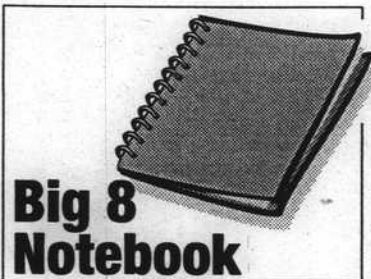


SPORTS

Tuesday, January 30, 1996

Page 7



Big 8 Notebook

Colorado interim basketball coach Ricardo Patton defended his decision to reassign Buffalo assistant coach Scott Sanderson on Monday. Patton was appointed coach after Joe Harrington resigned on Jan. 16.

"When I was given the position on an interim basis, I was told I would have the authority to do what I would do if it was a permanent basis," Patton said. "I told him (Sanderson) this was a good opportunity for him to pursue some other options."

Sanderson, the son of former Alabama coach Wimp Sanderson, was Harrington's top assistant and had been with the Buffaloes since 1990.

* * *

The Big Eight Conference leads the nation in shooting at 46.7 percent. Nebraska, which leads the league in field goal percentage, is fifth in the nation with a shooting percentage of 50.5 percent.

* * *

Oklahoma coach Kelvin Sampson said the Sooners, who are 10-8 overall and 2-4 in the conference, weren't getting the breaks they did last season when they finished 23-9 and 9-5. After the Sooners' 67-61 loss to Iowa State on Saturday, Sampson said he could see the losses were wearing on his players. He said when he went into the locker room, all of his players were hanging their heads.

"I told them to hold their heads up, and that they had nothing to be ashamed of. When they did, some of them were crying with real tears," Sampson said. "That's when coaching gets tough. These are college kids who have given everything, and it's a shame they have to be judged by their record."

* * *

Iowa State junior guard Dedric Willoughby was named the Big Eight player of the week for his performance in the Cyclones' win against Oklahoma. Willoughby scored 11 of the Cyclones' final 20 points and leads the league with a 21-point average in conference games. Willoughby transferred to Iowa State from Indian Hills (Iowa) Community College where he did not play a game. Willoughby did play one season for Cyclone coach Tim Floyd at New Orleans University.

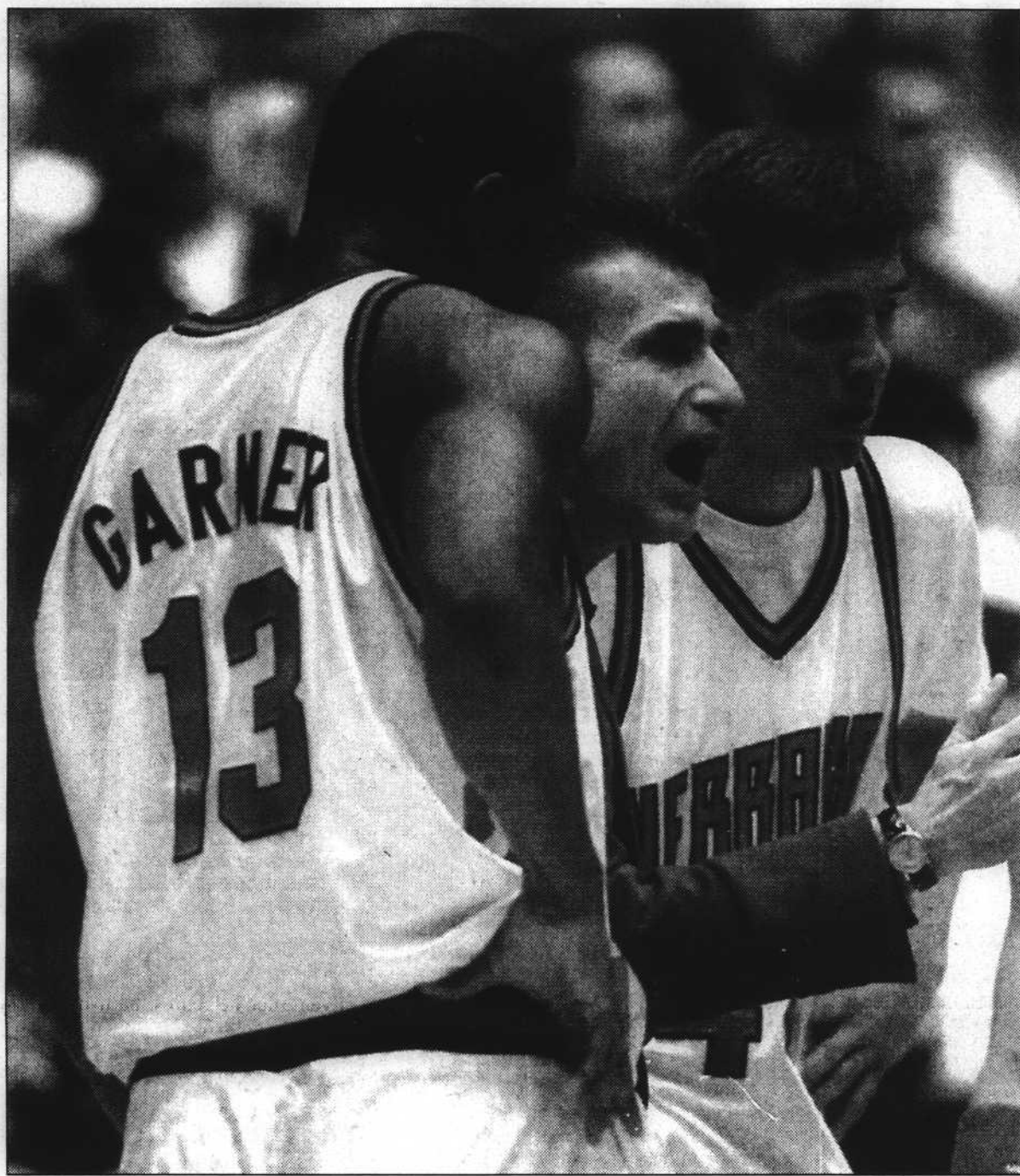
* * *

Oklahoma State sophomore forward Renee Roberts was named the Big Eight women's player of the week Monday. Roberts averaged 13.5 points and 7.5 rebounds per game in the Cowgirls' wins over Colorado and Missouri. Roberts was named in a split vote over Iowa State junior guard Kim Martin. Martin scored 16 points, including the game winner in the Cyclones' 79-77 overtime win against Nebraska on Sunday.

* * *

Oklahoma State coach Eddie Sutton, who favors man-to-man defense, said the 36 minutes of zone the Cowboys played in their 62-59 loss to Kansas State on Wednesday was the longest time one of his teams had played zone defense.

Notebook compiled by senior reporter Mike Kluck.



Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska power forward Bernard Garner has been the Cornhuskers' most consistent player during five Big Eight games. For the year, Garner is Nebraska's third-leading scorer and top rebounder.

Johnson returns to Lakers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Saying "it's now or never," Magic Johnson ended a retirement of more than four years Monday to play again for the Los Angeles Lakers, whom he led to five NBA championships during the 1980s.

Johnson, 36, left the NBA suddenly on Nov. 7, 1991, just before the start of the 1991-92 season after learning he had tested positive for the virus that causes AIDS.

He returned the following year, only to retire again after a handful of exhibition games, and later coached the Lakers for several games.

"Last night, I was just going crazy," Johnson said Monday. "I want my (3-year-old) son to see me play, right here in the NBA."

Johnson signed a contract for the remainder of the season and will play his first game back against the Golden State Warriors on Tuesday night at the Forum in Los Angeles.

Johnson, who said he's 27 pounds heavier than when he played his last game on June 12, 1991, has been practicing with the Lakers on and off for about two weeks and will play mostly at a forward spot.

"I know it's going to take me some time," he said. "I'm not in NBA shape. It's going to take me a month or two. This team has other people. It's not like I have to come in and dominate. I know what to do. I still know what not to do. I still know how to play this game."

Florida standout ready to commit

By David Wilson
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska football team has all but wrapped up its 17th verbal commitment.

Robert Pollard, considered by analysts to be one of the top high school athletes in the country, said Monday night — after speaking with Cornhusker assistant coach Craig Bohl — that Nebraska was his top choice.

Pollard said he planned to talk with Bohl later in the week to confirm his decision.

Pollard, a running back and safety at Orange Park High School in Jacksonville, Fla., said he had narrowed his choices down to Nebraska, Ohio State, and Auburn. Pollard said he also spoke with an Ohio State coach Monday night.

A 6-foot-2, 205 pounder, Pollard rushed for over 1,000 yards as a senior and was second on the team in tackles.

Orange Park Coach Bob Williams said he thought Pollard, rated the No. 2 safety in the nation by The National Recruiting Advisor, was more talented as a defensive back.

"I think he could have an impact immediately on defense, but he has all of the physical capabilities to play offense, too," Williams said.

Pollard said his preference would be to play running back at the colle-

giate level. And he said Nebraska was recruiting him as a running back.

Pollard, who visited Lincoln Dec. 8, said he liked the group of players he was with. Husker recruits J.R. Edwards, John Gibson and Steve Warren also visited that weekend.

"It was cold, but I won't let it get to me," Pollard said. "There was another (player from Florida) down there too, so at least I know I won't be alone."

Pollard, who has been timed at 4.4 seconds in the 40-yard-dash, earned all-state football honors as a sophomore, junior and senior. He also lettered in basketball, track and weightlifting.

Although he had not received his SAT scores yet, Pollard said that he was pretty sure that he would qualify academically.

"He's a hard worker in practice and a leader by example," Williams said. "He is a great athlete all-around."

Including Pollard, the Huskers have received 17 verbal commitments. Nebraska is expected to sign 18 players on signing day, Feb. 7.

After committing to Nebraska in December, Eric Stevenson, a linebacker from Crescent, Okla., visited various Big Eight schools and has since committed to Oklahoma State.

Garner adds power, bulk to NU post

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

Bernard Garner never did set a timetable for himself to fit in with the Nebraska basketball team.

He knew a time would come eventually when he would feel good playing for the Cornhuskers after transferring from Western Nebraska Community College.

That time has arrived. "I'm feeling comfortable now," Garner said. "It took me a while, but I am starting to pick it up at the right time."

And fortunately for Nebraska, Garner began to put his game together at the right time — at the start of the Big Eight season.

The Huskers are 15-5 overall and 3-2 in the conference after losing 88-73 to Kansas on Sunday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, but that record may be worse without Garner.

Garner has had a major impact in four of Nebraska's five league games.

On Jan. 20 against Oklahoma State, Garner scored 15 points. He was 3-for-3 from the field and made 9-of-10 free throws. In a 76-58 win over Missouri on Jan. 24, Garner scored nine points and grabbed six rebounds.

Even in defeat Garner has been important.

In the Huskers' 117-100 triple-overtime loss at Oklahoma, Garner scored 21 points and hauled in 12 rebounds, registering Nebraska's lone double-double of the season.

Garner scored 16 points and had seven rebounds in the loss to the Jayhawks Sunday.

In five Big Eight games, the 6-foot-7, 225-pound junior power forward, is averaging 13.2 points per game, sec-

See GARNER on 8

Thompson, Terry win at duals

From Staff Reports

Nebraska junior heavyweight wrestler Tolly Thompson became the fourth-ever Cornhusker to post three consecutive 30-win seasons by downing No. 4 Jeff Walter of Wisconsin Monday night at the NWCA All-Star Meet in Iowa City, Iowa.

Thompson, 30-1 and ranked No. 2 in the nation, and Temoer Terry, ranked second at 158 pounds, were the only Huskers to compete in the meet. Terry defeated third-ranked Ernest Benion of Illinois 9-4.

Terry recorded a takedown and three near falls in the second period and iced the win with a third-period takedown. Thompson had no problems in his win, a 10-3 victory.

Nebraska will return to action Saturday at 7:30 p.m. against Oklahoma at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. In that match, Nebraska coach Tim Neumann said he would change the lineup in the lower weights.

Brad Canoyer will probably return to 118 pounds, while Jeramie Welder will wrestle at 126 pounds. Tony DeAnda will return to 134 pounds and Mike Eierman could see action for the first time this season at 142 pounds.

Eierman was suspended before the season and missed more than a semester of practice.

"Another week or so, he'll be ready to go," Neumann said. "He's good enough to be in the top four in the country."