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MSU gets four years' probation

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan State's football program was placed on probation for four years by the NCAA on Monday, but the penalty does not include bans from bowl games or television appearances.

The NCAA concluded the school violated rules on recruiting, benefits, academic eligibility, ethical conduct and institutional control.

In addition to the four years' probation, which began Dec. 1, 1995, the NCAA also reduced by seven the number of initial scholarships Michigan State can award to football players during the 1997-98 academic year. And it cut by one the number of coaches who can recruit off campus during December 1996 and January 1997.

The sanctions do not include MSU's self-imposed penalties.

Michigan State placed its football program on probation for two years, starting Dec. 1, 1995, fired its athletics student adviser and reassigned others connected to the program during the time the violations occurred.

Despite adversity, Nee still has NU's support

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Byrne said. "I was very pleased with the way they ended their season."

The Cornhuskers won five straight games and captured the National Invitation Tournament last spring, the first postseason tournament crown in the 100-year history of the program.

Heading into the 1996-97 season, Nee may no longer have to worry about the NCAA investigation.

Al Papik, NU's director of athletic compliance and senior associate athletic director, said the Huskers sent three different reports to the NCAA involving the recruitment of Nigerian Osita Nwachukwu.

The first report — answering an NCAA inquiry — was sent March 13; the second — a follow-up to accusations made by the Houston Chronicle — was sent May 16; a third — a request by the NCAA for more information — was sent July 8.

The NCAA has talked with Christopher Pond, the North Carolina businessman, and Nwachukwu, Papik said, but their stories did not collaborate.

Nebraska has not received a final report, but there is no reason to believe the NCAA will penalize NU, Papik said. A response is expected prior to the season, Papik said.

So for now, Nee has his team out of bed for 6:15 a.m. conditioning workouts Monday through Friday.

"That's hard on us," Nee said. "But it's good for discipline, and it's good to start a work ethic."

In past years, he said, the team did not become organized until a few weeks before the start of the season. This year's workouts began Aug. 26.

The team's nucleus includes seniors Mikki Moore and Bernard Garner and sophomores Tyrone Lue, Andy Markowski and Venson Hamilton. All five saw substantial playing time in NU's run to the NIT crown.

Three players, 6-foot guard Alvin Mitchell, 6-foot-6 forward Larry Florence and 6-foot-5 guard Troy Piatkowski, enter the Nebraska lineup

after being academically ineligible last season.

The Huskers have added five walk-on players, including Mike Johnette from Cloud County (Kan.) Junior College and Ryan Pheifer from Mid Plains Community College in North Platte. Juniors Ryan Hinckley and Chad Burbach and freshman Andy Schwindt have also joined the team.

Segado "Cookie" Belcher, a 6-foot-3 guard from Mexico, Mo., is NU's only freshman signee. Nee said Belcher will have a great impact and compete for significant playing time.

"I'm not going to let them be satisfied with them winning a couple of games," Nee said. "We're going to try to have a hell of a team. We are going to be on them to do their best."

But not all is well in the NU program.

Three players — Chester Surles, Chad Ideus and Leif Nelson — have left the team. Rodney Fields, Nebraska's only spring signee, did not meet NCAA academic eligibility requirements. He will spend his first two seasons at Tyler, (Texas) Junior College.

And this summer, Avery Curry, a 6-foot-2 guard who played at Florida State last year, told NU's coaches he was coming to Lincoln. But Curry — who averaged 6.4 points per game at FSU and started the season playing 35 minutes per game before a horrid shooting slump — decided three weeks later to attend Idaho.

Each of the players who left would have played an important role in the future of the program, said Nee, who remains optimistic about NU's inaugural season in the Big 12.

"The one great thing about coaching is each year it's a new chapter," Nee said. "You erase the board and everything starts at step A."

"It all starts with how committed our players are and how much they are willing to sacrifice."

Senior reporter Mike Kluck contributed to this report.

BIG 12 CONFERENCE				
Conference Overall				
Team	W	L	W	L
North Division				
Kansas	0	0	2	0
Colorado	0	0	2	1
Missouri	0	1	0	2
South Division				
Texas Tech	1	1	1	1
Oklahoma	0	0	0	1
Oklahoma St.	0	1	2	1

Inexperience to blame for A&M's start

BY VINCE D'ADAMO
Staff Reporter

The 1996 season is off to a dismal beginning for the Texas A&M football team.

Saturday's 29-22 loss to Southwest Louisiana gives the Aggies their first 0-2 start since 1988.

Texas A&M had finished 10 of the last 11 seasons ranked among the nation's top 25 teams. Five of those years, the Aggies finished in the top 10.

"There's an expectation level that I and that people associated with our program have," Aggie Coach R.C. Slocum said. "We're concerned about it."

The Aggies, who play host to North Texas on Saturday, have found two different ways to lose this year. In their 41-34 loss to Brigham Young in the Pigskin Classic last month, the Cougars scorched Texas A&M's young secondary for 536 yards passing and six touchdowns.

Saturday, the Ragin' Cajuns mustered only 128 yards passing and one touchdown through the air. But the Aggies, who were ranked 13th in The Associated Press preseason poll, turned the ball over eight times, three of which translated into Southwest Louisiana touchdowns.

Slocum said both losses were bitter disappointments.

This A&M squad is one of Slocum's youngest in his eight years in College Station. The secondary consists exclusively of freshmen and sophomore starters.

"We were tremendously disappointed," said Slocum, who never lost an opener in his first seven seasons at A&M. "We're certainly not accustomed to being 0-2. We made too many mistakes combined with the play of Southwest Louisiana contributed to us losing."

Slocum said he remains confident in his players.

"We're definitely soul-searching," he said. "It's important that I stay in the boat right now."

Despite the Aggies' early season woes, they are still respected by the Big 12 coaches.

"I think they just need to work a few things out," Kansas State's Bill Snyder said. "They're a fine football team."

No. 12 Colorado travels to College Station on Sept. 28. CU Coach Rick Neuheisel said it would be a mistake to take the Aggies lightly.

"I know R.C. will have that team ready," Neuheisel said. "You know they have great pride, and they're well coached. I look at those two factors to mean they will right themselves."

The previously fifth-ranked Buffs, who were beaten 20-13 by Michigan Saturday in Boulder, have not lost a road game in Neuheisel's one-year stint at Colorado.

"A win over Colorado will make the Aggie faithful less bitter than how it started," Neuheisel said.

Position switch fits NU center Taylor well

TAYLOR from page 7

It's not size that always counts, and they made that clear to me."

According to Tenopir, who has coached 17 All-Americans in his 23 years at Nebraska, Taylor has what it takes to become the 18th.

"If you really watch a guy and study him on film, Aaron certainly has the qualities of becoming an All-American just because of his on field performance," Tenopir said. "He truly is a guy who does a good job and deserves an All-American role."

Last season, Taylor's first as a starter, the 305-pound junior from Wichita Falls, Texas, led the line with 128 pancakes (knockdown blocks) while playing left guard.

His position change comes after the graduation of two-year starter Aaron Graham, a first-team All-American last

season.

But after just one game at his new spot, Taylor said he doesn't feel any pressure trying to live up to Graham's accomplishments.

"I'm my own person," Taylor said. "He has talents, and I have talents. But if I play the best I can, there's not going to be a drop off."

Senior Chris Dishman moved from left tackle to left guard this fall, and Adam Treu took over Dishman's former spot. Taylor was moved to center to benefit the team, Tenopir said.

"He was the logical guy to move because he played next to Aaron (Graham) all along," Tenopir said, "and the terminology and line calls are familiar to him. It's just a matter of executing the position."

"But we made the change so we could get the five best players on the field."

Noth calls NU shots after Pettit's injury

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about becoming a head coach.

"I've always had it in my mind," she said. "There are a lot of opportunities out there, and I've been asked. I've turned them down, but there may be a time down the road. I'll just have to know in my heart."

Before being named an assistant in 1988, Noth was a member of the U.S. National Team and an alternate for the 1988 Olympic squad. She played under Pettit from 1981 through 1984, helping the Huskers to four straight Big

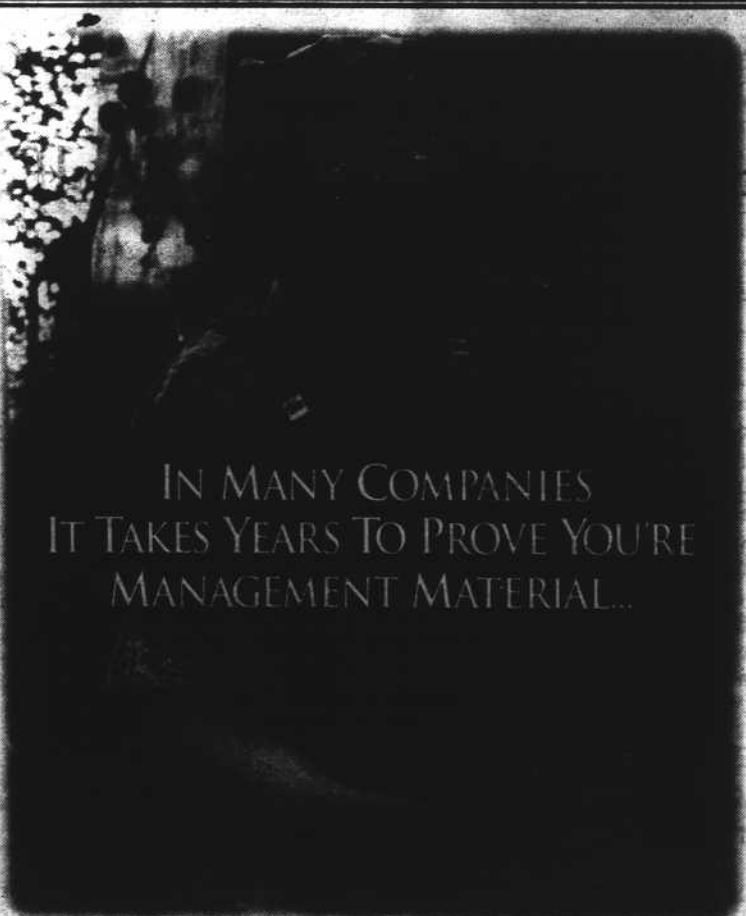
Eight titles.

The 6-2 Huskers gained valuable experience from the weekend, she said.

"Obviously, Friday was not what we wanted," she said, "but a lot of things were out of the ordinary for us. You grow from it and move on."

"After they lost, I think they needed to take it up as a challenge to perform the next night. It's no fun to play the way we did on Friday."

"They have definitely developed more maturity. You have to learn to be a player even without the head coach."



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