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Sports Opinion



David Wilson

NU regents need to give baseball a fighting chance

The fate of the Nebraska baseball program partially lies in the hands of the NU Board of Regents, who will decide Friday if the turf at Buck Beltzer Field will be replaced this fall.

The Cornhuskers have been playing on the current Monsanto Stadium-8 AstroTurf for 14 seasons.

"It's not a matter of wanting new turf," Nebraska Baseball Coach John Sanders said. "It's a matter of need."

The board will vote Friday on the proposed \$350,000 budget that would replace the infield turf at Buck Beltzer.

New turf may not greatly affect the outcome of the Huskers' 1997 season, but it will definitely be a step in the right direction for the program. And with the new Big 12 Conference, Nebraska is going to need all the help it can get.

Last season, the Huskers finished 27-27-1 — dead last in the Big Eight. And although Sanders had never finished at the bottom conference in his 19-year career at Nebraska, he still managed to turn three players pro.

"I think our program prepares players real well for professional baseball," Sanders said. "The players know what to expect, and nearly all of them experience success."

In just 1 1/2 seasons, former Husker Darin Erstad, selected No. 1 overall in the June 1995 draft, has proven he can play in the major leagues.

Erstad, now with the California Angels, will travel to Kansas City for a three-game series beginning Friday at 7:05.

Reduced-price tickets are available at the NU ticket office, but as of Wednesday, none had been sold through the university. Remember, he used to play football too. Maybe that will sell some tickets.

Another former Husker outfielder Matt Meyer, who spent the summer playing A ball with the Dodgers, had nothing but good things to say about the way Nebraska prepared him for the professional level.

"They helped me really get focused on my goals," Meyer said. "(Sanders) is a good coach. He taught me a lot of things that enabled me to start fast."

But without proper funding, there's only so much the coaching staff can do. Buck Beltzer Field, often used as a football-practice facility, has not seen any renovations since lights were installed in 1989.

So give them the dang turf, and let's send the Nebraska baseball program in a new direction.

Wilson is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.



SCOTT BRUHN/DN

JAIME KRONDAK, a sophomore on the Nebraska volleyball team, is second among NU players with 89 kills this season. Last season, she had just 32 kills as a reserve.

Krondak attacks role

NU's newest star works to improve in all areas

BY TREVOR PARKS
Senior Reporter

Jaime Krondak was having a bad day Tuesday.

As she was stitching a seam in her sewing class, the machine broke. Then, after a rough accounting class, she was glad it was time for volleyball practice.

"All day I've been thinking, 'I can't wait to get to practice,'" Krondak said. "Today, I am so frustrated, I want to hit the ball. And I just want to dig any ball that comes to me. It's a good place to take my aggressions out."

Krondak — whose fashion merchandising major requires expertise in sewing and accounting — has been taking out her pent-up emotion on opposing teams all season. In seven statistical categories, she is first or second on the fourth-ranked Nebraska squad.

At the State Farm NACWAA/Classic last month in Normal, Ill., NU Coach Terry Pettit said Krondak has the potential to be the best server in Nebraska history.

"Once all the seniors left, somebody had to step up. So I figured why not?"

JAIME KRONDAK
NU outside hitter

In six matches this season, she leads the Cornhuskers with 10 service aces and has played in each of 5-1 Nebraska's 23 games. But Krondak, who graduated from Lincoln East, said she never realized she had such a deadly serve.

"I didn't consider myself a good server until coach said it," said Krondak, a 6-foot sophomore. "So now I try to maintain what I do, even though I don't know what I do."

Krondak is second on the team in total attacks (243), kills per game (3.87) and set assists (nine).

Playing primarily as a reserve last year, Krondak had just 32 kills. This year, she had 34 after the season's first two matches, includ-

ing a career-best 21 against Illinois State in the first match of the year.

Though she played in only 47 of 106 games last season, Krondak said she learned a lot from watching Billie Winsett, Allison Weston and Christy Johnson.

Krondak, who replaced Winsett in the NU lineup at outside hitter, said last spring was also important in her development.

"Billie wasn't around," she said, "so that was my chance to step up. I think that is when I matured on the court a bit more."

"Once all the seniors left, somebody had to step up. So I figured why not?"

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Fast start satisfies Huskers

BY TREVOR PARKS
Senior Reporter

A rebuilding season decimated by injuries has quickly turned into a year of optimism for Nebraska Volleyball Coach Terry Pettit.

After only three weekends, the Cornhuskers — who have nine freshmen and sophomores among their 12 healthy players — look like a bunch of veterans.



"I haven't seen anything yet that as a coach would make me put limitations on them," Pettit said.

Pettit said he and the players are aware of the areas in which NU needs improvement.

"But I can't see many situations we

Please see **PETTIT** on 11

Osborne says Stokes' injury not serious

BY DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

Nebraska free safety Eric Stokes was held out of football practice Wednesday after jamming his neck at the end of Tuesday's workout.

Stokes was running a post-practice drill when he ran into defensive tackle Jason Peter, who was walking off the field. Stokes' X-rays Wednesday were negative, Coach Tom Osborne said, and the senior should be back in practice today.

Cornerback Michael Booker missed practice Wednesday with tendinitis in his knees. Fullback Brian Schuster sat out with the flu.

Jay Sims returned to practice after leaving Tuesday's workouts because of dehydration. Sims was taken to Bryan Memorial Hospital Tuesday night, where he was treated and released.

Smith sacks competition in K.C.

BY ANTONE OSEKA
Senior Editor

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Neil Smith changed the way Nebraska looks at defensive linemen.

Smith was one of the first big, mobile defenders who eventually allowed Nebraska to switch from read-and-react 5-2 defense to the attacking 4-3 set.

Smith has carried his success to the National Football League.

Now in his ninth season with the Kansas City Chiefs, Smith is a five-

time pro bowler and considered one of the best defensive linemen in the league.

While at Nebraska, Smith said, he took advantage of every opportunity, earning a starting spot as junior and senior. He was named a first-team All-American in 1987.

Before that, though, Smith said it looked like there was little hope for a professional career.

"I just stuck with it and did the best I could," Smith said. "When my time came, I stepped up and was one of those defensive linemen that made something happen."

Since then, the 6-foot-4, 273-pound Smith has made a career out of making something happen on the playing field. He's also added a new dimension — rushing the passer — to his game.

"I learned how to rush the passer when I was here," Smith said Sunday at Arrowhead Stadium after the Chiefs' 19-3 win over Oakland.

Along with Derrick Thomas, Smith is one-half of the most effective NFL sack duo this decade. He and Thomas, the 1988 Butkus Award winner from Alabama, have recorded 145 1/2 sacks since 1990, 38 more than the NFL's No. 2 tandem.

"Derrick is the pass rusher and I'm the run stopper," said Smith, who was the second pick in the first round of the 1988 draft after serving as an NU captain during his senior year.

Smith said he learned to win on the turf at Memorial Stadium.

"I always remember those college days," Smith said. "They were definitely the turning point of my career. When I look back, it was a good ride."

Huskers
in the
NFL

This is one in a series of stories about former NU players in the NFL.