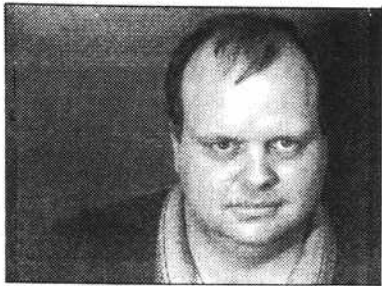


SPORTS WEEKEND

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SPORTS OPINION



Mike Kluck

Call-in show gets new life after KFAB

The last three months have been a roller coaster ride for SportsDay Mid-America host Jim Rose.

On Feb. 29, after doing his sports call-in show for three years on the Nebraska Sports Network, Rose received a call at 4 in the afternoon from KFAB General Manager Chuck Jewell. KFAB has been the flagship station of the Nebraska Sports Network since 1983.

Two hours before SDMA was scheduled to air, Rose said Jewell informed him KFAB had decided it wanted the show to go in a more "caller-driven direction."

"It's an oxymoron for shows to be caller-driven," Rose said. "Their contention was there's too much Jim Rose and not enough anything else. I thought that was a ludicrous and an idiotic statement."

"That's not what a sports talk show or any talk show revolves around. A talk show revolves around your ability to disseminate information in such a way to make it entertaining or compelling."

But Rose thought KFAB had a hidden reason for not wanting him to remain the host of the Nebraska Sports Network's sports call-in show.

In February, Great Plains Media Inc. was awarded the rights to broadcast Nebraska football, volleyball, baseball and men's and women's basketball. The company will take over Aug. 1.

Then in March, Great Plains Media Inc. President Paul Aaron announced KKAR and KDGE in Omaha and KLIN in Lincoln would broadcast the network events, marking the first time since 1926 that KFAB won't be covering Nebraska football.

Because KFAB knew it would not be a part of the network after Aug. 1, Rose said, it probably didn't want to support any of NSN's programs. Rose said he expected Great Plains Media to continue the SportsDay Mid-America call-in format.

"KFAB took zero interest in the program," he said. "KFAB did not want it on the air, and they never promoted it."

But now Rose has the last laugh. Most of the network's programming will run through KLIN, and Rose probably will have more control.

There are also plans for KLIN to work jointly with KKAR when Great Plains takes over the NSN.

"I want KKAR to feel an emotional attachment to this show that KFAB did not," Rose said. "I don't want KKAR to get in the same rut KFAB did. I want them to be involved so that they will highlight it."

More than likely, however, Rose's roller coaster ride is just getting started.

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

NFL scouts cast eyes on Phillips

By Mike Kluck
Senior Reporter

Lawrence Phillips' whirlwind tour of NFL cities is over.

Now, the former Cornhusker I-back and top NFL prospect will interview with a couple more teams at his home in California, and wait until April 20 to learn his spot in the NFL draft.

Phillips, considered by NFL insiders to be a likely top-five pick, has been in seven NFL cities during the last two weeks. During those visits, he has met with team owners, coaches and personnel.

But Phillips' agent, Mitch Frankel of Impact Sports Management in Boca Raton, Fla., said it was too early to know if Phillips would be drafted by the New York Jets with the No. 1 pick in the draft.

"He could come from Mars, and if he has talent, I don't really care about where he's from or his past problems."

JOHN BECKER

St. Louis Rams' college-scouting coordinator

"Right now, the Jets hold the trump card," Frankel said. "It's not for sure right now what they will do with their pick."

On Wednesday night and Thursday, Phillips met with Baltimore Ravens' coach Ted Marchibroda, director of football operations, Ozzie Newsome, and running backs coach Al Lavan. The Ravens, formerly the Cleveland Browns, hold the draft's

fourth pick.

The Jacksonville Jaguars have the second pick, the Arizona Cardinals hold the third pick and the New York Giants will draft fifth.

Earlier this week, Phillips met with New York Jets' coach Rich Kotite and director of personnel Dick Haley.

Lavan said Phillips would be able to immediately challenge for a position next season with any team.

"He can do for a team the same thing he did for Nebraska," Lavan said. "He has the ability to make big plays and to consistently make them."

Phillips, who was once a Heisman Trophy candidate, played in five games last season, rushing for 547 yards and nine touchdowns. In the Fiesta Bowl, Phillips ran for 165 yards and two touchdowns.

He finished his career as the fifth-leading rusher in Nebraska history. His 1,722-yard total as a sophomore in 1994 is the second-best season in school history.

But when a team evaluates Phillips, Lavan said, it has to look at both his football qualities and his personal character.

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Gymnasts ready for regionals

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

Since the beginning of the 1996 season, the Nebraska women's gymnastics team has had one goal, the NCAA Championships.

On Saturday night at the NCAA Midwest Regional in Salt Lake City, the Cornhuskers have a chance to either reach that goal or end the season.

Nebraska is the No. 5 seed in the regional behind top-seeded Utah, Arizona State, Arizona and Brigham Young. The winning team from each of the NCAA's five regionals will advance to the NCAA Championships along with seven at-large teams.

Advancing to the April 25-27 championship meet in Tuscaloosa, Ala., won't be easy, but Nebraska coach Dan Kendig isn't backing down from the challenge. He said he thought as many as five teams from the Midwest Regional could advance to Tuscaloosa.

"I feel good about our chances," he said. "We've had a great week of practice, and I think they are confident that we can do well."

In last year's regional at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, Nebraska finished second with a 194.725. Utah won with a 196.625.

Utah coach Greg Marsden said he thought his two-time defending national champion Utes would benefit from having the meet on their home floor.

"We have four freshmen in about 10 or 12 routines," he said. "And freshmen who have never been through this before tend to be a little inconsistent. We hope that having this at home will help them to relax."

Marsden said Utah, ranked No. 3 in the nation, had been inconsistent this season.

"We always work on execution and consistency," he said. "I feel like we have made some progress in that way, but we really haven't hit 100 in a competition this season. Our inability to fully accomplish the consistency has been the big problem."

Nebraska also has a youthful look, starting five freshmen. One of them, Big Eight newcomer-of-the-year Misty Oxford, said she thought the Huskers' youth would not be a problem.

"I'm not sure how we'll react," she said. "It's going to be overwhelming, but I think we'll be able to handle it."

Husker freshman Courtney Brown will lead off on the balance beam and Amie Dillman, also a freshman, will lead off on the vault and in the floor exercise.

Nebraska lost to Arizona State on Feb. 16 at the Sun Devil Classic, where



Matt Miller/DN

Nebraska freshman Courtney Brown performs on the balance beam earlier this season. Brown will lead off on the balance beam Saturday night for the Cornhuskers at the NCAA Midwest Regional in Salt Lake City.

ASU scored a school-record 195.85 points.

Sophomore all-arounder Meagan Wright will lead the way for the Sun Devils. Wright scored a career-high 39.475 against Nebraska, including a 9.975 score on the uneven bars.

The Huskers will be counting on another standout performance from senior all-arounder Joy Taylor, who was named the NCAA academic All-American of the year Wednesday.

The senior from New Palestine, Ind., is fresh off a career-best 39.375 first-

Hurt NU aims for NCAAs

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

Even though the Nebraska men's gymnastics team will limp into Saturday's NCAA West Regional at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, it doesn't plan on limping out.

Nebraska will use four of six possible gymnasts on the floor exercise, vault and horizontal bar because of back injuries to sophomore all-

arounder Jim Koziol and freshman J.D. Reive.

The meet, which will begin at 7 p.m., pits No. 4 Nebraska against second-ranked California, No. 6 Oklahoma, 11th-ranked New Mexico and No. 12 Brigham Young. Stanford, the 1995 national champion, rounds out the competition.

The top three teams in the region will advance to the NCAA Championships, April 25-27 in Stanford, Calif.

Nebraska is looking for its 18th consecutive bid to the NCAA Championships.

California defeated the Cornhuskers last week at the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation Championships in Santa Barbara, Calif., scoring a 228.95. Oklahoma and New Mexico also finished ahead of the fourth-place Huskers.

Oklahoma coach Greg Buwick said the Sooners' second-place finish had given his team a confidence boost heading into this weekend's meet.

"We're not intimidated by Nebraska," he said. "In fact I'd prefer to go to Nebraska than any other place."

Nebraska junior still rings specialist Ted Harris said the Huskers weren't going to be intimidated either.

"There will be a lot of talent out there this weekend," Harris said. "But we have talent, too. If we can go out and hit 100 percent, we'll be right there."

The Huskers finished third in the West Regional last year, behind Stanford and Oklahoma.

Nebraska senior all-arounder Jason Christie placed fifth in the all-around at the meet with a 56.85.

Christie, Allen said, has not reached his potential this season. But the Lincoln High graduate has been showing signs of life lately. He scored a season-high 56.225 at the MPSF Championships, finishing fourth in the all-around.

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See MEN on 10