

SPORTS

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

Page 9

Big 8 Notebook

The Oklahoma State baseball team's NCAA record for grand slams in a season could be in jeopardy. The Cowboys have hit nine home runs with the bases juiced this year. They hold the record of 11, a mark set last year.

Iowa State senior outfielder Darrin DeReu's two triples last week gave him a league-best eight for the season and 20 for his career. Heading into Tuesday's game against Iowa, DeReu needed just one triple to tie the all-time Big Eight career record. That mark is held by Shawn Buchanan of Nebraska and Chip Glass of Oklahoma.

Missouri senior Jay White earned Big Eight player of the week for last week. White, the only senior starter on the Tiger roster, hit .600 in five games last week, helping Missouri to a 4-1 record. The Tigers are now in first place in the Big Eight with a league record of 13-5 and an overall record of 30-12.

Kansas State junior Jon Oiseth earned Big Eight pitcher of the week. Oiseth picked up a win and a save last week and threw the final four innings of a 7-4 win over Missouri, allowing two hits and no runs.

The 1996 NFL draft set a new standard for Big Eight athletes. A total of 28 Big Eight alums were selected by an NFL team last weekend. An average of 3.43 Big Eight alums were picked per round. That rate surpassed the 1977 figure of 3.33, when 40 were selected.

Nebraska and Oklahoma each had six players chosen, and Colorado boasted five draftees. Kansas had four players chosen. Kansas State, Oklahoma State and Missouri each had one. Iowa State was the lone Big Eight school that was void of NFL draft picks.

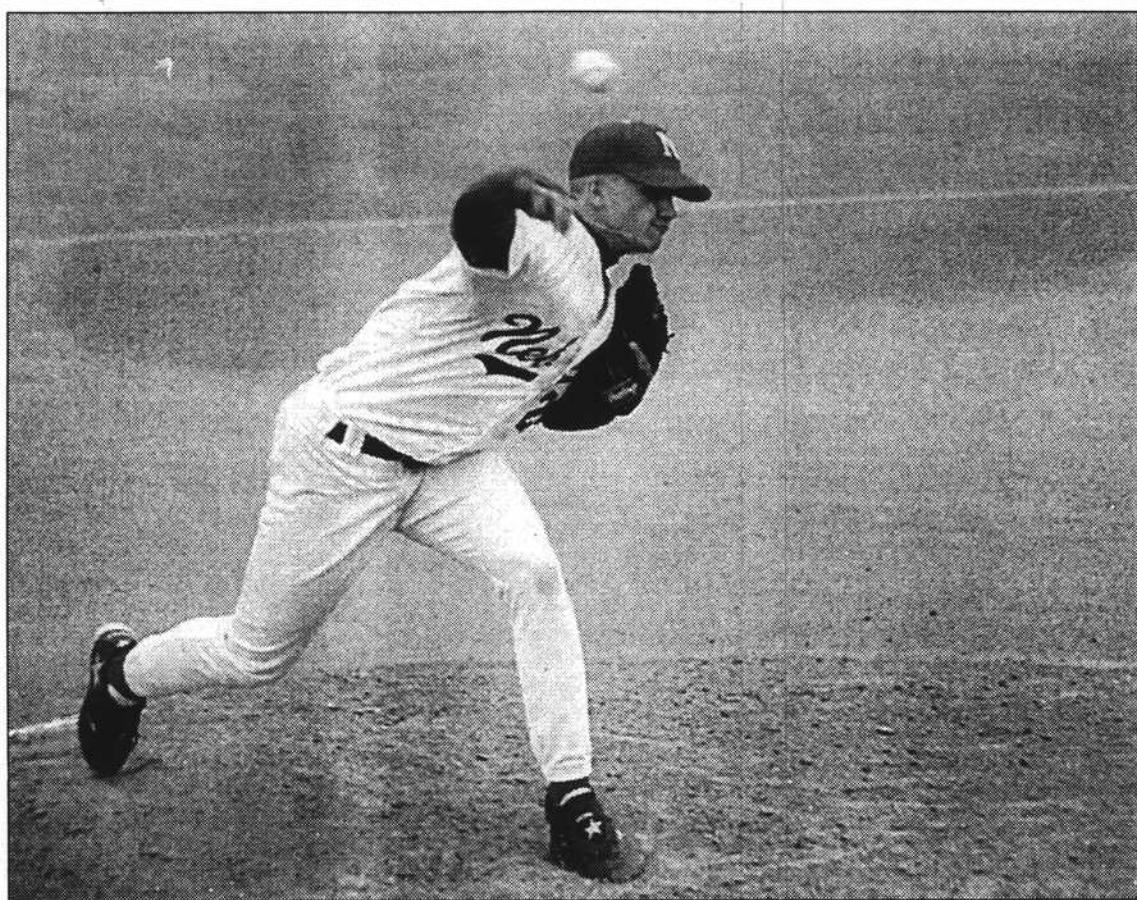
Academic honors keep on coming for Nebraska athletes. This time it was the softball team. A total of eight were selected to the academic All-Big 12 softball honor roll. They were: seniors Karla Knicely, Gloria Von Rentzell, Tobin Echo-Hawk and Cody Dusenberry, juniors Melanie Raimondi and Sarah Sinclair, sophomore Jenny Smith and freshman Kelly Pinkepank.

Over the last two weeks, the Big 12 softball race has heated up. Third-place Texas A&M has won eight of its last 10 games, second-place Oklahoma has won 11 of 13, and league leader Oklahoma State has won nine of its last 11 contests.

1996 will mark the first year of the new Big Eight tennis format. There will be a regular-season champion in men's and women's tennis, determined by round-robin play. Spring round competition will determine the singles and doubles champions. The tennis tournament also will have a team champion, based on team play at the Big Eight Tournament, April 26-28 in Kansas City, Mo. Seedings for the tournament are based on the spring round-robin play.

Oklahoma women's soccer will have a new coach next season. The Sooners named Elizabeth Fletcher as its new women's soccer coach. Fletcher was previously an assistant at North Carolina-Greensboro.

Notebook compiled by staff reporter Vince D'Adamo.



Matt Miller/DN

Nebraska junior Steve Fish throws one of his 176 pitches Sunday in the Huskers' 11-7 win over Kansas Sunday at Buck Beltzer Field. The Huskers will play host to Missouri today in a doubleheader at 2:30 p.m.

Huskers Fish-ing for wins

By David Wilson
Staff Reporter

The bats of the Nebraska baseball team have remained consistent all season, but offense can't always support a team with a 7.32 earned-run average.

The facts remain simple. If the Cornhuskers get good pitching, they win ball games.

"It all stops and starts with pitching," Nebraska coach John Sanders has said many times this season.

The Cornhuskers snapped a four-game losing streak — all losses to Kansas — in an 11-7 victory over the Jayhawks last Sunday. Junior right-hander Steve Fish pitched a complete-game 16-hitter.

"We definitely had to have this one," Fish said. "We couldn't afford to lose five to Kansas. I didn't think we played to our potential this series."

The Huskers, 18-23-1 overall and 7-13 in the Big Eight, will play host to Missouri (30-12, 13-5) today in a doubleheader beginning at 2:30 p.m. at Buck Beltzer Field. Nebraska sits alone in the cellar of the Big Eight.

The last-place team in the con-

ference does not advance to the Big Eight Tournament in Oklahoma City, Okla., May 16-19.

Pitching likely will determine the Huskers' chances of advancing to the tournament. Nebraska has won 10 out of the last 14 times a starter has lasted through the fifth inning.

Only two Husker starters, juniors Fish and Pat Driscoll, have thrown complete games this season. They are the only Nebraska starters with earned-run averages below 6.85.

Driscoll, who owns a 3.48 ERA, threw complete games in three consecutive appearances before his loss to Kansas last Saturday on just three days rest.

Fish, who has started a team-high 10 games, threw his first complete game last Sunday against the Jayhawks. He hurled 176 pitches — the most by a Husker starter all season — and allowed seven earned runs.

"That's a lot of pitches," Sanders said. "But you have to look at the type of pitcher. That would be too many for a guy that really powers. But a guy that is a spot, in-and-out guy, that's acceptable. It was a

really good performance."

Fish also was throwing on just three days rest, but said he was in top shape when Sunday's game began.

"I told coach before the game that I felt strong — that I could definitely go today, and that I was 100 percent," Fish said. "I wanted to show that I could do it."

As the game wore on, Fish said he began to feel weary.

After fanning five Jayhawks, Fish upped his strikeout total to a team-high 54 — just one more than junior Jonas Armenta. Fish also improved to 6-4. No other Husker starter has won more than two games this season.

Eleven games remain on the Nebraska schedule, including a doubleheader Thursday with UNO and two doubleheaders with Wayne State. Nebraska has only five Big Eight games left.

"We're going to have to win a fair share of them if we want to make it to the Big Eight Tournament, which is definitely possible," Fish said. "If we play like we did today and like the week we took

See FISH on 10

Graham excited about NFL

By Mike Kluck
Senior Reporter

It was only natural for Aaron Graham to dream of someday playing football in Texas Stadium.



Graham grew up and played high school football in Denton, Texas, just 40 miles from the Cowboys' home stadium. He always has been a Dallas fan.

On Sunday, Graham was drafted by the Arizona Cardinals, ensuring that he will play at least one game a year in Texas Stadium.

Although Nebraska's starting center for the past two seasons was disappointed he wasn't drafted by his favorite team, he said he was pleased the Cardinals selected him in the fourth round.

"I feel good about what's ahead," Graham said from his father's home in Conroe, Texas. "Playing in the pros has been a dream of mine since I put on a Nebraska uniform."

Graham's moment of disappointment came in the third round when the Cowboys chose Florida State center Clay Shiver with the 67th pick in the National Football League draft.

Graham was the 112th player taken in the seven-round draft, joining five other former Huskers who were selected Saturday and Sunday.

"Dallas had a chance, but instead of taking a hometown guy, they decided on somebody else," Graham said. "That's OK. It just motivates me more."

Arizona offensive line coach Carl Mauck said Graham may have a chance to play immediately for the Cardinals.

"I think he will have a better opportunity here than at Dallas," Mauck said. "Here he will have an opportunity to step in and play a lot sooner than he would in Dallas."

Graham is the fourth member of Nebraska's 1994 line to become a member of an NFL team. Rob Zatechka plays for the New York Giants, Zach Wiegert is a member of the St. Louis Rams and Brenden Stai plays for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

The 6-foot-4, 285-pound Graham has all the tools needed to be a top offensive lineman in the NFL, Mauck said.

"He's going to get a good shot at it," Mauck said. "I really like him, and he is one of your typical Nebraska linemen, hard worker, good student and well-trained."

Mauck said he was impressed with Graham's quickness off the ball and his ability to get to his blocks. Graham was the second center on the Cardinals' draft board, Mauck said.

He said Graham's deep-snapping ability added to his value.

Graham needs to work on his pass blocking, Mauck said, mainly because he has not worked in an offense that throws the ball 30 times a game. And of course, he will have to learn the Cardinals' system.

But Graham said he wasn't worried about learning the Cardinals' system or playing in a warm weather climate.

"The one thing I never got adjusted to through all my years at Nebraska was the cold weather," Graham said. "I grew up in the heat, and I am very happy a warm weather team chose me."

The draft was also a sad time for Graham. On Thursday, Graham's former roommate, Brook Berringer, died in a plane crash. But Graham was unable to attend Monday's funeral in Goodland, Kan., he said, because his grandfather, James Graham, is very ill.

Tacha wins Big Eight title

From Staff Reports

Nebraska sophomore golfer Rachele Tacha won the Big Eight championship Tuesday in Des Moines,



Iowa, firing a career-low final round of 73.

Tacha was one of three Cornhuskers to shoot in the 70s Tuesday to lead Nebraska to a tie for third place with Oklahoma with a two-day total of 974. Oklahoma State won the tournament with a 946, and Iowa State placed second at 960.

Tacha, whose title was the first ever individual championship by a Husker golfer, shot a 227 to outdistance Oklahoma State's JoJo Roberston.

Tacha dedicated her championship to former Nebraska quarterback Brook Berringer, who died last week in a plane crash.

"I went in with a lot of confidence and a lot of energy, knowing that if I put a good round together, I could come out on top," Tacha said.

Nebraska coach Robin Krapfl said she was proud of Tacha's effort.

"She played some absolutely great golf today," Krapfl said. "This is one of the toughest courses we'll ever play on, and the weather was absolutely horrendous yesterday, so Rachele's win is especially impressive."

"I couldn't have been prouder of a player if she were my own daughter."

Nebraska, which entered the day in fourth place, qualified for NCAA regionals, which will be played at the

Champions Club in Omaha, May 9-11.

Heidi Stark shot a 74 Tuesday to place 10th, Michelle Patterson finished 17th, Molly Mullin tied for 30th and Maureen Regan placed 32nd.

In Hutchinson, Kan., the Nebraska men's team finished third at the conference championships, 10 shots behind Oklahoma and Oklahoma State. Oklahoma State won the title over the Sooners in a playoff.

Ryan Niefeldt was Nebraska's top finisher, shooting a two-over par 72 Tuesday to finish eighth. Trent Morrison finished ninth, Josh Madden was 12th, Steve Friesen placed 22nd and Jacques Paiement finished 37th.

The Huskers probably will receive a bid to the NCAA Central Regional, May 16-18 in Ann Arbor, Mich.