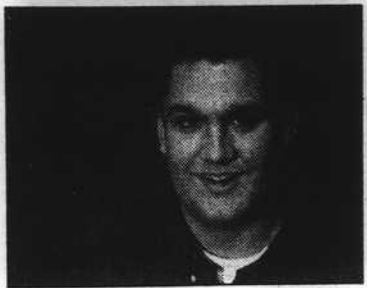


# SPORTS

Thursday, April 11, 1996

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## SPORTS OPINION



### Todd Walkenhorst

## Baseball fans show support despite snow

Rarely do you see a major league baseball game played in a snowstorm, but recently it's become a common occurrence.

On Tuesday, the Yankees opened their home season by playing host to the Royals. It snowed like Christmas the entire game.

Last week, the Cubs played host to the Padres in a game that saw its share of light snow.

For the first time, the major league baseball season started with a game played in March. On March 31, the Mariners played host to the White Sox on ESPN's Sunday Night Baseball.

At least the scheduling committee had enough sense to schedule that one indoors.

Because another round of playoffs has been added to the end of the year, the baseball season needed to be extended in one direction or the other. Hence, the early start date.

Apparently, the baseball schedulers do not always plan ahead.

Let's see. Chicago started the season at home against San Diego and Los Angeles. Where is it warmer in April, Illinois or southern California?

Scheduling needs to be done a little more carefully. Teams in the South and teams that play in indoor stadiums should be at home to begin the season. I know it's a radical idea, but think about it. It might work.

But baseball will not change, despite a snowstorm and 38-degree temperatures with wind chill in the upper 20s, a sellout crowd filled Yankee Stadium.

Baseball is the only outdoor sport that refuses to play in a large variety of natural elements. In New York, the fans did not care. Less than two years after the strike, an opening day in a blizzard drew 56,329 fans. zard drew 56,329 fans.

In the Japanese baseball league, games are not postponed or delayed when climatic conditions are unfavorable. These athletes do not have the big-dollar contracts, and owners don't worry about losing a few athletes to pulled muscles.

And still, other outdoor professional sports teams don't call off games when the weather is less than ideal.

Major league baseball should not start playing in all weather conditions, but if it continues to schedule games in the winter, players are going to have to start playing in the snow.

With the adverse weather conditions and the strike apparently a distant memory, baseball is seeing brighter days in 1996. The bottom line is that the numbers at the gates are rebounding in the opening week. Compared to a year ago, baseball attendance is up 4.5 percent in the first week of the season.

Walkenhorst is a senior broadcast major and a Daily Nebraskan sports columnist.

## Huskers win sixth game in a row

By David Wilson  
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska baseball team extended its winning streak to six games Wednesday afternoon in Manhattan, Kan., defeating Kansas State 13-6 at Frank Myers Field.



**Fish** started on the mound for the Cornhuskers and allowed just two earned runs on four hits in eight innings. Fish, who improved his record to 5-3, lowered his earned-run average to 5.08.

"Steve Fish pitched an outstanding ball game," Nebraska coach John

Sanders said. "It all stops and starts with pitching. The guys played hard and worked hard."

In their six-game winning streak, Husker starters have held opponents to 18 earned runs on 35 hits in 45 innings, lasted an average of 7.5 innings per outing and struck out 42 batters.

"We've had better starting pitching, which also transfers over to hitting," Sanders said. "The hitters tend to get frustrated when they play long innings. Everything looks better when you pitch well."

Starters Pat Driscoll, who has thrown complete games his last two outings, and Fish have each earned two wins in the six-game stretch. Junior Jonas Armenta and freshman Seth Williams picked up the other two victories.

The Cornhuskers, who improved to 16-18-1 overall and 5-8 in the conference, jumped to an early 1-0 lead in the first inning after a two-out bases-loaded single by freshman designated hitter Jason Fry.

Junior third baseman Pete Jenkins followed by crushing a grand slam to increase the Huskers' lead to five.

Jenkins' second homer of the season was the only extra-base hit of the afternoon for the Husker offense, which picked at four Kansas State pitchers for 11 singles.

Nebraska struck again in the second when right fielder Mel Motley drove in shortstop Larry Hartzell by reaching first base on a fielder's choice with the bases loaded.

Junior center fielder Francis Collins extended his hitting streak to 19 games with a single in the second inning.

Collins owns a team-high .417 batting average and is among the top five hitters in the Big Eight.

Wildcat starter Jon Oiseth, whose record dropped to 5-2, was rattled again in the third for four runs before he was pulled with two outs. Oiseth hit the showers after allowing 10 runs on seven hits in just 2 2/3 innings.

With the win, Nebraska moved past Kansas into fourth in the Big Eight. Kansas State fell to 19-14 overall and a sixth-best 3-7 in the conference.

The Wildcats will visit Buck Beltzer Field this weekend for a three-game series, beginning at 7 p.m. Friday.

"Baseball is a crazy game," Sanders said. "We have to continue to play hard every game. We're climbing the ladder, and we have to continue to climb."



Matt Miller/DN

Cornhusker rush ends Grant Wistrom (left) and Jared Tomich are the best pair of defenders Husker assistant coach Tony Samuel said he had coached.

## Rush ends rank 'with NU's best'

By Trevor Parks  
Senior Reporter

With arguably the best tandem of rush ends in school history, an opposing offense may wonder what direction to run a play against the Nebraska defense next season.

If it runs a play to the right, it has to deal with rush end Jared Tomich. If it goes left, Grant Wistrom awaits it.

"I don't know what they might do," Tomich said, "maybe they will try a lot of trick plays or something."

No matter what an opposing offense does, it will have to deal with both Tomich and Wistrom. Both started every game for the Cornhuskers last year.

They combined for 71 tackles — 27 of which came behind the line of scrimmage — and 14 sacks. Tomich, playing full-time last season for the first time, was named to the Associated Press All-America first team and Wistrom was named to the AP third team.

Rush ends coach Tony Samuel said Tomich and Wistrom were the best pair of bookends he had coached in his

*"I'm 50-0 in my last 50 football games, and I don't plan on starting to lose now."*

**GRANT WISTROM**

Nebraska rush end

11 seasons at Nebraska.

That says a lot because Samuel has coached Trev Alberts, now with the Indianapolis Colts, Broderick Thomas, who recently signed with the Dallas Cowboys, Kansas City's Troy Dumas, Donta Jones of the Pittsburgh Steelers and Mike Croel, the 1991 defensive rookie of the year for the Denver Broncos.

Samuel said Tomich and Wistrom were in the same category of his former stars.

"They always play hard," he said. "They run to the ball hard, and they are good leaders on the field. They lead by example."

Tomich, a 6-foot-2, 258-pound senior-to-be, led the team with 10 sacks in 1995. Since the Fiesta Bowl, Tomich has spent time in the weight room.

At pre-spring performance testing, Tomich set a position record, scoring 2,936 points in the performance index. He also scored 918 points in the pro agility run, a school record.

For his efforts, Tomich was named the 1996 lifer of the year by his teammates. Next season, he will have to take on more of a leadership role, he said, and that was the main reason he worked hard over the winter.

"It's kind of a new thing for me," Tomich said. "I learned from some of those guys who were here last year."

Wistrom, a junior in the fall, has never lost a game at Nebraska. As a sophomore, he led the team in tackles for losses with 15. Before winning two national titles at Nebraska, the 6-5, 230-pound native of Webb City, Mo., won two Missouri Class 4A state cham-

pionships.

"I'm 50-0 in my last 50 football games, and I don't plan on starting to lose now," Wistrom said. "I've forgotten what it's like to lose. Winning four in a row is a realistic possibility."

With the way the Husker defense stacks up around Tomich and Wistrom, three consecutive titles is not out of the question.

On defense, the Huskers return six starters. Tomich said this defense had a chance to be better than last year's squad, which gave up 13.6 points and 294.1 yards per game. In its last three games against Kansas, Oklahoma and Florida, the defense surrendered a total of 95 yards rushing.

"I think we will be better this year because a lot of us have experience," Tomich said. "None of us had that experience going into last year, and we did fine."

Wistrom, who also backs up offensive lineman Adam Treu on punt snaps, agreed with his teammate.

"We're both older guys now," he said, "and we assume some more responsibility in the fact that we know we have to go out there and set an example."