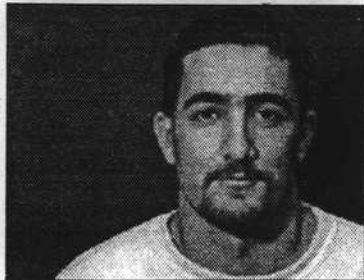


SPORTS

Tuesday, April 2, 1996

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SPORTS OPINION



Derek Samson College hoops best, worst shine through

Now that the college basketball season is over, it's time to name the winners and losers of the NCAA Tournament.

Best Conference: Southeastern Conference. The SEC qualified four teams for the tournament. All four made it to the Sweet 16. Half of the Final Four was from the SEC, including national champion Kentucky. Georgia could have been the SEC's third Final Four team, but it lost to Syracuse on a last-second shot in overtime of the West Regional semifinals.

The other best conference: Big East. Not only did the Big East own the rights to three of the four best players in the country (Villanova's Kerry Kittles, Georgetown's Allen Iverson and Connecticut's Ray Allen), it also proved to have four of the best teams. The conference's fourth-best team, Syracuse, played for the NCAA title Monday night. Syracuse, Connecticut and Georgetown all made it to the Sweet 16, and all five Big East teams invited to the tourney won first-round games.

Worst conference: This one was too easy — the Big Ten. Once again, this conference proved its worth right away. Like last year when only Purdue escaped the first round, the majority of the Big Ten was gone after the opening round. Three of the Big Ten's five teams were beaten, leaving only Purdue and Iowa. Purdue proved what a joke it was to award a No. 1 seed to a Big Ten team by getting routed by eighth-seeded Georgia after barely escaping Western Carolina in the first round. And it took Iowa until the second round to realize what state it was from.

Second-worst conference: Big Eight. This year's NCAA Tournament proved that Kansas and Iowa State deserved bids. Oklahoma and Kansas State should have been battling Nebraska for rights to claim No. 65 at the National Invitation Tournament. Both the Sooners and Wildcats were massacred in the first round, and Iowa State proved how overrated it was with a loss to Utah in the second round. Kansas was competitive, but even the Big Eight's best team was no match for the Big East's fourth-best team in the West Regional final.

Best coach: Another easy one — Tubby Smith, Georgia. After leading Tulsa (a Missouri Valley school in Oklahoma) to two straight Sweet 16 appearances, Smith took his talents to Georgia. Without Smith, the Bulldogs were 18-10 last year and actually lost a first-round NIT game to Nebraska. This year, Smith led the Bulldogs to the Sweet 16, where they were beaten in overtime by Syracuse. That makes it three straight Sweet 16 appearances with two different schools for Smith. It's too bad Nebraska couldn't realize he wanted to move on from Tulsa.

Samson is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan sports columnist.

Wildcats finally get title

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — Kentucky earned the title Monday night that it was expected to win all season.

A 76-67 victory over Syracuse gave the Wildcats their sixth national title in school history and the Orangemen the respect few gave them going before the game.

"We're a little bit like the Green Bay Packers," Kentucky coach Rick Pitino said. "The entire state of Kentucky owns our basketball team."

Kentucky's senior guard Tony Delk, voted the outstanding player of the NCAA Tournament, finished Monday with 24 points and tied the championship game record with seven 3-pointers.

Freshman future star Ron Mercer added a career-high 20 points and the deep Kentucky bench enabled the Wildcats to keep up the defensive pressure. Syracuse finished with 24 turnovers, 19 more than it had in the semifinal win over Mississippi State Saturday.

Orangemen senior John Wallace finished with 29 points and 10 rebounds but fouled out with 1:06 to play and Kentucky leading 72-67.

After Kentucky built a 59-46 lead, the Orangemen came up with a 12-3 run, cutting the lead to 62-58 on a Wallace three-point play with 7:58 left. Wallace later hit two free throws with 4:46 left to trim Kentucky's lead to 64-62, but Syracuse could get no closer.

Derek Anderson and Antoine Walker had 11 points apiece for Kentucky. Syracuse forward Todd Burgan finished with 19 points.

Syracuse couldn't have asked for more from its 2-3 zone in the first half as Kentucky struggled with its shooting from everywhere. With the exception of Delk's hot shooting from behind the 3-point arc, the Wildcats were missing layups, drives, short jumpers and long ones.

With the score tied at 28 after a Wallace 3-pointer with 3 minutes to play in the first half, Mercer and Delk combined for 12 points over the next 1:49 to build a 40-30 Kentucky lead.

Mercer started the spurt with a three-point play, and his second 3-pointer of the game was sandwiched between two Delk 3-pointers. Otis Hill's three-point play got Syracuse within 40-33, but Walker made two free throws with 36 seconds left to put the Wildcats up 42-33 at the half.

"I'm proud of my guys," Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim said. "They came back. My kids had so much heart all year and in this tournament, and I think they gained respect."

NU searches for pitching

By David Wilson
Staff Reporter

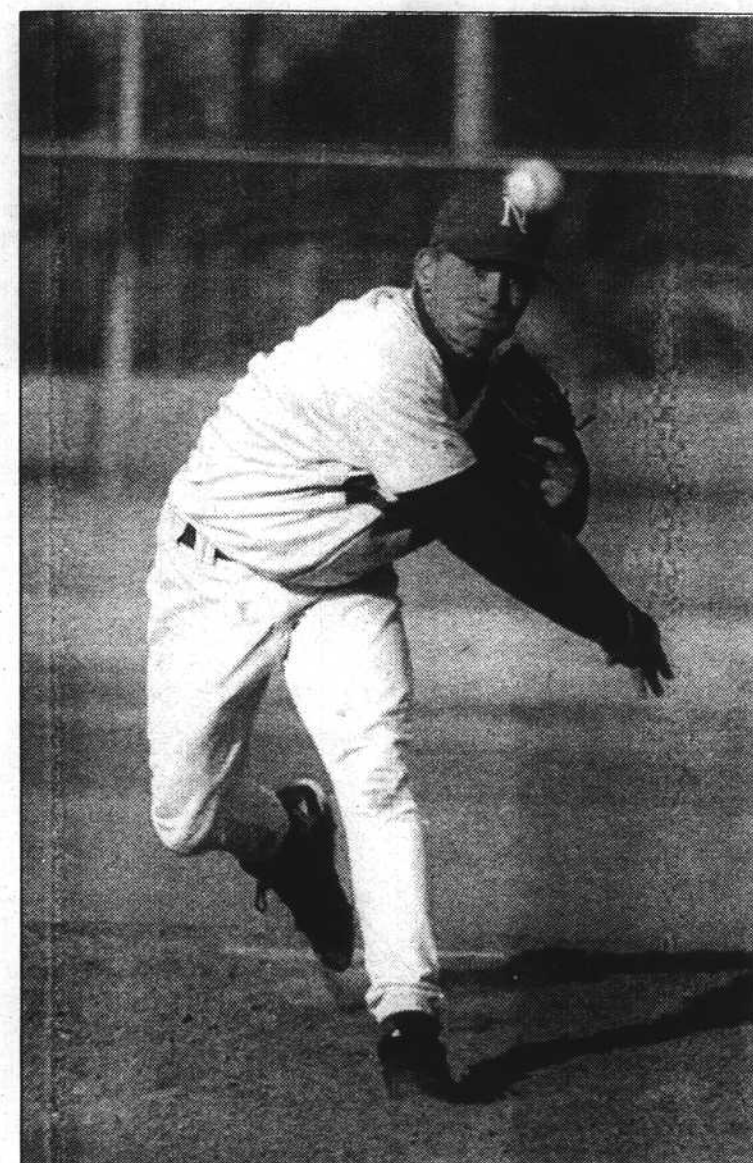
After posting a 10-17-1 record in the first half of the season, the Nebraska baseball team wants to improve in one area.

"Our goals this week are to stabilize on the mound so we can gain some momentum," Nebraska coach John Sanders said Monday. "It all stops and starts on the mound. We want to show a better second half with respect to our pitching."

The Cornhuskers play host to No. 21 Oklahoma today in a 7 p.m. game at Buck Beltzer Field.

Oklahoma, 20-10 overall and 7-2 in the Big Eight, is second only to 7-1 Oklahoma State in the conference. The Sooners lead the Big Eight with a .351 batting average.

"Oklahoma is a good team," Sanders said. "They're in the top 10 in bat-



Scott Bruhn/DN

Nebraska freshman Corey Miller will pitch tonight against No. 21 Oklahoma. Miller, normally a second baseman, is making his second appearance of the season on the mound.

NU freshman aids team at two spots

By Nikki Markota
Staff Reporter

Success as a freshman at the collegiate level is quite an accomplishment.

To do it at two completely different positions is even more impressive.

So far this year, that is exactly what freshman Corey Miller has done. Before last week, Miller had started every game of the season in the infield for the Cornhusker baseball team.

But Nebraska's everyday second baseman tried his luck as a pitcher last Wednesday against Peru State, holding the Bobcats to no runs and

three hits in 3 2/3 innings. Tonight at 7, Miller will pitch again.

This time, however, the competition will be much stiffer. The Huskers are playing host to 21st-ranked Oklahoma, a team that won the national title only two years ago.

"I love playing second and pitching," Miller said.

But the 5-foot-11, 170-pound right-hander from Oakhurst, Calif., said he might be a bit partial to the mound.

"The best thing about pitching is that you are always in the game," he said.

See MILLER on 8

Alberts eager for new season

By Todd Walkenhorst
Staff Reporter

Former Nebraska All-American and Butkus Award winner Trev Alberts returned to Lincoln Monday for the fifth annual School Is Cool Jam.

The return to Lincoln is a chance for Alberts to give back to the community that supported him during his collegiate career from 1989-1993, he said.

Alberts told the 14,000 children in attendance at the Bob Devaney Sports Center to give a 100 percent effort in everything they do.

"Winning isn't everything," he said, "it's how you play."

Alberts has learned from personal experience. As a senior at Northern University High School in Cedar Falls, Iowa, Alberts lost in a state championship game.

As a senior at Nebraska in 1993, the Cornhuskers lost the Orange Bowl by two points to Florida State in a game that decided the national title.

And in January, his current team, the Indianapolis Colts, fell one play short of earning a trip to the Super Bowl in Alberts' second NFL season.

"It's not always winning," he said. "Even if you get a B in a class, it's all right as long as you gave 100 percent."

For the first time since leaving Nebraska, Alberts — who was the fifth overall pick in the April 1994 draft — has been able to participate in off-season training without the burden of re-

See ALBERTS on 8

NU radio affiliates announced

From the Associated Press

University of Nebraska sports have a new home on the radio.

News-talk station KKAR (1290 AM) and rock station KDGE (101.9 FM) were named Monday as the Omaha affiliates to the Cornhusker Sports Network, said Paul Aaron of Great Plains Media, Inc.

Both stations are owned by Mitchell Broadcasting Co. of Omaha.

Last month, Great Plains Media won the five-year contract to the Husker network with an \$8.5 million bid.

Omaha station KFAB has carried Nebraska sports exclusively since 1983 and has broadcast Nebraska football games since 1926.

KKAR General Manager Marty Riemenschneider declined to disclose Mitchell Broadcasting's bid. KKAR will broadcast Nebraska football, volleyball, men's and women's basketball and a few baseball games. KDGE, called The Edge, will only broadcast football games, Riemenschneider said.

Great Plains will begin its broadcasts in August. Aaron said the network would expand to include more stations.

New technology, including field microphones to pick up the sound of tackles, will be used during football game broadcasts, Aaron said.

The Lincoln AM affiliate — expected to be 1400 KLIN — will be announced Thursday, Aaron said.

He also said play-by-play radio announcer Kent Pavelka would be

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JOHN SANDERS

Nebraska baseball coach

ting average in the country. They're a very explosive offensive team. We have a tremendous challenge."

Freshman second baseman Corey Miller, who has started all but one game in the infield this season, will start on the mound today against the best offense the Huskers have seen all season.

Miller made his collegiate pitching debut against Peru State last Wednesday, throwing 3 2/3 innings and allowing no runs on two hits.

"I think he's a competitive young man," Sanders said. "He's someone who has done well, and it gives us a chance to go out there with someone different. Corey's someone who hasn't had a lot of innings, so why not?"

Offensively, the Sooners are led by senior first baseman Damon Minor. Minor, one of four Oklahoma players to start every Sooner game, is batting .383 and leads the Big Eight with 10

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