

Sports Opinion



Mike Kluck

Gusso won't let knee injury keep her down

Pop.

As soon as she heard the sound, Nebraska senior guard Amy Gusso knew exactly what had happened.

After all, she grew up around basketball in Spearfish, S.D. Her father coached both the girls' and boys' basketball teams in her hometown so she was in the gym from August to March.

Gusso had seen and heard enough about the pop athletes hear when they rip their anterior cruciate ligament apart that when the noise came from her knee on Jan. 21, it could mean only one thing.

"I knew right then it was done," Gusso said. "Why now" was all I could think of. Not now. Last year, or my first year it would have been easier to accept."

And the tears that flowed weren't from the pain of her throbbing knee but from the realization that her career as a Nebraska basketball player might be over.

Although Gusso averaged less than 10 minutes of court time per game, she received quality minutes.

The 5-foot-6 senior spelled senior point guard LaToya Doage throughout the season while also giving the team an emotional lift whether she was in or out of the game.

Gusso didn't get a lot of minutes, but part of the success of the Huskers' school-record start of 16-1 has to do with her.

Next Thursday Gusso is scheduled to have surgery to repair her knee; then she faces months of rehabilitation.

It's another challenge Gusso is learning to overcome.

After all, she came to Nebraska and earned a scholarship in her second year. Then a stellar freshman recruiting class came in this season and she had to give up her scholarship.

This was to be her last season in uniform. Gusso is scheduled to graduate in December and hopes then to be accepted into medical school.

But her plans changed Jan. 21 as she lay in a heap at NU's practice.

Since she didn't play her freshman year, she can return next year again as a senior.

"My career can't end like this," Gusso said. "The coaches talked to me about coming back, and needing a senior leader next season."

With those words, Gusso is more determined than ever to return next year. She is going to stay in Lincoln this summer undergoing rehab, and a new lease on her senior season sounds nice.

Gusso was a motivational leader this season, and being a team leader again next year isn't out of the realm of possibility.

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

Huskers rout ISU; KU next

DeForge scores 29 as Nebraska wins its seventh straight game.

By **MIKE KLUCK**
Senior Reporter

AMES, Iowa — Nebraska Coach Angela Beck thought the Cornhuskers' game at Iowa State would be similar to two pitbulls fighting for superiority.

Despite the Cyclones 9-8 record they hadn't lost a game by more than 11 points this season. Especially at the Hilton Coliseum where ISU had lost by three to 12th-ranked Kansas and by two to Colorado in double overtime.

Thursday night, the Cyclones were overrun by the Huskers speedy defense as NU ran away with a 76-52 win.

The win, which improved the Huskers to 16-1 overall and 6-1 in the Big 12 Conference, should send a message to the rest of the league, Beck said.

"We're one of the dogs," Beck said. "We're not one of the little ones, we're one of the big ones right now. We've gone from the middle of the pack to being something."

"People say 'can you handle play-

ing in a close game?' Well, we didn't make it close."

The Huskers, who are tied with Kansas for the lead in the North Division wanted to send a message to everyone in the conference by whipping the Cyclones, Nebraska junior Anna DeForge said.

The 5-foot-11 forward led the Huskers with a game-high 29 points including 20 in the second half.

"Coach Beck told us before the game how other Cyclone opponents had struggled here," said DeForge, who made 10 of 14 shots from the field and 9 of 10 from the free-throw line. "That got us more focused on the game and we wanted to come in here and have a good game."

Iowa State appeared to be setting

Nebraska	76
Iowa St.	52

the stage to ruin Nebraska's good game by scoring seven straight points to cut NU's lead to eight with just 3:18 remaining in the game.

Husker forward Tina McClain scored on NU's next two possessions while freshman Brooke Schwartz added two free throws to give the Huskers a 14-point advantage.

Beck said McClain, who led the Huskers with seven rebounds, has struggled at times this season but played well against the Cyclones. McClain also scored a season-high 15 points.

Please see ISU on 11

NU faces tough odds at Kansas

By **MITCH SHERMAN**
Senior Reporter

Listening to Nebraska Basketball Coach Danny Nee talk about the Cornhuskers' opponent Saturday, one may think NU is preparing to battle the Chicago Bulls.



Markowski

Wrong. It's just Kansas.

"This team, when it plays poorly, it plays together," Nee said.

"It's not disjointed, ever. Their system is a constant. Things are going to be there. Every day, they are going to be there. That's what makes a great team, and they have that."

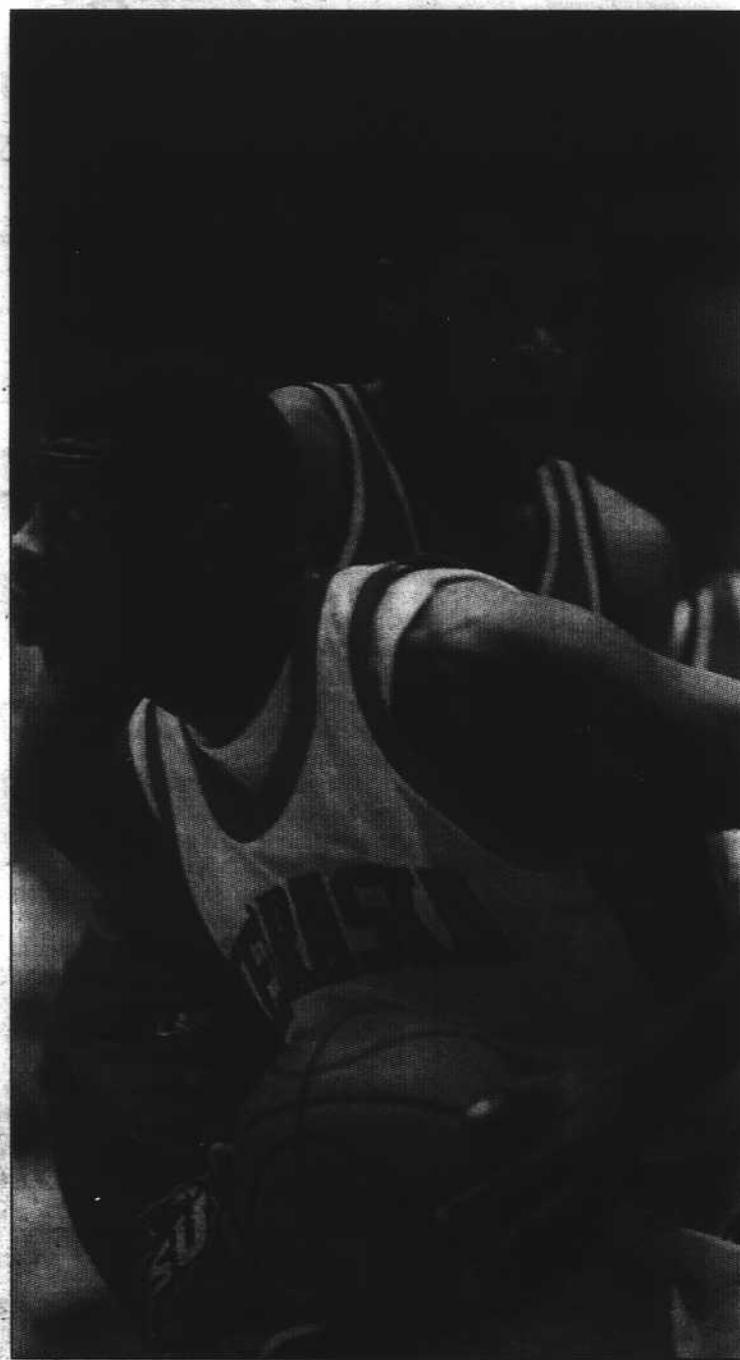
To say the Jayhawks are rolling is a gross understatement. At 21-0 and ranked No. 1 with all 70 first-place votes in The Associated Press Top 25, Kansas cruises into Saturday's 3 p.m. meeting with Nebraska at a sold-out and sure-to-be-loud Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence, Kan.

Nebraska, on the other hand, backs in, losers of its last three league games and on the verge of spinning into a season of disappointment and missed opportunities.

So when the Cornhuskers (11-8 overall and 3-4 in the Big 12 Conference) attempt to slay the giant on Saturday, virtually no one outside of the NU locker room gives them a chance. Behind the doors, the Huskers say they feel quietly confident, drooling at the opportunity to pull off the upset of the year in college basketball.

"We have nothing to lose," forward Andy Markowski said. "We just have to go down there and have fun and execute our game plan."

"They're not unbeatable." Markowski, one of only seven Huskers to play in NU's 77-67 loss to No. 11 Iowa State Wednesday



RYAN SODERLIN/DN

VENSON HAMILTON looks for a shot Wednesday as Iowa State's Kenny Pratt defends. NU will play Saturday at No. 1 Kansas.

night in Lincoln, pointed to the absence of KU center Scot Pollard as the Jayhawks' Achilles' heel.

The 6-foot-11 senior suffered a stress fracture in his left foot on Jan. 22 during Kansas' 29-point win over Texas A&M. Doctors expect Pollard to sit out until March.

But senior B.J. Williams has filled in nicely, helping the Jayhawks win at No. 18 Colorado last Saturday and at No. 22 Texas Tech on Wednesday, improving their league record to 7-0.

Pollard's absence marks the second time this season KU has

lost a senior starter to an injury. All-American point guard Jacque Vaughn missed the first 10 games of the season with a broken wrist. Kansas Coach Roy Williams said his squad works well to overcome the adversity.

"It's not a challenge I would like to have very often," Williams said at his weekly press conference on Monday. "When you think about about it, it gives you a little extra challenge as a coach. But the kids have to be able to step up and do it. It hasn't been boring, let's

Please see KU on 11

NU gymnasts eager to meet OU at home

Saturday's dual against the Sooners excites Kendig, Allen.

By **GREGG MADSEN**
Staff Reporter

There's no place like home. The Nebraska women's and men's gymnastics teams hope that saying proves true Saturday night when they play host to their first meet of the season.

The seventh-ranked women's team and the No. 4 men's team face the Oklahoma men and women at 7 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Nebraska women's Coach Dan Kendig said being at home is a welcome change since the Cornhuskers' began the season with four meets on the road.

"It will be great to be at home," Kendig said. "I'm happy that we just don't have to travel this weekend."

Despite being on the road, the women's team has tumbled, swung and vaulted to its best start ever. Monday night's 195.45-point effort at Southeast Missouri State was the Huskers' second-highest team score in school history.

Added depth and strong leadership from seniors Kim DeHaan and Shelly Bartlett has been the key to the early success, Kendig said.

Bartlett has won the all-around the past three meets, including a 39.36 effort at Southeast Missouri State.

"Shelly's done a bang-up job for us on all four events," Kendig said.

Kendig said the Sooners, third in the Big Eight last season and 2-1 this season, will be a good match for Nebraska.

"I think they're an improved team," Kendig said. "But we are, too."

The Nebraska men's team has beaten the No. 3 Sooners once this season. NU outscored OU 226.65 to 222.4 at the Rocky Mountain Open in Colorado Springs on Jan. 17.

Coach Francis Allen said he expects a stronger showing from Oklahoma Saturday.

Please see SOONERS on 11