

Sports

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Sports Opinion



Mitch Sherman Erstad will not forget his roots in Nebraska

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Darin Erstad makes everything look easy.

As a professional baseball player, he is a model of concentration. As a punter on the Nebraska football team, he simply did not feel pressure — not even in front of a hostile Orange Bowl crowd while staring down the 23-year-old demons that constantly teased the Huskers with a national title.

But as a Nebraska baseball player, not everything came easy to Erstad. He never played in a College World Series. His NU teams never made a regional tournament, and 1 1/2 years later, Erstad has not forgotten the pain.

"It's tough to explain," he said Saturday in the California Angels' clubhouse at Kauffman Stadium. "I don't have any answers. We just couldn't put it together."

Erstad has every reason to forget Nebraska. But he hasn't. He's the same Darin. When the Angels play at home in Los Angeles, he drives on only two streets — one to the ballpark and one back home.

He scaled the minor-league mountain in less than one season, forcing the Angels to find him a spot in an outfield filled with three proven players.

Instead of forgetting Nebraska, however, Erstad credits the school — particularly Baseball Coach John Sanders — for his success.

"Look where I'm at," he said. "I can't say enough about both baseball and football (at Nebraska). I grew up a lot in those three years."

Erstad said Sanders is not to blame for the Huskers' woes. In fact, Erstad said, NU's coach of 19 years deserves praise for his hard work and dedication.

Sanders has found little praise in recent years. Last season, Nebraska was last in the Big Eight and needed 13 wins over non-Division-I opponents to finish at .500.

"You guys all want to blame John for not doing his job," Erstad said. "Why not blame me?"

"There's no right answer."

Erstad is right. Nebraska faces virtually a no-win situation. The program struggled for approval to replace 14-year-old turf deemed dangerous as a playing surface.

Next spring, NU enters the Big 12, a conference filled with national powers and a six-team league tournament. The Huskers will begin each season with two strikes, and it would take nine Erstads to handle the Texas heat.

It's too late for Erstad to help Nebraska, but this future major-league star — raised in North Dakota and discovered in Nebraska — will never forget his roots.

Sherman is a senior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.

NU flattens two more foes

Oral Roberts	0
Nebraska	5
Loyola Marymount	1
Nebraska	9

SEVEN HUSKERS score goals in Sunday's 9-1 win.

BY VINCE D'ADAMO
Staff Reporter

Any chance of the Nebraska soccer team suffering a letdown after its leap to 12th in the USA Today rankings was put to rest in resounding fashion this weekend.

On Friday, the Cornhuskers (5-0) shut out Oral Roberts 5-0 and followed that by pummeling Loyola Marymount 9-1 Sunday at the Abbott Sports Complex before a crowd of 411.

The nine goals were the most ever scored in the three-year history of the NU program.

Husker Coach John Walker said the team continued to play with high intensity.

"We've talked since day one how we want to get better every day," Walker said. "So we're never satisfied with what we are. We always look toward what we can be."

Senior co-captain Kim Ratliff said the team does not pay any attention to its high ranking.

"We said rankings don't mean anything," Ratliff said.

On Friday, sophomore Becky Hogan paced Nebraska with two first half goals. Sophomore Kristen Gay added a goal along with freshman Isabelle Morneau and Jenny Benson.



MATT MILLER/DN

JENNY BENSON (right) battles Loyola Marymount's Trisha Abe for the ball Sunday at the Abbott Sports Complex. The Huskers won 9-1.

In front of a rain-soaked crowd on Sunday, seven Nebraska players scored. Morneau and Lindsay Eddleman each scored two goals. Ratliff, Kari Uppinghouse and Jenny Benson also added goals, and Jill Nelson and Cheryl Hanson scored their first goals of the season.

"If you have depth," Walker said, "everybody is rested and there's no drop-off. We're not as tired and have

quality fresh players."

Loyola Marymount entered this weekend with a record of 1-2-1.

"I thought it would be a fairly tough game," he said. "They have to compete at the same level of intensity."

In the second half, after the Huskers widened their lead to 4-0, a strange occurrence took place — Nebraska yielded a goal. Nebraska has outscored its opponents 31-2 this year.

Soon after the Lions' goal, the Huskers scored three goals in less than five minutes to turn out the lights on Loyola Marymount.

Walker said the players were not happy to give up a goal.

"It's almost like self-imposed standards, and they're very mature about it," Walker said. "You could see their reaction. They're angry. That's a good sign as well."

The swing of an Angel

Former NU star fights to fit into crowded outfield

BY DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — After just 1 1/2 seasons of professional baseball, former Cornhusker Darin Erstad is competing for playing time in a talented California Angel outfield.

"He is an exceptional player with exceptional talent," California Interim Manager John McNamara said. "He's very serious about what he's doing and he plays hard. You can't teach those things."

Erstad, the first pick in the June 1995 draft, was recalled to California for the second time this season on Sept. 2, when major league teams expanded their rosters to 40 players.

"He's really quiet — but that's kind of the unwritten rule for rookies," said Angel rightfielder Tim Salmon, the 1993 American League rookie of the year. "You just kind of keep your ears wide open and your mouth shut. Darin's like that. He's mature, and he's ready to play here."

This weekend, Erstad and the Angels visited Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City. He did not play Friday night but started in left field on Saturday and batted leadoff, going 2 for 5 with two runs scored and raising his average to .275.

"He's a good ballplayer for as young as he is," Salmon said. "He's



LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN

DARIN ERSTAD, a former Nebraska star, singles in his second at-bat Saturday at Kauffman Stadium. Erstad started in left field and led off for California.

much further along than other guys his age."

After beginning the season in Class AAA Vancouver, Erstad was called up on June 14 to replace the injured Jim Edmonds, who was placed on the 15-day disabled list with a sprained right thumb.

"I was surprised," Erstad said. "I didn't think it would happen that early. I was shooting for a September call up, but unfortunately, Edmonds got hurt."

"You never want to see that happen to players, but that gave me an opportunity."

Erstad was told of his promotion after batting practice.

"Inside, you're very happy," Erstad said, "but you have to be professional about the situation. There are a lot of guys who would love to get that call. I just don't think it's necessary to try and show somebody up."

After drawing a walk in his first major league plate appearance, Erstad was held hitless in his first 11 at-bats. But with the help of hitting coach Rod Carew, Erstad soon

Please see ERSTAD on 8

Huskers lose to Tar Heels, defeat Duke

Nebraska	15	15	11	13	12
N. Carolina	12	13	15	15	15
Nebraska	15	15	15		
Duke	9	8	7		

From Staff Reports

The fourth-ranked Nebraska volleyball team was beaten Friday night in five games by North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C.

The Cornhuskers won the first two games 15-12 and 15-13 but dropped the last three 11-15, 13-15, 12-15. North Carolina Coach Joe Sagula said the win was the biggest in the history of the Tar Heel program.

Nebraska, without Coach Terry Pettit — who stayed in Lincoln to have surgery after injuring his knee on Thursday — was led by Jaime Krondek and Lisa Reitsma, who had 15 kills each. True freshman Tonia Tauke recorded nine kills and hit a match-high .571.

NU (6-2) rebounded on Saturday, sweeping Duke 15-9, 15-8, 15-7 in Durham, N.C. Reitsma pounded 16 kills and Krondek had 14. Megan Korver, who had 10 kills and hit .563, and Tauke (five kills and .571 hitting percentage) also played well for Nebraska.

"I was pleased to see how we came back from losing," said Assistant Coach Cathy Noth, who filled in for Pettit. "We're a young team, and it's great to see us respond positively."