

Sports Opinion



Gregg Madsen

Willoughby steps up again when it counts

You could almost feel it coming. Nebraska sophomore Andy Markowski made a short jumper to cut Iowa State's lead to 61-57 with 3:28 left in the second half.

But the Cyclones' Detric Willoughby was still in the game, and you knew what was going to happen.

The 13,623 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center Wednesday night cautiously rose to their feet, everyone hoping Willoughby wouldn't get the ball. They knew what would happen if he did.

For a moment it looked like the Cornhuskers would get a chance to cut the game to one point when Kenny Pratt missed from 3-point range. But the Cyclones got one of their few rebounds of the night and Willoughby made NU pay.

Then it happened. With 2:35 left in the game, the 6-foot-3 senior let a high-arching 3 fly, and after it scorched the bottom of the net, the stunned crowd sat back down. The Cyclones went up by seven. The Huskers never recovered.

Willoughby then sank two free throws with 11 seconds left to seal the No. 11 Cyclones' 77-67 victory.

In two seasons at Iowa State, Willoughby has made a habit of terrorizing the Huskers.

When Iowa State demolished Nebraska 74-59 last year in Ames, he made a career-high seven 3-pointers. He nailed six of eight Wednesday night and finished the game with 21 points.

His performance becomes even more amazing when you consider he played the final 20 minutes with a strained hamstring.

"I was kind of stiff," Willoughby said of his injury. "I just needed to be out there to get the guys pumped up."

Time after time Wednesday night, Willoughby stepped up to lead the Cyclones when they needed a boost.

With 6:08 left in the first half, Iowa State's Kelvin Cato went to the bench with three fouls and Willoughby went into a zone. He nailed four 3-pointers, hushing the crowd and helping the Cyclones to a seven-point halftime advantage.

Willoughby can take control of any game, and against NU he showed why. He played through pain, and once again proved he is deadly when the pressure is on.

This season he has played through a sprained wrist, two different strains on his left hamstring and a twisted ankle.

But Willoughby said his latest ailment wouldn't affect him long. It's a safe bet he'll be hitting game-winning shots and leading the Cyclones for the rest of the season.

You can already feel it coming.

Madsen is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.

A year later, McPherson presses on

By **MIKE KLUCK**
Senior Reporter

A good game tonight against Iowa State will help ease the painful memories of last Jan. 30, a date that Nebraska point guard Sheila McPherson will never forget.

Tonight at 7, McPherson will be on the basketball court as the 15-1 Cornhuskers play the Cy-



McPherson

clones at Hilton Coliseum in Ames.

A year ago, McPherson spent the night of Jan. 30 waiting for a phone call from her twin sister, Shannon, a point guard for the Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis basketball team.

Shannon was returning to Indianapolis with her team following a road game.

Sheila spent that Jan. 30 evening in her dorm room studying and taking notes about the events of the day, including Magic Johnson's return to the NBA. Finally, around 11 she fell asleep.

The call never came.

Instead, she was awakened in her room by NU Coach Angela

Beck four hours later. Beck told her to call home immediately.

McPherson's early morning conversation with her father is still clouded in her mind, but the phrases "van ride home from the game," "lost control," "crash," and "Shannon dead" still are vivid.

"When I was told to call my dad, it was in the back of my mind that it was Shannon, but I was anxiously hoping it wasn't," McPherson said. "It didn't hit me for a long time that she was actually dead."

Shannon and Sheila McPherson grew up in Indianapolis, and not only did they share the bond as twins, but a passion for basketball.

Even though Shannon was re-

cruited by Division I schools out of high school, the two stayed together going to Division II IUPUI where they got to play with each other for one more season.

After their freshman season at IUPUI, Shannon became pregnant and took a year off from school to have her son, Kendall.

Sheila went on to play for Wabash Valley (Ill.) Community College. Wabash played Lincoln (Ill.) Junior College during the season, and McPherson played against NU point guard LaToya Doage. Beck was at the game watching Doage but the 5-foot-5 McPherson

Please see **SHEILA** on 8



RYAN SODERLIN/DN

MIKKI MOORE shoots over Iowa State's Klay Edwards Wednesday.

ISU drills NU; streak reaches 3

By **MITCH SHERMAN**
Senior Reporter

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Nebraska extinguished Kelvin Cato on Wednesday night but found no answers for the rest of the Iowa State basketball team's firepower.

Detric Willoughby drilled his sixth 3-pointer with 2:35 remaining in the game to sink Nebraska's hopes for a comeback after the Cyclones took control with a 15-0 run late in the first half and early in the second half.

The 77-67 loss, NU's third-straight Big 12 Conference defeat, sends Nebraska reeling into Saturday's visit to Lawrence, Kan., where top-ranked, 21-0 Kansas awaits.

"I thought Iowa State played a strong basketball game," Nebraska Coach Danny Nee said after the Huskers' sixth-straight loss to ISU before a season-high crowd of 13,623 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. "When we made our run, Iowa State broke us down."

NU (11-8 overall and 3-4 in the league) used only seven players Wednesday because of Larry Florence's season-long knee problems. Point guard Tyrone Lue scored 15 of his 17 points after halftime, but ISU sizzled from the field, hitting 72 percent of its second-half shots and shooting 57 percent for the game.

The 11th-ranked Cyclones (14-3 and 5-2) also made 9 of 13 3-point shots and sank 18 free throws to NU's two, negating a 40-19 Husker rebounding edge. Nebraska center Mikki Moore scored 13 points, blocked four shots and nearly out-rebounded ISU by himself, tying a career high with 15 boards.

Moore played a large part in Cato's demise. The highly regarded 6-foot-11 Cyclone center scored just nine points in 18 minutes, drawing his third foul

Please see **ISU** on 8

Nebraska Tornadoes make NVA debut

Six former Huskers play first pro volleyball match Saturday.

By **SHANNON HEFFELFINGER**
Staff Reporter

Living up to high expectations is nothing new to Christy Johnson and Kate Crnich.

The former Nebraska volleyball players helped the Cornhuskers dominate opponents on their way to winning the national championship in 1995. That NU team relied not only on its talent, but the support it received from an established program and more than 4,000 fans per home match.

Things will be a little different the next time they take the court.

When Johnson and Crnich's new

team, the Nebraska Tornadoes of the National Volleyball Association — a women's professional volleyball league — makes its debut at 7 Saturday night against the St. Louis Spirits at Omaha Burke High School, the team will not hold such advantages.

Instead, it will be attempting to create them.

Promoting a new franchise, strengthening a new league and securing a dedicated fan base are three things that are almost as important to the Tornadoes as winning their first match.

Despite shouldering high expectations, Johnson is confident that the Tornadoes — which also includes former NU players Allison Weston, Kelly Aspegren, Virginia Stahr and Rachel Errthum — will get the job done.

"I was kind of leery at first about the amount of support we were going to get," Johnson said. "But we've been spreading the word and I think anybody

in this area who's into volleyball knows about it."

The high level of volleyball knowledge and interest in the state brought the struggling NVA to Nebraska. Formerly a five-team league consisting of four teams from California and one from Utah, the NVA is attempting to redefine itself in its fourth season.

The 1997 version of the NVA includes two three-team conferences. In the Midwest Conference, the Tornadoes will face St. Louis — a team led by former Husker and Olympian Lori Endicott — and the Iowa Blizzard. Out west, the Colorado Thunder, Arizona Flames and the Utah Golden Spikers make up the Pacific Conference.

The teams were assembled in December, with each franchise drafting two players before holding tryouts to fill the remaining roster positions. Names on the league's six team roster's include 12 Olympians and NCAA All-

Americans.

NVA teams practice just once a week because of outside time commitments of their players.

"We don't have to train like we used to," Johnson said, "so it's a little more relaxed. But we're going to take it seriously. This is going to be a competitive league."

The NVA season begins Feb. 1 and will conclude with the championship match on May 10. Each team will play five home and away series with each league team for a total of 10 matches.

Tornadoes owner Gary Wyma — who owns interest in every team in the league — and general manager Ron Hoffman are counting on a positive response from area volleyball fans to help jump-start interest in the NVA.

"The support for volleyball around here is tremendous," Hoffman said. "The people in this area have always demonstrated a love for volleyball."