz said he was so encouraged by the Husker Bobbers fall performance that he will no longer require lifeguards or safety breaks at practice. However, he did say that flotation devices will still be mandatory.

Finley is a third-year law student and a daily Nebraskan sports columnist.

Huskers seek revenge against ISU

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

Christy Johnson wants to annihilate Iowa State.

The 5-foot-8 senior captain of the Nebraska volleyball team is looking for revenge Saturday night when the Huskers travel to Ames, Iowa, to take on the Cyclones at 7:30 p.m. at the Hilton Coliseum.

Iowa State defeated the Huskers last spring in a tournament held at the NU Coliseum. And although the match had no bearing on Nebraska's fall season, Johnson said she took the loss personally.

"That was a bad weekend for us," Johnson said. "We played really bad. We were having lots of problems. And then after we lost, they sent out press releases and all this stuff about how they beat Nebraska. We got those things back and put them up in our locker room. Some of them are still up."

Johnson said the Cyclones' excitement over winning a glorified scrimmage made her even more anxious to face them Saturday.

"You know," she said, "it makes you think, and it makes you mad. We want to really go in this weekend and just annihilate them. I mean, if we could win 15-0 every time, that's what we want to do, just to show them what the difference is between a top five team and the others."

The Cyclones are 0-45 against the Huskers, who are 13-1 and ranked No. 1 in the nation, since the teams began playing competitively in 1975.

Iowa State is 11-5 this year and 2-0 in the Big Eight. Husker coach Terry Pettit said he voted for them in the top 25 this week.

The Cyclones are paced by 6-foot senior outside hitter Kirstin Hugdahl, who finished second in the conference to Nebraska's Allison Weston in kills per game last season, averaging 4.61.

Iowa State has five returning starters from a team that took Nebraska to four games twice last season and finished third in the Big Eight with an overall record of 24-11.

"I think they have good outside hitters. They're not going to do stupid things like hit into the block every time," she said. "I don't think that physically they'll be able to match up with our middle blockers. They'll move the ball around, but they'll struggle. I'm sure."

Although Johnson is looking forward to playing the Cyclones, she said she was even more excited about how the season had been going so far.

"There are times that we don't do what we need to do in practice," she said. "But I feel like for the most part, we are getting better. It doesn't happen real fast, and it's not very easy to see, but I really feel like we're getting better."

"I think by the time the end of November comes, that we're going to be great."

Pettit agreed that the team needed to improve in certain phases of its game, and he emphasized the role that Johnson and other upperclassmen needed to play.

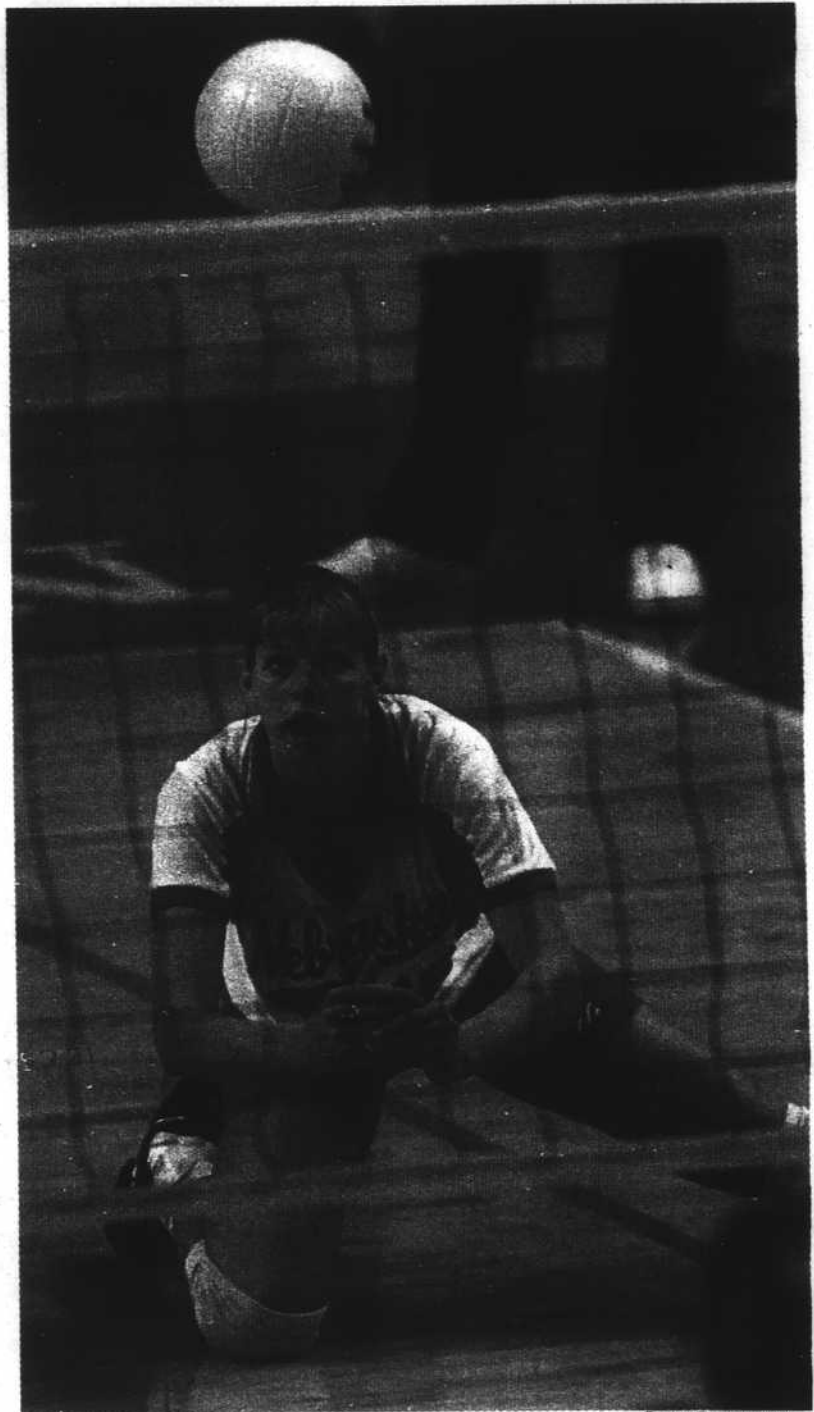
"What you hope is that your experienced players, your seniors come to practice and work at elevating play because they know what's ahead, and they know you've got to get better," Pettit said.

Pettit said the team had a great opportunity right now to work on fine tuning its serving and offense, areas that will make a difference down the road.

"Those issues have to be now so that if we go to one play in a critical match, we know we can handle it," he said. "I think sometimes at practice we are doing a fairly good job, but I think sometimes, particularly at the end of practice, we're not as focused as I'd like to see us."

Johnson agreed.

"Whether we win the national championship or not, it all depends on us," she said. "If we come in and practice and get better and better, we will do it. I really feel like this year we've got the tools."



Scott Bruhn/DN

Nebraska middle blocker Allison Weston digs a ball during the Cornhuskers' sweep of Oklahoma last weekend.

Young Huskers jump at chance to play

Cornerback adapts to Nebraska defense

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

Like a lot of football players who come to Nebraska, all Michael Booker wanted to do was get playing time.

Now that he's got it, Booker wants to make the most of his opportunity.

The right cornerback was yanked out of a redshirt year last season after Mike Minter tore an anterior cruciate ligament against Texas Tech in the second game of the year. Booker was forced to play because Eric Stokes, who had been playing cornerback, moved to safety.

This season, Booker was listed third on the depth chart before fall practice began, but against Arizona State, he earned the start, and since then, he hasn't been out of the lineup.

But everything isn't perfect when Booker is on the playing field. He said he was still having trouble becoming accustomed to Nebraska's defensive system.

"I still don't have it down to a tee," Booker said. "I'm still working on it, and I get better as the games come along."

That has shown in his statistics. Against the Sun Devils, he had two tackles and an interception. The next weekend against Pacific, he had three tackles, including one for a loss. Against Washington State, Booker

again registered three tackles.

But the junior from Oceanside, Calif., who sat out the 1993 season as a Proposition 48 casualty, said he was still lost at times.

"The thing I have the most problem with is when we go over the offense that we're playing all week, and then in the game, they do something we haven't studied," Booker said. He said he attributed his move up the depth chart to hard work and a couple of surprises.

"The biggest surprise to me was moving Eric Stokes to safety, because then I was thinking I would never play," Booker said. "I just kept my head in practice and gave 100 percent."

Booker said his progress had been slowed because of a foot injury suffered in March during spring practice. That injury, he said, gave him a chance to work on his upper body strength.

Booker said he did not regret his decision not to redshirt. Although it cost him a year of eligibility, the experience was important, he said.

"Minter got hurt so they pulled me out," Booker said. "I should have thought about it a little bit more, but I just wanted to play."

Booker made just four tackles in

See BOOKER on 10

Makovicka benefits from change of pace

By Antone Oseka
Staff Reporter

Joel Makovicka was relieved when the I-back corps started to fill back up this week.

Makovicka, a redshirt freshman, switched from fullback to I-back after Clinton Childs and Damon Benning were forced to sit because of injuries.

"When everyone comes back and starts to get healthy, I'm switching back to fullback," Makovicka said.

He also said he didn't have a problem playing I-back. He just had to get used to it.

"I knew the running plays," he said. "The passing plays are starting to come along now."

The extra practice at I-back has made Makovicka a better fullback, he said.

"Practicing at I-back helps you get the chance to work on your quickness, moves, overall ball handling, and ability to read blocks. You get to carry the ball a little more, too," he said.

Although listed fourth on the depth chart at I-back, Makovicka said the only practice he's had at that position this week was Thursday. But he's been learning the position for quite a while.

"Any time I didn't know the I-

back position, I'd step in and learn it," said the 5-foot-10, 215-pounder from Brainard. "That way, if they ever needed me in a game, I could come in and do it."

Makovicka said he saw the practice as a chance to get on the field. He said he just wanted to help the team, and wasn't worried about having to fill big shoes.

"I like it at fullback," Makovicka said, "because that's my position in the future. But any time you can carry the ball, that's fine. I-back might be more of a spotlight position, but I really enjoy fullback and the blocking. The I-back can set you up to make a long run."

Makovicka's best chance to play, he said, is at fullback. And he expects to wait his turn there, just like his older brother Jeff had to do.

One thing Makovicka sees as a fun possibility is playing I-back behind Jeff, a senior, who is the No. 1 fullback.

But Joel, who said he knew the position switch would be temporary, figured he would probably never have that chance.

"My position is fullback and I know that," he said. "They asked me to get a few reps in, and learned I-back a little bit in case any more players went down."

"Both positions are fun."