

SPORTS

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SPORTS OPINION



Mitch Sherman

Student spirit needed behind Husker hoops

Danny Nee knows the importance of student support to the Nebraska basketball team.

Over the past two years, the Cornhusker coach has become personally involved in an attempt to liven up the atmosphere among the 1,200 courtside bleacher seats at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"I have always personally felt that the students are very valuable," Nee said. "They are like a sixth man. The students shape the atmosphere of the arena. I think they are worth six to eight points a game and always get you a couple of calls."

Nee has been the host of pre-game pep rallies such as "Dinner with Danny," in which free shirts, pop and hot dogs were given to UNL students who showed up as early as 2 1/2 hours before Husker home games.

At times, the students' support has sparked Nebraska wins. Every Big Eight team has fallen at the Devaney Center in the past three years.

Last season, a young, immature Husker team without a true leader slipped, losing five of seven conference games at home and failing to qualify for the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1990.

Student tickets, which cost only \$3.50 a game, have been on sale for three weeks. Only 984 applications have been returned to the Husker ticket office. In 1994, students purchased 1,700 tickets. The year before, they bought 2,300.

It's not too late to correct the mistake. Although originally scheduled for only one week of sales, tickets remain available.

"We probably have not done enough marketing of the team this year," Nee said. "I should be out there trying to sell tickets right now. I think some of the students don't realize we are going to have a pretty good team this year."

Saturday night, Husker fans will see a glimpse of Nebraska basketball at the annual Midnight Blues, which signifies the beginning of practice.

They'll like what they see. This is a different season, a different team.

It's a team with a leader and a strong supporting cast. Erick Strickland is dedicated, focused and determined to drive Nebraska to new heights, also known as success in the NCAA Tournament. Six newcomers, two of whom have the potential to start from day one, give this team needed depth.

Go to the Devaney Center on Saturday night, and you'll see Tyrone Lue, a true freshman with Jacques Vaughn-like quickness and court vision, lead Nebraska's offense.

You'll see Jaron Boone, who without the burden of handling point guard, can concentrate on his defense and shooting.

You'll see Terrance Badgett, who without the burden of being

See **SHERMAN** on 8

Big 8 teams storming the polls

By **Derek Samson**
Senior Reporter

After falling to No. 14 Oklahoma on Saturday, Iowa State has four games remaining against ranked conference teams.

And all four opponents are in the top 10.

The Big Eight Conference is at its best this year, Iowa State coach Dan McCarney said Monday.

After Kansas upset No. 4 Colorado 40-24 and Kansas State recorded its third consecutive shutout in a 30-0 win over Missouri, the top 10 is loaded with Big Eight teams.

In the Associated Press poll, Nebraska, which did not play, remained No. 2. Kansas State (5-0) moved from No. 13 to No. 8. Colorado dropped to ninth, while Kansas jumped 14 spots to No. 10. Oklahoma, after a victory over Iowa State, moved from 14th to 13th.

McCarney, who already has led Iowa State to two more victories than all of last season, said he entered the

conference when it was at its best.

"This is an exciting experience for the Big Eight," McCarney said in the Big Eight coaches' teleconference Monday. "People said I was suicidal when I took this job. After seeing what the Big Eight has done, I think we could use some top draft picks to play for us in some of these next games. It's going to be tough."

It is the first time in history that five Big Eight teams have been rated in the top 13 of the AP, and also the first time five have been rated in the top 12 of the USA Today/CNN coaches' poll. It marks the second time that four Big Eight schools have been rated in the top 10, with the last time coming Oct. 4, 1976.

It should be no surprise that it is also the first time both Kansas and Kansas State have been rated in the top 10.

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne credited the longevity of the coaches at the two Kansas schools for their success.

"You have two very fine coaching

Big 8 Standings

Team	Conference	All Games
Nebraska	1-0 1.000	5-0 1.000
Kansas	1-0 1.000	5-0 1.000
Kansas St.	1-0 1.000	5-0 1.000
Colorado	1-1 0.500	5-1 0.833
Oklahoma	1-1 0.500	4-1 0.800
Iowa St.	0-1 0.000	2-3 0.400
Missouri	0-1 0.000	2-3 0.400
Oklahoma St.	0-1 0.000	1-4 0.250

staffs there, and they've been there a while," Osborne said. "The history of those schools is three years and out with the coaches. When you roll coaching staffs like that, you lose a whole lot

of recruiting."

The No. 8 ranking is the highest ranking ever for the Wildcats in the

See **RANKINGS** on 8

Uppinghouse making impact as new Husker

By **Mike Kluck**
Staff Reporter

Two years ago Kari Uppinghouse was working her way toward being one of the top scorers on the George Mason soccer team.

Uppinghouse's play that season helped the Patriots finish the season as runner-up for the national championship, and Uppinghouse was named first-team All-Colonial Athletic Conference. But that wasn't enough for her.

"I was bored, and I didn't like it that much," Uppinghouse said. "Many students commuted to school and then would go home on the weekend. Plus, I was far away from my family."

So Uppinghouse left George Mason to return home to Littleton, Colo., and help coach her former high school and club teams.

Nebraska soccer coach John Walker said he was recruiting two players from Uppinghouse's club team, Lakewood Fury, when the Fury's head coach, Tom Stone, told Walker about Uppinghouse's willingness to

play soccer again.

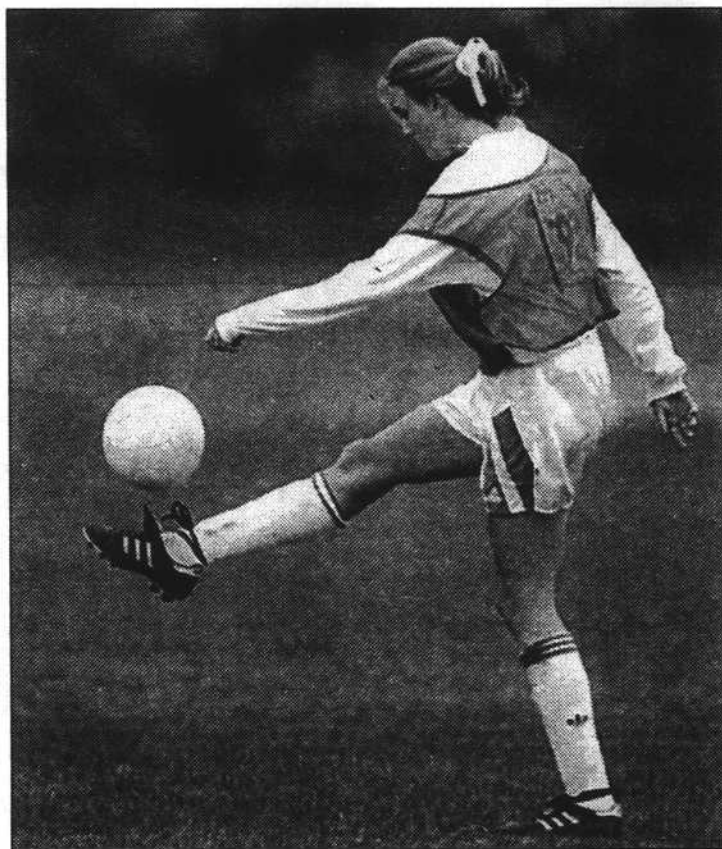
Walker said he was interested enough in the possibility that he attended one of the Fury's practices where Uppinghouse worked out with the team. Walker then asked her to consider Nebraska.

"When I visited Nebraska, I liked the school, and the facilities here were incredible," Uppinghouse said. "I really liked the way athletes were treated here."

So this year Uppinghouse is trying to help the second-year Nebraska team make the NCAA Tournament.

Uppinghouse has made an immediate impact with the young Husker squad. She leads the team in shots on goal with 30 attempts and is the third-leading scorer on the team with five goals.

Walker said although Nebraska didn't get the two players — now playing at Maryland and Duke — he originally looked at in Littleton, Nebraska got the best player in Uppinghouse.



Tanna Kinnaman/DN

Nebraska's Kari Uppinghouse leads the Huskers in shot attempts in her first year on the team.

Pederson bringing talent to Husker tradition

By **Mitch Sherman**
Senior Editor

Steve Pederson knows all about long-term goals.

In addition to overseeing the daily affairs of the Cornhusker football program, Pederson, the associate athletic director for football operations, spearheads the Nebraska recruiting drive from his office on the second floor of the South Stadium.

The former recruiting coordinator at Ohio State and Tennessee, in the second year of his second stint in Lincoln, said Nebraska's national title last season truly would begin to pay off near the end of the decade.

"We probably made a lot of headway with a lot of 11-, 12-, 13 year-old kids when we won the national championship," Pederson said Monday at the Extra-Point Luncheon.

"When you walk through airports now, you see a lot more kids with red hats on. Maybe that sounds goofy to you, but that's what we like to see."

Apparently, Pederson's focus on the future has rubbed off on the rest of the coaching staff, including Coach Tom Osborne.

"The night that Tom called me and said Ahman Green just committed to me on the phone," Pederson said, "I swear he was more excited than he was in

the locker room after the Orange Bowl game."

The Nebraska program, owners of the nation's longest winning streak at 18 games, Pederson said, is beginning to command more respect around the country.

"I got tired of walking into sporting good stores in major cities where they didn't have a Nebraska hat," he said. "We want guys in Nebraska hats. Those things make a difference to them early on in their careers as to what they are going to do."

"If that theory holds true, then deep down what they have is an abiding desire to go to Nebraska. And then if you actually start to recruit them in their junior or senior year, then all you have to do is bring that to the surface and you can sign them."

Pederson, who was the Nebraska recruiting coordinator from 1982 to 1986, left football for two years before taking a similar position at Ohio State in 1988. He moved to Tennessee in 1991 and returned to Nebraska in April 1994.

Although Nebraska has been more successful over the past decade than both Ohio State and Tennessee, Pederson said it was much more difficult to recruit in Lincoln than in any other place he had worked.

"It's not because of the program or the tradition or any of those kind of things," he said. "But at Ohio State, our coaches would leave and come back that night, and sleep in their own beds after they saw a recruit that night."

The majority of the players recruited by Ohio State, he said, are from Ohio or surrounding states. At Nebraska, almost all of 950 high school players the Huskers contact by mail each year hail from outside Nebraska.

"(At Ohio State) when we had games," he said, "we might have 50 of the top players in the country come in, because the furthest they had to drive was 2 1/2 hours. Our coaches just plain have to work harder. Anybody will tell you that as you go out further and further, the percentage chances of signing a guy diminish."

"Thank heavens that we have got such a great tradition. Thank heavens that we have got Tom Osborne, and we can sell the fact that we've got those things going for us."

Pederson said Husker coaches took advantage of Nebraska's off-week Saturday to fly around the nation and evaluate high school athletes. To this point, only one player, running back DeAngelo Evans from Wichita, Kan., has verbally committed to sign with Nebraska in February.

Even though commitments aren't pouring in at Nebraska as fast as they are at many other schools, Pederson said the Husker coaches were doing just fine this year.

"Things are off to a good start," Pederson said. "Our coaches feel pretty good about the early conversations they have had with prospects. Right now, we are in a heavy, intense, evaluation stage."