

Sports Opinion



Mike Kluck Exhibition win gives Huskers needed boost

Naivety is great. For example, there are many times I believe I am a better punter than Nebraska's Jesse Kosch. But then I watch Kosch work out, and reality sets in. I realize my 10-yard punts don't quite match his booming 45-yard kicks. And then factuality sets in, and I realize what would happen if I had to run 60 yards downfield after a kick. I'd drop dead.

Right now, the Nebraska basketball team is enjoying being young and naive. Nobody told the youthful Huskers that Marathon Oil was 5-1 and had defeated Georgia Tech of the Atlantic Coast Conference by 29 points.

Along with that, nobody told freshman Cookie Belcher that he is not supposed to make 3-pointers at the buzzer look as easy as Nebraska sprinter Tom Fish running the 100-meter dash.

But Belcher's bomb with less than one second remaining gave the Huskers an 82-81 victory Thursday night.

"I was hoping I would get the ball," said Belcher, who hit all four of his shots from behind the 3-point arc.

"We need to come together more as a team right now. We just have a few individuals. We haven't played together for very long. If we just come together as a team, I think we will be hard to beat."

Ahh, naivety. Nobody told sophomore Larry Florence that in his first game as a Husker, he's not supposed to make a 3-pointer with 11 seconds remaining to tie the game. And he's not supposed to coolly deliver the ball to Belcher for the game-winner.

Thursday was the first time he's ever hit a shot like that, he said. It was also the first 3-point attempt of his college career.

"(This game) will give us a lot of confidence," Florence said, "knowing that (Tyronn Lue and Mikki Moore) fouled out and our young guys stepped up."

And confidence may be the one counter to naivety. Once a team has confidence, it goes from thinking it can win to knowing it can win. And that's when it can become dangerous.

The young Huskers may not be dangerous yet, but they are certainly developing confidence.

"Yeah, we're ready for Texas," Florence said.

The Huskers open their season on Nov. 23 against the Longhorns.

Hey, who knows, the Huskers may qualify for their seventh-straight postseason tournament — and I may be able to run 60 yards downfield after booming a punt.

Kluck is a journalism graduate student and a Daily Nebraska senior reporter.

Defense runs NU show

Blackshirts hitting stride as final stretch approaches.



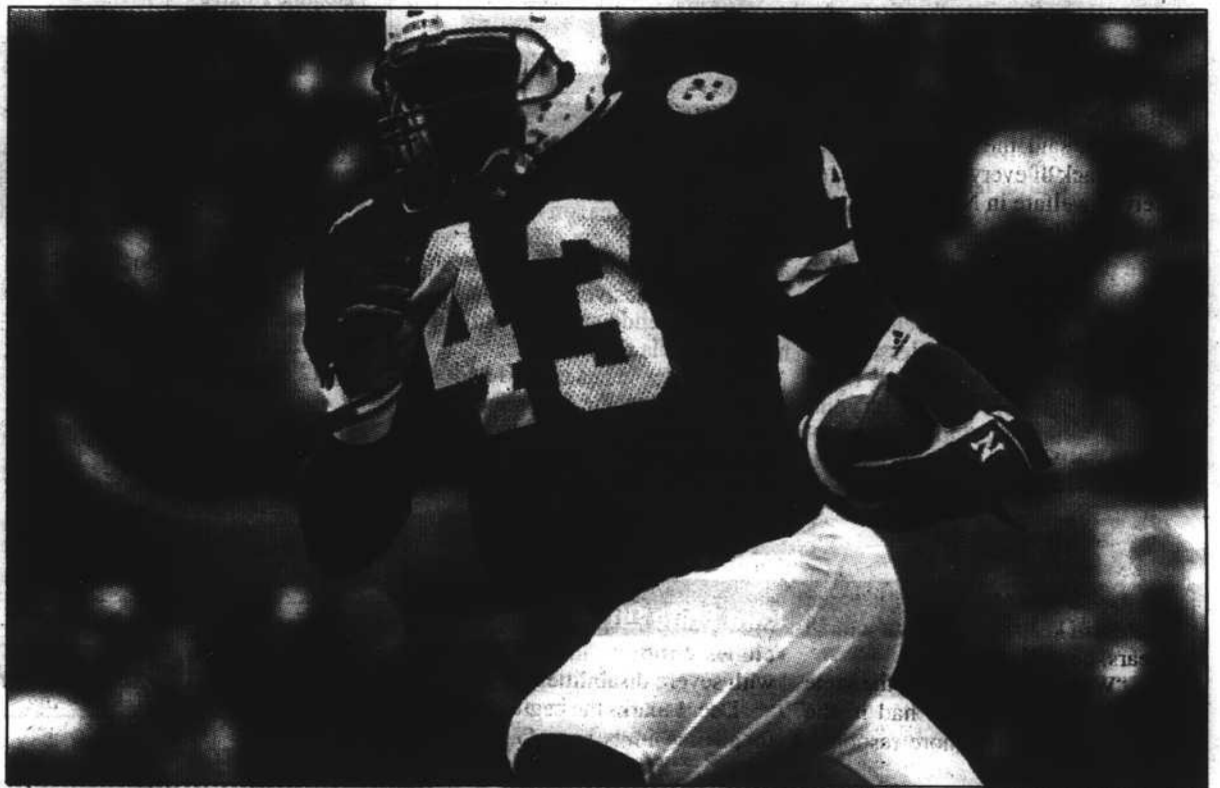
By DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

Nine games into the season, the Nebraska defense is prepared to lead the Cornhuskers through the stretch run of the season.

Fifth-ranked Nebraska (8-1 overall and 6-0 in the Big 12) will travel to Ames Saturday to face Iowa State (2-7 and 1-5) at 1 p.m. at Cyclone Stadium.

Rush end Grant Wistrom said the Husker defense, which has held opponents to 10 points and 227.4 yards per game this season, still has room for improvement.

"I don't think we've reached our full potential yet," Wistrom said. "We've had games where everybody



RYAN SODERLIN/DN

TERRELL FARLEY will lead Nebraska's defense into Ames against Iowa State on Saturday.

has played extremely well. But I don't think we've had a game where after we walk off the field, everybody on our defense can say, 'I played great today.' If we can do that, then as a team we're

going to play out of this world." The Cyclone attack is led by junior Troy Davis, who leads the nation with 1,822 yards rushing, averaging 6.7 yards per attempt.

But the Blackshirts have had little trouble stopping the run this season, allowing opponents just 1.9 yards per

Please see ISU on 8

Last-second 3-pointer ices Husker win



By DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

Inexperience was supposed to be the weakness of the Nebraska basketball team, but it was the Cornhusker youth that propelled NU to an 82-81 exhibition victory over Marathon Oil Thursday night.

With 0.9 seconds remaining, true freshman Cookie Belcher buried a high-arching 3-pointer as time expired to ice the victory before 6,096 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"When I saw Larry (Florence) throw it to me," Belcher said, "I just caught it and shot it. I just tried to focus on the rim."

Florence, who inbounded the ball on the last-second play, said his first option was Bernard Garner, who wasn't open. With Nebraska down 79-76, Florence — playing his first game as a Husker — tied the game, nailing a 3-pointer with 11.1 seconds remaining.

After a timeout, Marathon Oil regained a 81-79 lead when guard Joe McLean grabbed a rebound, turned around and hit a field goal with three seconds on the clock.

Garner's full-court inbound pass was tipped out of bounds, leaving 0.9 seconds on the clock and setting the

Please see HOOPS on 8

Perfect NU rolls into tournament

By VINCE D'ADAMO
Staff Reporter

The fifth-ranked Nebraska soccer team hopes its first-ever trip to the NCAA Tournament is not a short one.

The do-or-die portion of the Cornhusker season begins Sunday at 1 p.m., when NU (21-0) plays host to a first-round NCAA Tournament game against Minnesota (13-6) at the Abbott Sports Complex.

"They're a tough and experienced team," Nebraska Coach John Walker said. "We're excited about being in the tournament, but by no means are we satisfied. We know it's going to be a battle."

"We're not going to adjust anything that we do. We just have to execute better."

The Big 12 champion Huskers are seeded sixth overall and second to No. 3 Portland in the West Region. The Golden Gophers come into Lincoln on their heels, having lost three of their last four games. That has Walker wary.

"Of all the teams traveling to play a first-round game," Walker said, "they're probably the toughest. They weren't sure if they'd get in. They can redeem themselves."

The Gophers, a fourth-year program, are making their second-straight NCAA Tournament appearance. Minnesota lost 1-0 to Big Ten rival Wisconsin last year in the first round.

Jennifer McElmury leads the Gophers with 33 points on 13 goals. Ebin Hussey has added 30 points on 10 goals.

Nebraska striker Isabelle

Soccer

About Sports Council
NCAA Tournament first round

Morneau said the Big 12 Tournament, in which NU beat Texas A&M 1-0 in the championship game last Sunday, should prepare the Huskers for the NCAA Tournament.

"It's going to help us a lot," said Morneau, a freshman first-team All-Big 12 selection. "We're going to have to fight the same way we did against Texas A&M."

Both NU and Minnesota have been stout defensively this fall. The Huskers have outscored their opponents 36-12, never allowing more than two goals in a game. The Gophers have outscored their foes 44-22 while never allowing more than three goals in a game.

"John has stressed the defensive part of our game everyday in practice," NU striker Kristen Gay said. "Without defense, we wouldn't be anywhere."

Freshman midfielder Jenny Benson, also a member of the All-Big 12 first team, hopes playing at home can make a difference.

"It makes it so much more exciting," Benson said, "just knowing we'll have the home-field advantage. We just have to play our game and not let them dictate the game that they play."

The winner of Sunday's game will play either Duke or Virginia on Nov. 24.

NU faces must-win at K-State

Tonight's match carries postseason implications.

By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Staff Reporter

Jim Moore can't help but think back to the 1995 volleyball season.

It was a time when his Kansas State team faced only one ranked conference opponent instead of four. The road trips didn't seem as long and the schedule wasn't quite so grueling.

And as Moore thought about his team's contest with No. 5 Nebraska tonight in Manhattan, Kan., he made one final observation regarding the differences between the old Big Eight and the new Big 12.

"If this were still the Big Eight, we'd be battling Nebraska for the conference lead," Moore said. "This match would be for the conference championship."

However, in the newly expanded Big 12, KSU is not in a position to challenge Nebraska for league supremacy. The Wildcats are a solid fourth place in the conference standings.

But Moore — who has turned around KSU's program in three years

Please see KSU on 8

Volleyball

at Kansas State, today, 7:30 p.m.