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Sanders, Revelle favor later start

NU coaches like the idea of pushing back baseball, softball schedules.

By **DAVID WILSON**
 Staff Reporter

Though the Nebraska baseball team will not play a game until Feb. 18, many warm-weather schools are well into their first week of the regular season.

Because of that, the NCAA is reviewing legislation that would push the start of both the baseball and softball seasons to mid-April and having them run until the end of June. The proposal, introduced by the athletic directors of the Big 10 Conference, could take effect as soon as 1999, NU Baseball Coach John Sanders said.

And a later start, Sanders said, would minimize the warm-weather schools' advantages.

"They're (southern teams) practicing outside—not just playing," Sanders said. "This would give everybody that reasonable chance to do those things."

NU Softball Coach Rhonda Revelle wrote an article in a coaches' magazine that helped push the idea of moving the season back.

Revelle said with 220-plus Divi-

sion I teams — more than half play in a true winter climate — it makes sense to move the season back.

"We want to play national championship caliber teams and we can't have them come here," Revelle said. "So for the first month or first six weeks we are on the road."

That also hurts the softball program's fan base.

Sports like soccer, volleyball and women's basketball are supported well by Nebraska fans. Revelle said if the temperature was above 40 degrees,

more than 600 fans would come to NU games. But if the temperature dropped below 40, she said, "we're lucky to have the parents come out."

If the season is pushed back a month, the College World Series, normally played during the first week of June at Rosenblatt Stadium in Omaha, would likely be played at the end of June.

But a later-then-usual World Series will also give college summer leagues a later start. Sanders said those leagues could work around post-season play.

"Eighty-three percent of college baseball teams don't go to the NCAA regionals," Sanders said. "Those guys will be ready to play ball right after the season ends."

Revelle said the committee needs to look into such factors as when school ends, other academic conflicts,



Sanders Revelle

summer job factors and housing problems that could be encountered.

The Huskers, who have not qualified for a regional since 1986, will start this season on new turf, which was installed last month.

The new turf will drain better and not pose a hazard to the players.

"The turf we were on, we had for 14 years," Sanders said. "It's like carpet at home that wears out. You get down to the pad eventually. It became really dangerous."

The Huskers were able to practice outside this week, but that opportunity is rare in January, Sanders said.

Even if the season is pushed back a month, Sanders said, the northern schools will never have all the advantages of the warm-weather teams.

"Unfortunately, we'd still have some cold weather up here and practice opportunities wouldn't be the same as a warm-weather school," Sanders said.

De Vitis leaves NU soccer team

By **VINCE D'ADAMO**
 Staff Reporter

With signing day on Feb. 5, Nebraska Soccer Coach John Walker's main focus has been toward adding

more pieces to a puzzle that has brought the three-year-old program into the nation's elite.

The last season scoring eight points on two Cornhuskers finished 23-1 in 1996 and were on the doorstep of a Final Four berth before

losing to Portland 1-0 in the quarterfinals last fall. NU lost only one player, Kim Ratliff, to graduation.

While NU returns most of its firepower from last year's squad, the team will be without midfielder/striker Erica De Vitis and possibly midfielder

Jill Nelson.

De Vitis, a 5-foot-4 sophomore from Irvine, Calif., has decided to return closer to home. She has transferred to Southern California.

"We support Erica 100 percent," Walker said. "She was always kind of homesick here. That was the primary reason. It was an amicable parting."

De Vitis made her mark as a creative one-on-one player with an attacking style in her two years at NU.

She started all 24 games for NU last season scoring eight points on two goals and four assists.

Walker said Nelson, a freshman from Newport Beach, Calif., plans to leave, but has not yet come to a final decision. Nelson saw limited action, coming off the bench to play 19 games last year. She had four points on two goals and a pair of assists.

Walker has compiled an accomplished 47-13 record in his three years at Nebraska. Last week, he was picked as the National Senior College

Women's Coach of the Year. But he refuses to take sole credit for the award.

"It's a nice honor," Walker said. "But it reflects more on my players and my assistants — Marty Everding and Megan Bechtold."

Walker was also the Big 12 Conference Coach of the Year and the NSCAA Central Region Coach of the Year.

On Feb. 2, Walker will coach in the NSCAA Select All-Star Classic in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. It is made up of the nation's top seniors, much like college football's Senior Bowl.

Walker will coach players from schools such as Vanderbilt, Texas A&M, San Diego, Wisconsin, Stanford, Portland and NCAA runner-up Notre Dame.

"I'm looking forward to it," he said. "There are quite a few All-Americans. We're not going to put in a major game plan, we're just going to go out and have fun."

Schwartz adjusts to new role

By **SEAN LEWIS**
 Staff Reporter

Brooke Schwartz has gone from a go-to player to a reserve in less than one year, something that has given the

guard on the Nebraska women's basketball team a different role to get used to.

Schwartz, a 5-foot-11-inch freshman from Gering, came to Nebraska as one of the state's top recruits. Her senior year at Gering she averaged 27 points and 10 rebounds per game. Now she is one of the first players to come off the Cornhusker bench as a valuable reserve.

Schwartz is averaging seven points per game and ranks third on the team in 3-point shooting in her first season. Wednesday night against Missouri, she had 14 points and grabbed six rebounds. She was 6 of 8 from the field.

Coach Angela Beck said Schwartz has had to make adjustments this sea-

son and that one day, Schwartz will become a special player for NU.

"I think it's been a tremendous adjustment for her from high school," Beck said. "From being everything that her team needed to coming to college and playing team ball and having to adjust to the fundamentals of the game."

"Another adjustment she's had to make is coming off the bench. I'm sure she'd like to start, but I think she understands that this is another level."

Schwartz said it is a totally different level of play and a different system for her to learn.

"In high school, I could score at will and here there's so many other players that can score," Schwartz said. "Everyone's a scorer, not just one player."

Defense is still an area of concern, Schwartz said. Although she has 34 steals, fifth on the team, she isn't totally happy with her performance.

"If you were a good player, the coach didn't care what you did. Here you could be the bottom player and you still have to be disciplined as much as the top player."

Beck said Schwartz's defense is a little behind the rest of her teammates, but that Schwartz has the natural in-



Schwartz

"I think she's going to be a great leader."

ANGELA BECK
 NU women's basketball coach

stincts and ability to force steals when people don't expect them.

Making the transition from the star to coming off the bench hasn't been difficult, according to Schwartz. Being one of the first players off the bench for the Huskers is just as good.

"It doesn't really matter here what player you are, as long as you contribute," she said. "I feel like I'm contributing, doing what I need to do as a player on the team, and that's just fine to me."

Beck said Schwartz will have a chance to earn a starting spot next season when senior point guard LaToya Doage graduates.

"I think she's going to be a great leader," Beck said. "Right now she's just trying to get and become one of the team and do what she can to make us successful."