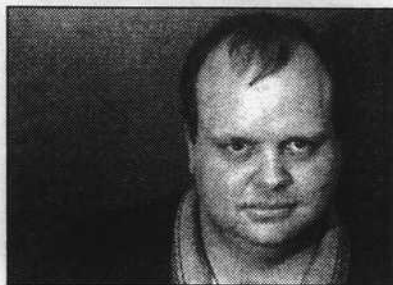


SPORTS WEEKEND

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SPORTS OPINION



Mike Kluck

Wald provides spark for NU off the bench

It is still uncertain whether the Nebraska basketball team will avoid a late-season collapse like last year and finish seventh in the Big Eight.

If they do, the Cornhuskers could rally and finish in the top three of the Big Eight and make it to the Sweet 16, which is what some players were talking about Wednesday night after the Huskers' 79-74 win over Colorado.

Those questions remain to be answered.

What is certain about Nebraska right now is that no matter what the team does the rest of the season, Tom Wald has to be the behind-the-scenes most valuable player of the squad. And he may be the best sixth man in the conference.

The senior transfer from Mankato State averages only 5.5 points and 14.3 minutes per game but plays a huge role, not for what he's done on the court, but for what he has not done off the court.

Wald, who was named to the Big Eight's all-bench squad a year ago, is loaded with reasons to bring this team crashing down after freshman Tyronn Lue bypassed him to start at point guard.

"I've got every right to be upset, to be ticked off at the minutes I get, like anybody else," Wald said. "Tyronn comes in and gets promised a starting spot, and all of a sudden, Tom gets bumped off."

Wald said he could react in one of two ways.

"I can make a big stink about it, ruin this team, and just bring a lot of people down with me. Or, I can try to become a champion."

Because Wald has tried to turn the Huskers into a championship program, he has become a better person. And he has received recognition for his efforts not only from his coaches and teammates, but also from opposing coaches.

On Saturday against Long Beach State, Wald's steal with 10 seconds remaining helped preserve Nebraska's 69-68 victory.

In Wald's brief two-year career at Nebraska, he has made either a game-winning or game-saving play five times. After the game, 49ers' coach Seth Greenberg bypassed complimenting any of Nebraska's starters and recognized Wald.

But for now, Wald has to be content with coming off the bench to provide the Huskers with a spark.

"I think the best thing I can do is to realize that I'm not going to start," Wald said. "Most people, their ego is too large to realize they're not needed in that way. I think the best players are those that realize what their roles are, no matter how small."

Luckily for the Huskers, Wald knows his role.

Kluck is a graduate student of Journalism and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.

Huskers, Sooners vie for 2-0 start

By Todd Walkenhorst
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska basketball team stands atop the Big Eight conference after a 79-74 victory over Colorado.

Now, the Cornhuskers prepare to take their show on the road. Oklahoma and Nebraska will tangle Saturday at the Lloyd Noble Center in Norman, Okla., at 12:45 p.m.

The Sooners and Huskers are two of four teams with a 1-0 record in the Big Eight and tied for first place. Kansas and Missouri also have perfect marks.

Oklahoma is 9-4 overall, coming off a 64-59 victory over Kansas State on Wednesday night in Manhattan, Kan.

Saturday's game is a welcome vacation for some Huskers, who believe that playing on the road could present less pressure than playing at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"We're the kind of team that goes on a road trip and we're real relaxed,"

"People at Nebraska have high expectations of us, and sometimes we mess up."

JARON BOONE

Nebraska guard

senior guard Jaron Boone said. "I think our team puts a little added pressure on ourselves when we're at home, playing in front of our fans."

"We want to play good. We want to do everything right. People at Nebraska have high expectations of us, and sometimes we mess up."

Nebraska coach Danny Nee said he was happy with the Huskers' victory over Colorado, which improved his team's record to 12-3 overall.

See OU on 8

Basketball Starters

Nebraska	Ht.	Wt.	Class	PPG	RPG
G Tyronn Lue	6-0	165	Fr.	9.4	2.6
G Jaron Boone	6-6	195	Sr.	17.5	2.6
F Erick Strickland	6-3	210	Sr.	15.0	4.9
F Bernard Garner	6-7	225	Jr.	10.0	6.1
C Mikki Moore	6-11	205	Jr.	8.6	5.1

Oklahoma	Ht.	Wt.	Class	PPG	RPG
G Nate Erdmann	6-5	210	Jr.	12.0	5.7
G Tyrone Foster	5-11	165	Jr.	10.3	3.8
F Ryan Minor	6-7	220	Sr.	21.3	6.8
F Ernie Abercrombie	6-4	240	Sr.	14.3	9.5
C Bobby Joe Evans	6-9	270	Fr.	7.2	4.0

Sooner opponents face Minor problem

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

Ryan Minor is big in Oklahoma. He is so big that he even had his picture in an advertisement on the cover of the Oklahoma City phone book.



Minor

"It's been interesting to see all the preseason publicity, but I just want to focus on the team."

The 1994-95 Big Eight player of the year, Minor not only excels on the basketball court, but also on the baseball field.

But the 6-foot-7 preseason All-American forward hasn't let all the hype go to his head. He said he was focused on basketball for right now.

Although the Sooners have struggled early this season, Minor said he felt good about the way they were playing now.

"I think we are doing OK now," Minor said. "Before we played Kansas State, we were struggling a little bit with our confidence. But it was big to get that win on the road to open the conference season."

Minor has helped the Sooners to a 9-4 record and despite being double- and triple-teamed by opposing teams, he leads the Big Eight in scoring, averaging 21.3 points and 6.8 rebounds per game.

"That is really frustrating at times," Minor said. "And it makes it hard to play the way I would like to play. But I have to work around that and get back into rhythm."

Nebraska will have to stop Minor's scoring if it wants to stop the Sooners on Saturday in Norman. In his career, Minor is 4-3 against the Huskers. Last season, the Sooners beat Nebraska in Norman 82-72 but lost in Lincoln 71-59. Minor averaged 25 points in those two games.

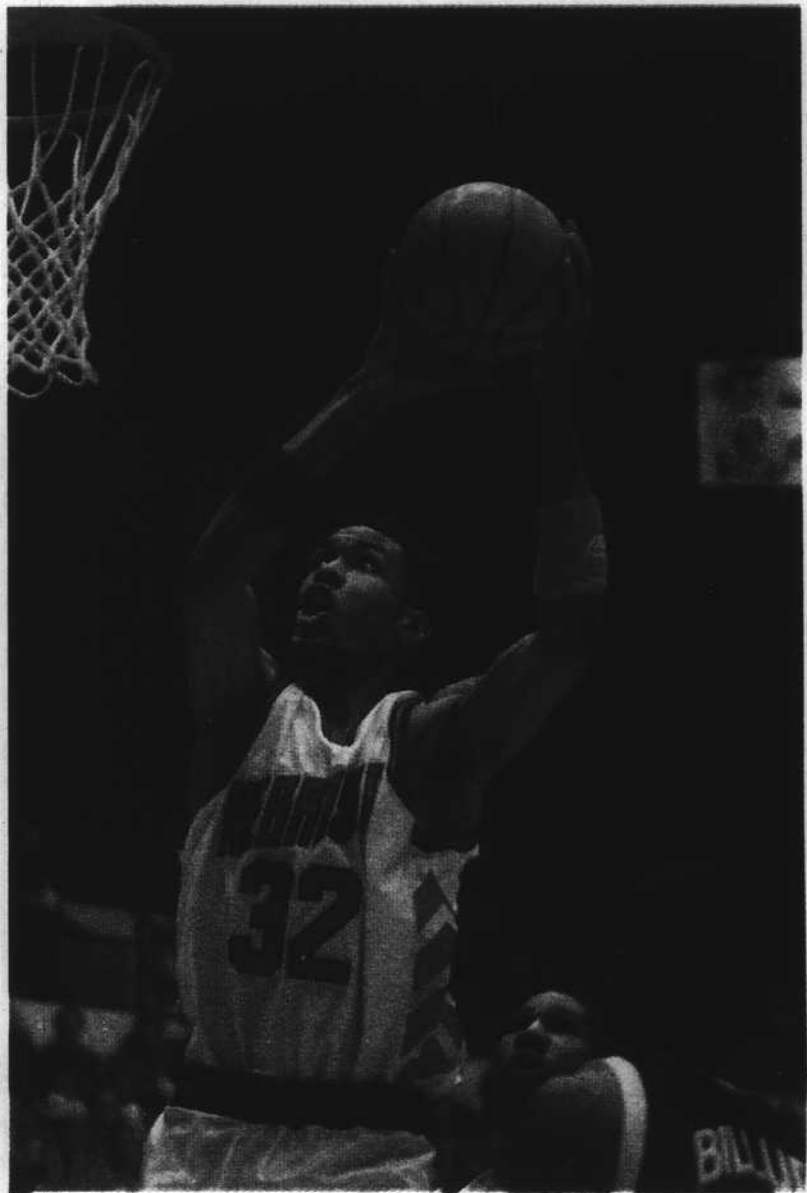
But this year, the 12-3 Huskers will have the advantage in experience and in backcourt play, Minor said.

"They have great guards," he said. "With Strickland and Boone, I don't think you are going to find a better duo in the conference. They can beat you in a lot of ways."

"Having the experienced seniors is going to help them a lot. They have got players who know what they need to do to win."

Minor said that the Sooners were having a hard time sneaking up on teams like they did last year.

"A lot of teams were surprised by us last season," Minor said. "They were ready for us this year. We didn't have the right frame of mind at the beginning of the season."



Scott Bruhn/DN

Nebraska junior center Mikki Moore and the Huskers will play at Oklahoma Saturday night. Moore scored 16 points and grabbed eight rebounds against Colorado Wednesday night.

Husker women's team aims for home win

By Mike Kluck
Senior Reporter

per game and leads the Jayhawks with 74 rebounds.

To be successful in Big Eight women's basketball, teams must be able to win at home.

But to finish at the top of the conference, a team must be able to win on the road.

That problem faces Nebraska this weekend as it plays host to Kansas at 7 tonight at the Bob Devaney Sports Center and Kansas State at 2 p.m. Sunday.

Nebraska, Kansas and Kansas State are coming off splits last weekend. Both Kansas and Kansas State lost to Colorado on their home courts, but defeated Missouri. On the road, Nebraska defeated Oklahoma, but lost to Oklahoma State.

"I think you're going to have to go undefeated at home or maybe lose one or two on the road, and that is it," Nebraska coach Angela Beck said. "I really think three losses to win the league would be all you could afford. We're going to have to take care of business, and that's going to be pressure."

Beck said she hoped the Cornhuskers would put the pressure on the Jayhawks and Wildcats by playing more physically than they did last weekend.

The physical play will have to be directed at Kansas center Nakia Sanford, Beck said. The 6-foot-3 freshman is averaging 8.6 points

Sanford should be named the Big Eight freshman of the year, Beck said, but more importantly, she complements junior point guard Tamecka Dixon. Dixon is averaging 18.1 points per game for the Jayhawks and needs 24 points to surpass the 800-point career mark.

"Dixon is probably one of the better point guards in our league, and it will be real difficult to contain her," Beck said. "She is probably one of the great players of the game."

But Beck said it would be more important to see how Kansas responded to its 60-59 loss to Colorado. In the game, the Buffaloes hit two free throws with 7/10 of a second remaining.

"I think Kansas has probably got one of the better teams that they have had. They're a tremendous team," Beck said.

Kansas State coach Brian Agler said the Wildcats were looking forward to Big Eight Conference play because it's as if they were starting a new season. But he said he knew it would be difficult to win in Lincoln.

"Nebraska is a really good basketball team," Agler said. "To go in and win, we will have to do a lot of things right. They are very explosive offensively."