

## Sports Opinion



### Mitch Sherman Husker star returns home to run, farm

Jonah Kiptarus loves to farm almost as much as he loves to run.

In his hometown of Kapsabet, Kenya, Kiptarus works in the fields every day, farming corn. He also raises cattle.

And then he runs.

Kiptarus, the runner-up at the NCAA Cross Country Championships last November, hopes someday to qualify for the Kenyan Olympic Team — a feat just a little easier than running from here to Africa without stopping for water.

But for now, he farms because he has no choice.

"There were problems on the farm at home," said Phillip Maiyo, Kiptarus' brother and a member of the Cornhusker track team.

Last month, Kiptarus left Lincoln after tearing through his junior season, the most successful individual campaign in NU history.

"I got a call from Phillip," said Jay Dirksen, who coaches NU's distance runners. "He said he didn't know if Jonah would be able to come back. I didn't exactly know the details."

Kiptarus and Maiyo come from a large family, and according to Maiyo, Kiptarus faced a difficult decision, opting to stay in Kenya and tend to his land.

Had Kiptarus, who turned 24 this month, chosen to return to NU instead of raise cows in Africa, he would have competed for a national title this spring in the 3,000 meters.

"It's a big loss at the national level," Dirksen said.

In fact, Kiptarus may have made the difference between a Husker national title and a top-three finish in the indoor and outdoor seasons.

"You can't say that for sure," Dirksen said, "but at the end of the year, if we're within four points of a national title, he probably would have made the difference."

So Dirksen waits for his star to return in August for another year alongside fellow Kenyan standout Cleophas Boor, who finished one spot behind Kiptarus at the Cross Country Championships. Maiyo said his brother is coming back.

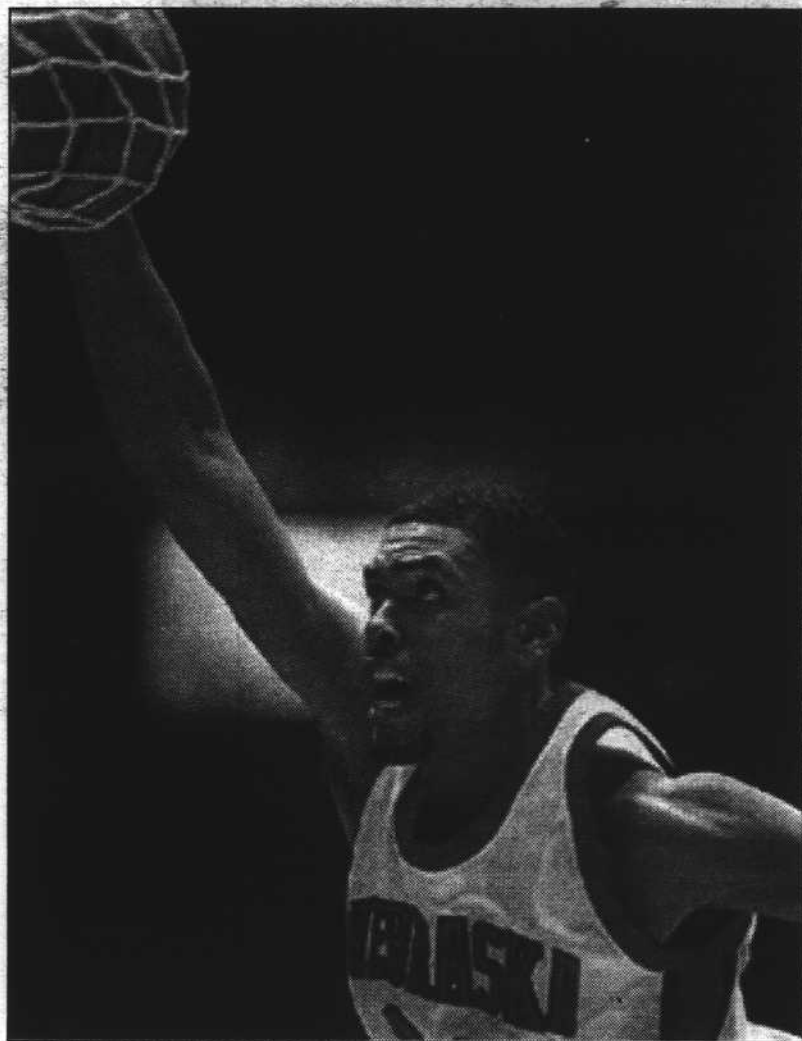
"Who knows?" Dirksen said. "It's hard to tell. I hope he's back. They are tremendous young people, and the thing that impresses me is how hard they work at their studies. Jonah loves farming, and it's important to him to get his degree."

Kiptarus and Boor major in agri-economics, and Maiyo wants to work as a physician's assistant. Back home, Kiptarus still runs daily, staying in shape and hoping to grab the attention of prestigious Kenyan National Team.

But mostly, he farms.

Sherman is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.

# Nee wants to see real NU



MATT MILLER/DN

MIKKI MOORE goes up for a dunk earlier this season. Nebraska plays No. 11 Iowa State tonight.

## Cornhuskers try to end two-game skid against Cyclones.

By DAVID WILSON  
Staff Reporter

It's all about consistency. Even Nebraska Basketball Coach Danny Nee doesn't know which Cornhusker team will show up at 7:05 tonight to face 11th-ranked Iowa State at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"We don't know night in and night out if we can get the consistent play from everyone," Nee said. "We need eight guys to play well and contribute."

After winning three straight conference games at home, the Cornhuskers (11-7 overall and 3-3 in the Big 12 Conference) lost two consecutive games on the road against Missouri and Oklahoma.

But Iowa State Coach Tim Floyd said NU is a strong team on its home floor.

"I think they've played very well at home," Floyd said. "They had a tough week last week, but that's understandable given who they played and where they played the games."



HAMILTON

In its next four games Nebraska will face four ranked opponents including No. 1 Kansas whom the Huskers play Saturday in Lawrence.

"It's probably one of the toughest parts of our schedule," Nee said. "The mentality would be just to defend your home court and win your home games."

The young Husker squad will go up against a Cyclone team that starts five seniors, giving ISU (13-3 and 4-2) an experience advantage.

"(The Cyclones) know each other and they know the system," Nee said. "They have the ability to win close games. All the things that spell for success, I think Iowa State has. It's a stronger, better basketball team."

"When they have that unit together, that's as strong of team as there is in the Midwest."

Guard Dedric Willoughby, who scored 63 points in three games against Nebraska last season, leads the Cyclones averaging 16.8 points per game. But Willoughby still may not be at full strength.

The 6-foot-3, 180-pound senior pulled a hamstring in the second half of the Cyclones 80-67 loss at Kansas, and sat out against Colorado and Kansas State. Although not 100 percent, he played against Texas Tech last Saturday.

"I think Willoughby would be the heart and soul for the offense," Nee said. "We're expecting him to play."

NU point guard Tyrone Lue

Please see ISU on 8

## Welder sees ISU dual as big chance

By SAM MCKEWIN  
Staff Reporter

Nebraska 126-pound wrestler Jeremie Welder isn't intimidated by the nation's fourth-best 126-pounder, Dwight Hinson of Iowa State.



WELDER

clones.

The 11th-ranked Welder's match is important not only for personal reasons but for the team as well. A victory at 126 could give the No. 11 Huskers (10-4) early momentum against seventh-ranked Iowa State (4-5-1).

"We'd love to have that win at 126," NU Coach Tim Neumann. "Jeremie is prepared to win, and he's got a good chance."

Welder (30-5) won his 30th match of this season by pinning Wyoming's Corey Hamrick 1:44 into the match.

"I saw Jeremie and this team take it to another level," Neumann said. "We matured a lot with the National Duals."

Welder is coming off an injury-plagued sophomore season where he

Please see WELDER on 8

## NU swimmers glad to compete at home

By JAY SAUNDERS  
Staff Reporter

With road trips to California and Iowa in the past month, the 15th-ranked men's and 16th-ranked women's Nebraska swimming and diving teams are happy to finally compete at home.



BENTZ

The Cornhuskers have home meets at the Bob Devaney Sports Center pool the next two weekends. Missouri visits Saturday for a 1 p.m. dual, and Kansas comes to Lincoln Feb. 9.

NU Coach Cal Bentz said the meets against the Tigers and Jayhawks will help the Huskers determine who will swim in what races for the Big 12 Championship meet Feb. 27 through March 1 in College Station, Texas.

But for now, Bentz said, it's just good to be home.

"It is nice to be at home, but it is not necessary for us to swim well," Bentz said. "This is a team that travels very well."

The two-meet homestand comes after a long stretch of competing on the road. The Huskers spent a weekend in California over winter break and used the time for intense practices and meets against

Cal-Santa Barbara and Southern California.

Both the NU men and women won the dual against Gauchos but lost to the Trojans.

Bentz said the California trip has paid dividends for his team.

"We had great training in California and swam well," Bentz said. "We were pleased with our performance. The trip was very beneficial."

The Huskers notched some of their top times of the season in their win over UCSB. Freshman Carlos Asserta had a time of 2 minutes 5.06 seconds in the 200-yard breaststroke, and freshman Christine Troy swam a 10:22.33 in the 1,000-yard freestyle.

After the California trip, the Husker men won at Iowa and at Iowa State, and the women won at Iowa State two weekends ago.

Although it has been two weeks since the Huskers last competed, the team has settled back into a routine schedule, Bentz said.

"We have also been training hard on a regular basis," he said. "With the way we have to train, competition disturbs our schedule."

Bentz said NU is excited to compete at home and will have to swim well against MU. The Tiger men enter their meet with the Huskers with a record of 4-5 but have won three-straight duals. The Missouri women have improved to 4-5.

"Missouri has been making steady improvements," Bentz said. "I am sure they will provide good competition. We have to be ready for that."

## Iowa State gives Beck concerns

By MIKE KLUCK  
Senior Reporter

Unable to control its destiny in the national polls, the Nebraska women's basketball team has turned its focus to achieving one goal it can attain — winning the Big 12 Conference title.

The Cornhuskers (15-1 overall and 5-1 in the Big 12) are tied with Kansas for the lead in the North Division.

Texas has the best conference record of any team with a 6-1 mark. The Longhorns are 13-3 overall.

"If we win the Big 12 Championship we will get a lot of national respect, we'll be the best and then everything we want will fall in line," NU Coach Angela Beck said. "I just don't have any feelings about the rankings. Right now we are more worried about what we can control. And what we can control is our record."

In order to stay in the hunt for the conference crown, the Huskers need to win the games they are supposed to starting Thursday night at Iowa State.

The Cyclones (9-7, 2-4) have been a pesky team for foes this season. Iowa State has not lost a game by more than 11 points this year, and its four con-

Please see BECK on 8