

# SPORTS

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## SPORTS OPINION



**Tim Pearson**

## Five seniors need to take charge for NU

Nebraska's seniors should forget this season — now.

Erase it from the slate.

Starting Friday against Iowa State, the five Cornhusker seniors will start a new season, playing every game as if it were their last. A loss, and their Nebraska careers are over. A win gives them another game.

Jamar Johnson knows the feeling well — he's been there.

Two years ago, Johnson, then a senior point guard for Nebraska, was in the same position. Johnson and the Huskers brought home Nebraska's first-ever Big Eight Tournament championship.

"Right now this part of the season, the postseason, is all about the seniors," said Johnson, now an undergraduate assistant coach at Nebraska. "You can't expect juniors, sophomores and freshmen to step up because they haven't been there. It's the seniors' responsibility."

The Husker seniors — Erick Strickland, Jaron Boone, Terrance Badgett, Jason Glock and Tom Wald — must assume that responsibility and salvage a lost season.

Two years ago, Strickland, Boone, Badgett and Glock played roles in the Huskers' Big Eight Tournament run, while Wald, sitting out the year after transferring from Mankato State, watched from the sidelines.

"They want to relive that moment," Johnson said. "You don't want to say, 'As a sophomore, we won the Big Eight Tournament.' When you're a senior, you want to go out with a bang."

After the Huskers won the tournament in 1994, they were greeted by 5,000 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Johnson led his teammates onto the court with the Big Eight Tournament championship trophy in hand.

This year's five seniors want to do the same. Expectations were high for this year's team — even two years ago. Everybody was saying, "Wait until Boone, Strickland and company are seniors."

Well, we're still waiting. The seniors need to take charge. Two years ago, the team's four seniors stepped up when it counted most.

"I can recall practices where everyone came out and practiced hard with the same focus," Johnson said. "This year, there's not always the same focus. That was something we always had."

That focus translated into a Big Eight Tournament title.

"We were on such a roll that teams just wanted to get out of the way," Johnson said. "Our attitude was that we didn't care who we played. It all starts with the seniors."

This year's Nebraska team has the potential to be explosive, and one spark could go a long way.

But the seniors must light that fire.

Pearson is a senior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan copy desk chief.

## Strickland looks for new beginning

By Trevor Parks  
Senior Reporter

Erick Strickland knows his playing career for the Nebraska basketball team is winding down.

On Wednesday, after all of his teammates left the arena, Strickland had assistant coach Bill Johnson throw passes to him as the senior finished what might have been his final practice at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Johnson left Strickland alone to shoot free throws and after a few minutes, Strickland left the court with a towel around his neck. Five minutes after he left the court, the lights in the arena were turned off.

For now, Strickland has at least one game left. The Cornhuskers, 16-13, play No. 23 Iowa State in the first round of the Big Eight Tournament in Kansas City, Mo. at 6:10 p.m. Friday at Kemper Arena.

Strickland, a graduate of Bellevue West, said he wanted to end his career in the NCAA Tournament.

"It's my last time to go to the (Big Eight) tournament, and I want to win it," Strickland said. "It's a lot of fun. I'd like to go there and do something this time."

"It also would be nice to get in the NCAA and do something no team has done."

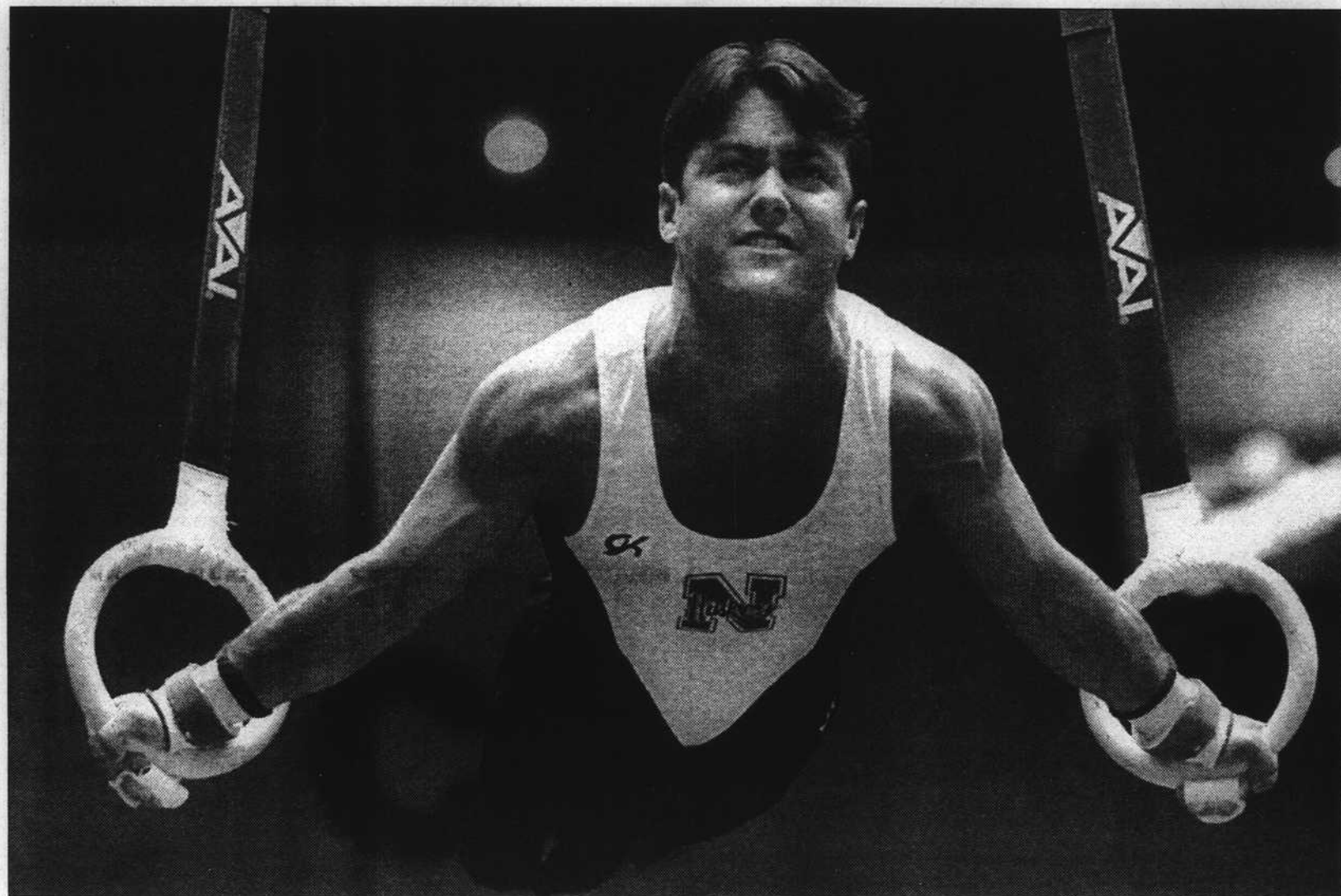
No Nebraska team has ever won an NCAA Tournament game, but that's not because Strickland hasn't done his part. He is trying to become the first Big Eight player in history to score 1,500 points, record 250 steals, dish out 400 assists and make 170 3-point field goals.

Strickland has eclipsed the steals and 3-point fields. He needs only seven points and three assists to become the first player to achieve all four totals.

In his three trips to Kemper Arena, Strickland has turned in performances that if repeated could help his team have some success and make the NCAA Tournament.

In 1994, he averaged 13 points and six rebounds as the Huskers defeated Oklahoma, Missouri and Oklahoma State to win the only conference tour-

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Scott Bruhn/DN

Nebraska junior Ted Harris has been the Cornhuskers' most consistent gymnasts on the still rings this season. Harris and junior Ryan McEwen have combined to form a formidable all-around duo this season.

## Duo boosts Husker scores

By Gregg Madsen  
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's gymnastics team has a secret weapon.

It isn't just one gymnast. It's a combination of two.

Juniors Ted Harris and Ryan McEwen have fused into an all-around tandem that has become a scoring force for the third-ranked Cornhuskers.

Harris specializes in the still rings, and McEwen competes in every other event. Twice this season, their combined score has been the best all-around mark on the team.

Last Sunday against Oklahoma, the two combined to score 56.375 in all six events, which was higher than sophomore Jim Koziol, who won the all-around with a 56.35.

Although having the top score didn't earn the duo any recognition at the award ceremonies, they both agreed that it did give them bragging rights in the practice gym.

"We're always talking about it," McEwen said. "It gives us a lot of competition between the all-arounders, and it's a lot of fun. It's for bragging rights, no doubt about it."

Nebraska coach Francis Allen said he didn't remember a higher-scoring tandem in his 27 years of coaching.

"I think they've created a good monster," Allen said.

With injuries sidelining freshmen Marshall Nelson and J.D. Reive this season, the monster has turned into an even more valuable part of the Huskers' scoring power, assistant coach Jim Howard said.

"To have a really strong team, you mix and match and try to create more all-arounders," Howard said. "That philosophy has worked out well for us over the years."

McEwen said the team had devised its own scoring system for the season. Five points go to the top all-around scorer from each meet, and four points go to second place.

"It's going to get tight down the road," McEwen said.

But to look at Harris and McEwen only as a dynamic duo does not present one with the whole picture.

Harris, a Kearney native, tied the

school record at the NCAA Championships team finals last year on the still rings, scoring a 9.9. This season, he has won the event at every meet, including a season-high 9.8 at Iowa on Feb. 23.

"I guess I'm kind of like the designated hitter on this team," Harris said.

Even though McEwen competes in five events to Harris' one, McEwen said Harris was just as valuable to the Huskers' success.

"Actually, he's just as much a part as I am," McEwen said. "He's got one of the best ring routines in the nation."

A graduate of Lincoln Christian, McEwen attended Penn State for two years before transferring to Nebraska. He said that injuries, along with the childhood dream of being a Husker, convinced him to make the change.

McEwen was named Mountain Pacific Sports Conference gymnast of the week after his performance against Oklahoma on Feb. 11. In the Nebraska dual meet win, he won the parallel bars (9.625) and horizontal bar (9.650), and finished second in pommel horse (9.6) and vault (9.250).

## Frazier continues to improve

By Mike Kluck  
Senior Reporter

Former Nebraska quarterback Tommie Frazier should be released from Bryan Memorial Hospital either Friday or Saturday, one of his doctors said Wednesday night.

Dr. Deepak Gangahar, a cardiovascular surgeon at Bryan, said Frazier, who has been hospitalized since Feb. 26, had been making steady progress and was up and walking.

"He was pretty sick one time last week," Gangahar said. "But he has been improving the last four or five days. Most of the pain and discomfort has left him for good."

"If all the signs are satisfactory and he is stronger and doesn't have much pain, then he will be released."

Frazier entered the hospital suffering from a severe sinus infection, but media reports have said he also had a swollen leg.