

Sports Opinion



Kelly Johnson

Webb City's best connects on, off field

Cornhusker fans love it when their beloved Blackshirts, Nebraska's favorite bad guys, get down and dirty.

That's why we love 'em ... because they're the best bad guys around. The badder they are, the better we like 'em.

Come Saturday, they are the good guys.

Grant Wistrom is considered one of the nation's baddest defensive players.

By Husker standards, he's a fine bad guy. Wistrom's a rabble-rouser. He plays with passion. He's capable of landing a tackle at any time that could change or charge his team's momentum.

Wistrom finds his reasons for playing football both on and off the field. As many quarterbacks know, Wistrom connects with people.

Wistrom impacts people the way he impacts football games.

On the Husker Online web site, Kyle Allen, a seventh-grader from Webb City, Mo., said:

"Grant Wistrom is my best friend, and I love to watch him play for the great Cornhuskers."

In a place such as Webb City, Wistrom's hometown, a player's fans have the opportunity to know him off the field, to rate him as a person as well as a player.

"He's a great athlete," said Jesse Wall, Wistrom's high school position coach, "but also a fine young man. I learned as much from him as he probably learned from me."

Wistrom said helping people and seeing "how much it means to them gives you a good feeling of why you play the game."

"He has a lot of compassion for people," Wall said. "If you asked him to do anything in the world, he'd do it."

Wistrom is expected to be among the top 10 players selected in the 1998 NFL draft. He said he enjoys playing football, but he also plays each week because it's "a way to pay for school."

While he can create a stir that rouses Memorial Stadium, off the field, Wistrom said, he's a "pretty laid-back guy."

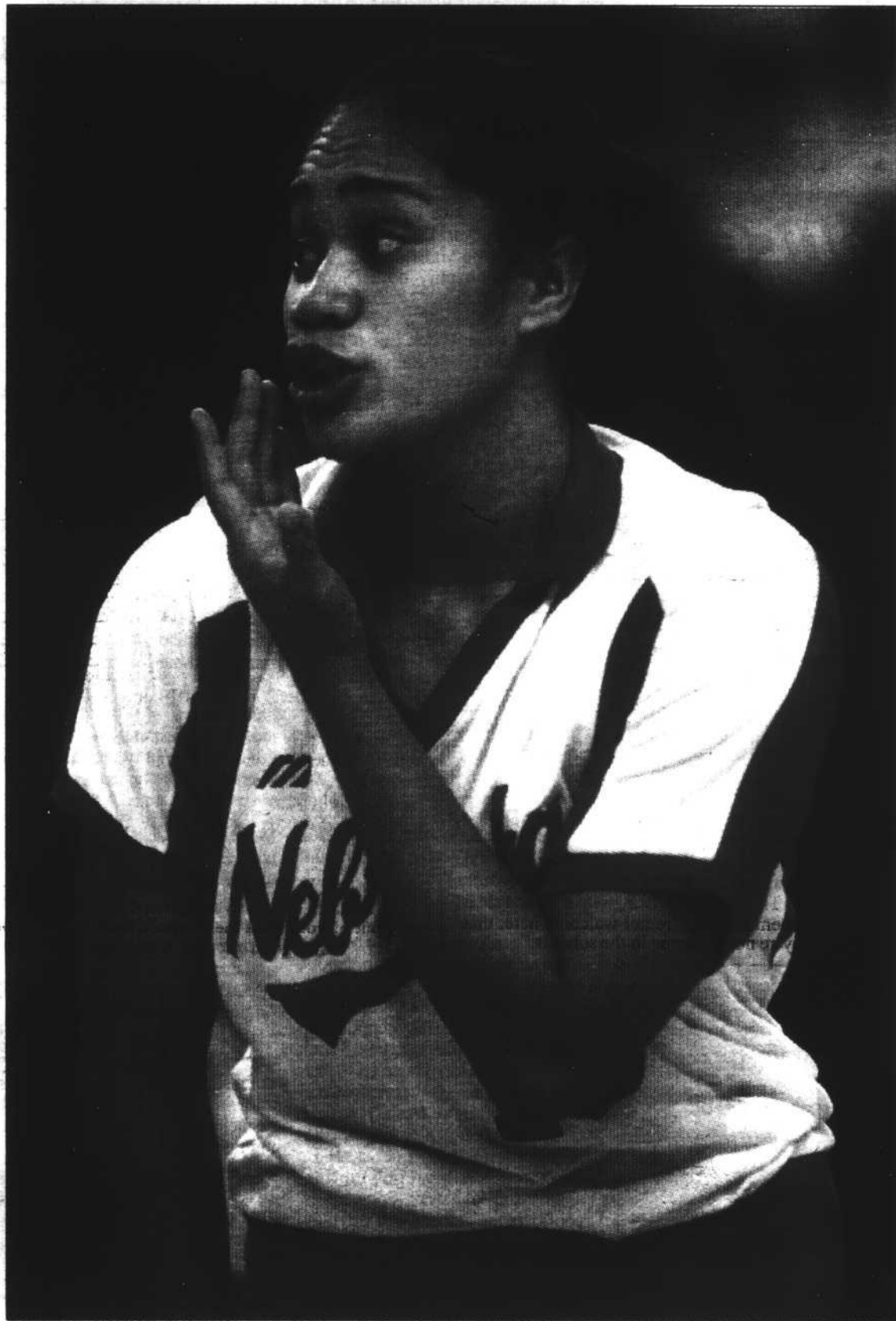
He's a guy who wishes every course was biology. Wistrom posts a 3.4 grade-point average in pre-pharmacy. His eyes sparkle when he talks about microbiology.

"If I could just take biology classes," he said, "I think college would be all right."

After college and possibly the NFL, Wistrom will be remembered as the good ol' bad guy; but he plans to carry on in his good-guy way as a pharmacist.

"I'd like to work as a clinical pharmacist," he said, "work one on one with the patients, rather than just passing out pills."

Johnson is a graduate student in journalism and the Daily Nebraskan wire editor.



MATT MILLER/DN

NEBRASKA'S CAPTAIN, Fiona Nepo, is to credit for much of NU's success this year, Coach Terry Pettit says.

Nepo sets her own pace

NU's setter handles the pressure of following legends.

By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Staff Reporter

Fiona Nepo was well aware of the pressure placed on her shoulders before the Nebraska volleyball team began its season in August.

The 5-foot-9 sophomore from Honolulu knew she had to face the pressure of trying to follow an impressive legacy of Husker setters, which includes Cathy Noth, Trish Delaney, Lori Endicott, Val Novak, Nikki Stricker and, most recently, Christy Johnson, who guided the Cornhusker volleyball team to its first-ever national championship.

But Nepo, the 1996 Cornhusker captain, accepted the challenge anyway.

"Of course I felt the pressure," Nepo said. "But I tried to put it out of my mind because I knew it

wouldn't help me. Thinking about it would have just affected me in a bad way."

Nepo's constant improvement, Coach Terry Pettit said, has dictated the Husker fortunes this season. Nepo agreed that her play is a factor in the team's success.

In 16-2 Nebraska's two biggest conference matches of the season last weekend, she was at her best. Nepo — who averages 13.4 set assists per game — recorded 59 assists and six block assists against then-No. 8 Texas.

Against Texas A&M, previously ranked No. 10, she contributed 55 assists, six kills on .455 hitting and a team-high 18 digs.

"I need to be at my best when I set so that the other players on our team can reach their potential," Nepo said.

Pettit said he has been pleased with Nepo's progress.

"She gets to go out and make mistakes without everybody sec-

Please see NEPO on 10



MATT MILLER/DN

NEPO has become a leader on the court this fall.

Mason wants victory

The KU coach has been routed four times in Lincoln.

By TREVOR PARKS
Senior Reporter

Kansas Football Coach Glen Mason has been on the sidelines of Memorial Stadium four times, and all four times he has left the victim of a rout.

But no matter how unsuccessful Mason has been in Lincoln, he considers the stadium one of the shrines in all of college football.



"I think it is Mason college football at its finest," Mason said during his press conference earlier this week. "There is no doubt that there is a commitment at the University of Nebraska and the state of Nebraska to the sport of football."

In his three visits to Lincoln as the KU coach, Mason left a 51-14 loser in 1989, 49-7 in 1992 and 45-17 in 1994. As an assistant to then-Iowa State Coach Earle Bruce in 1975, Mason watched as NU beat the Cyclones 52-0.

Mason, who is 0-8 against Nebraska, gets a chance to avoid remaining winless when the Jayhawks travel to Lincoln Saturday night. It is the first night game at Memorial Stadium since Kansas lost 49-7 in 1992.

Kansas averages 378.2 yards per game — with 189 yards rushing and 189 yards passing. But a balanced at-

Please see MASON on 10

World Series

Yanks rally from six down to win again

ATLANTA (AP) — The Atlanta Braves took a big gamble Wednesday night, and the New York Yankees turned it into one of the biggest comebacks in World Series history.

Pinch-hitter Wade Boggs drew a bases-loaded walk with two outs in the 10th inning following a questionable intentional walk, and the Yankees beat Atlanta 8-6 to even the Series at two games each.

A three-run homer by Jim Leyritz in the eighth inning tied the game as the Yankees rallied from a 6-0 deficit.

With two outs in the 10th, Tim Lincecum drew a walk from Steve Avery and moved to second on a single by Derek Jeter. When Atlanta Manager Bobby Cox went to the mound and elected to intentionally walk Bernie Williams, rookie Andy Fox was on deck.

Cox clearly knew that Boggs was still left on the bench. Boggs took three straight balls for a walk that put New York ahead to stay.