

SPORTS

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SPORTS OPINION



Mitch Sherman

NU a memory for pro-bound Husker I-back

Lawrence Phillips made the right decision.

Fulfilling the expectations of many who have followed his career, Phillips, Nebraska's maligned I-back, announced Tuesday he would never again play in a Cornhusker uniform.

Phillips became the third Husker I-back this decade to cut his college football career short, opting for the NFL. There, Phillips will find running the football more difficult.

Life, however, will be easier.

What Phillips did in the early morning of Sept. 10 was inexcusable. What happened in the next two and a half months must have been unbearable — not only for Phillips, but for Kate McEwen, her family and her friends.

Phillips' punishment did not come from his coach, Tom Osborne. It didn't come from the university's administration. His punishment came with daily blasts from seemingly every newspaper and sports talk show in the nation.

Had he returned for his senior year, Phillips would have spent the season being referred to as the man who attacked his former girlfriend, not the amazingly talented running back who helped Nebraska win its second consecutive national championship.

Perhaps when Phillips is drafted in April — possibly as a top 10 pick — he can put his Nebraska career behind him.

He might have already done that on Jan. 2. As he exited the media tent at Sun Devil Stadium, Phillips did not look like a player who had just won a national title.

"I'm through with interviews," he said.

Phillips was on campus Tuesday, but no press conference accompanied his announcement.

In a release issued Monday by Impact Sports and Entertainment Management Company of Boca Raton, Fla., Phillips said: "I know that I made a mistake, which I deeply regret. I believe I have learned and grown as a result of it."

If it is true that Phillips has learned, then Osborne made the right decision by bucking criticism and reinstating him.

At Nebraska's pre-bowl press conference and again during the Fiesta Bowl's media day, Osborne said Phillips probably had missed out on thousands, if not millions, of dollars by sitting out six games.

After his performance against Florida, Phillips is unlikely to miss out on anything.

This summer, he'll be a millionaire. His Nebraska career will be behind him. And that's fine — as long as it's not forgotten.

Sherman is a junior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.

Phillips opts to enter NFL draft

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

Nebraska I-back Lawrence Phillips announced Tuesday that he would forego his senior season and apply for the NFL draft in April.

Phillips, the fourth-ever Cornhusker to leave school early, joins Johnny Mitchell, Calvin Jones and Derek Brown.

Frank Solich, Nebraska's head assistant and running backs coach, said it was difficult to compare Phillips to Jones and Brown, both of whom are

still in the NFL.

"It has worked out for them," Solich said. "You always take a little bit of a chance in terms of where you are going in the draft."

Phillips, who ended his career as the fifth-leading rusher in Husker history, was in Lincoln briefly on Tuesday, but soon will return to his home in California. He could not be reached for comment.

"He was here to solidify the fact that he intended to enter the draft, so

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Leaving Early

Player	Year	Round	Team
Lawrence Phillips	1996	—	—
Calvin Jones	1994	3rd	Raiders
Derek Brown	1993	4th	Saints
Johnny Mitchell	1992	1st (15th pick)	Jets

Structure of NCAA may change

DALLAS (AP) — Everybody attending the NCAA's 90th annual convention agreed they made history by overwhelmingly voting to streamline and realign the entire governing structure of the governing body of college sports.

And student-athletes may have finally won a major battle.

"I think there will be a movement to look at whether or not we're realistic as it relates to the student-athlete today," said NCAA executive director Cedric Dempsey, who told delegates in his convention-opening address on Sunday that the NCAA may have fallen behind the times.

Issues like independent student-aid will be better dealt with, said Wake Forest president Thomas Hearn, a leader in the presidential reform movement that began in the mid-'80s and culminated Monday with the vote to restructure.

The new structure sets up a three-tiered system with college presidents clearly in command. It will have no immediate bearing on the Final Four, bowl games or television contracts.

But each division will now deal separately from the others. No longer will small schools have a voice alongside major schools in such things as revenue distribution and policy-making.

"I don't understand myself yet exactly what this means," said Bob Frederick, Kansas athletic director and chairman of the selection committee of the men's basketball tournament. "I don't think it will have any effect on the tournament. A lot of us don't know for sure what this means for the future."

The new structure goes into effect in August 1997.

Although a college football play-off is at least three years away, it is one thing the new alignment might hasten.

Several officials said Division I-A might soon add to the value of athletic scholarships.

"Our rules were made at a time when student-athletes had the whole summer to work, and many had holidays to work," Dempsey said. "Those opportunities have diminished considerably."

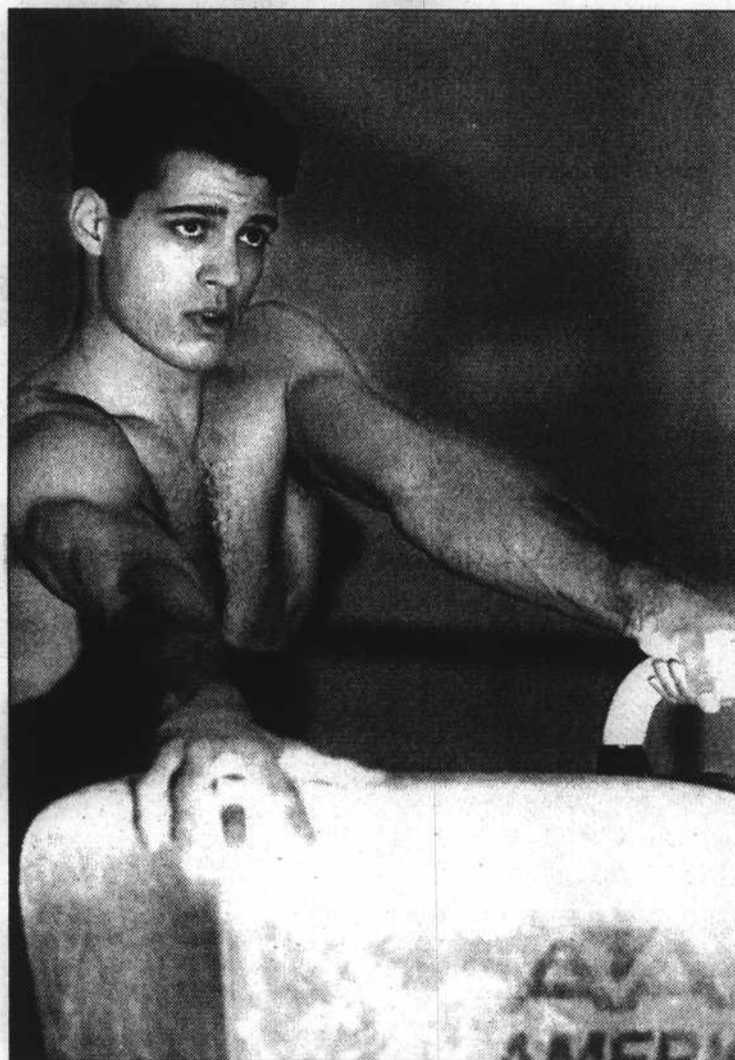
"At one time, the feeling was they could work during holidays and three months in the summer and earn enough to supplement their financial aid package. We may need to review that."

Also at the convention, which ended Tuesday:

● The Pac 10 and the Big Ten began talks that could lead to their involvement in the Bowl Alliance.

● a proposal was rejected that would have allowed Division I-A football teams to count victories against some I-AA teams toward the six wins needed to qualify for the postseason. A request for a second vote also failed.

Aiming high



Jay Calderon/DN

Nebraska senior gymnast Jason Christie practices on the pommel horse. Christie hopes to compete in the Olympic Games in August.

Coach foresees title in Nebraska's future

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

Entering his 27th year as the Nebraska men's gymnastics coach, Francis Allen is confident that his team can win its ninth national title in school history this season.

"We're a little banged up right now, but I think we're going to make the finals of the NCAA," Allen said. "I think this team is going to be in the driver's seat."

Gone are 1995 all-around champion Richard Grace and five-time All-American Rick Kieffer, but Allen has reloaded with two outstanding athletes.

"We had to replace two great gymnasts," Allen said, "and I have two very good ones that replaced them. I think (we're) better than last year's team."

Replacing Grace, now a graduate assistant coach, and Kieffer will be freshmen Marshall Nelson and J.D. Reive, both from Palmer High

"We do not have a weak event, and that's why I think this team can win the championship."

FRANCIS ALLEN

Nebraska men's gymnastics coach

School in Colorado Springs, Colo.

"If they improve, we're going to win the national championship," Allen said of the newcomers. "They're good ones. They're as good of gymnasts that we've had here. J.D. may be one of the best we've ever had."

The Huskers will be anchored in the all-around by senior Jason Christie.

See GYM on 8

NU ready to begin Big Eight

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

For the Nebraska basketball team, the real season starts tonight.

The 11-3 Cornhuskers begin conference action playing host to Colorado, 5-6 and 0-1 in the Big Eight, at 7:05 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.



Nee

Coach Danny Nee said his team was ready to open conference play.

"The older players have been looking forward to it," Nee said. "It turns into basketball season now, and they are looking for the challenge."

That challenge comes from the Buffaloes, who have struggled, losing three straight games. Colorado is coming off a 77-66 loss at Missouri and has not won a game outside the Coors Event Center in Boulder this season.

But the Huskers do face a team that stunned them 80-74 last year in Lincoln. That was the Buffaloes' first win at the Devaney Center since 1981, and it broke a 28-game conference road losing streak. Overall, Nebraska was 2-5 at home last year against Big Eight foes.

The Huskers have won three of their last four conference openers with some success on the road, but have not won a conference opener at home since 1988. Last season, Nebraska got off to a rough start, losing to Missouri 82-74 at home in the conference opener.

Although Nebraska has won seven of its last 10 games against Colorado, Nee said his team had had its problems against Joe Harrington's team.

"We've had trouble matching up against them," Nee said. "They have improved their personnel, and we have not been overwhelming in our Big Eight openers. I hope our players are ready to play."

One player who will need to be ready to play for Nebraska is freshman guard Tyrone Lue, who will be playing in his first Big Eight contest.

Lue and standout Colorado freshman guard Chauncey Billups most likely will take center stage along with Colorado forward Martice Moore, a transfer from Georgia Tech.

Billups, a native of Denver, is averaging 20.4 points per game along with 5.8 rebounds and 5.9 assists per game. Moore, who was named the Atlantic Coast Conference freshman of the year in 1993, is averaging 13.5 points and 7.2 rebounds per game.

"Billups is the real deal," Nee said. "But he's going to go through what all freshmen go through with an adjustment period."

So far he hasn't struggled, shoot-

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