

Sports Opinion



Mitch Sherman

NU coach can answer critics with victories

Danny Nee can't seem to do anything right these days. When he loses, he gets bashed. And now when he wins, he gets bashed.

Tuesday, Nebraska's basketball coach lashed back at the news media, using his weekly press conference as a forum to express displeasure with a pair of columns published Monday in the Omaha and Lincoln newspapers.

"I was shocked," Nee said. "I thought the game and the players was the most important thing, but obviously it's not."

This week's newspaper reports, much like nearly all recent criticism directed at Nee, attacked NU's lack of consistency in the wake of its 79-67 victory over Texas on Sunday.

Nee took it a little too personally. The coach overreacted, balking at the thought of being called a slickster and compared to a used car salesman.

"I don't think that's appropriate," Nee said. "I shouldn't call you names, and you shouldn't put labels on me, because most of the people in this room don't know Danny Nee. You judge me on two hours a day, but that's the mentality of the press."

"I've looked this way for 51 years. I've talked this way for 51 years. One thing that has been consistent about me is my blunt frankness and honesty."

In a sense, Nee is right. The Cornhusker coach speaks his mind, and at times, his honesty becomes a little hard to swallow, not only for the press, but for Husker fans and players. Nee's record creates unrealistic expectations, particularly this season with a team featuring seven freshmen and sophomores.

Considering that NU has played one of the nation's most difficult schedules (nonconference losses to Minnesota and Cincinnati carry a heavy hammer in the RPI), a 14-11 mark in mid-February is respectable.

Nee has his thin, young team headed in the right direction, and nearly all this criticism smells mysteriously like it originated during last season's one-day practice boycott. Nee rectified that situation, but still he hasn't won an NCAA Tournament game in 11 years at Nebraska.

"I love coaching at Nebraska," Nee said. "But these last two years have been very hard. I guess that comes with the territory."

Nee understands his job and he certainly knows the territory. He's been through this before, but can he produce?

With two weeks to play in the regular season, NU needs a win over Iowa State or Kansas.

Without it, the Huskers are headed back to the NIT—much too familiar territory.

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

Brandt awaits Husker big men

By GREGG MADSEN
Staff Reporter

The 750-plus miles separating Hastings from Waco, Texas, didn't stop Doug Brandt from leaving Nebraska after high school to accept a basketball scholarship at Baylor.



Brandt

Five years later, Brandt doesn't regret his choice.

"I've been really pleased with my decision to come to Baylor," he said. "I wouldn't change it for anything."

Tonight at 6:07, Brandt gets the chance to face his home-state school for the first time when the Bears play host to the Cornhuskers at the Ferrell Center in Waco.

The 6-foot-10, 210-pound Brandt, who averages 11.3 points and 6.6 re-

bounds per game, said he is excited about the chance to play NU.

"It'll be fun because there will be a lot of folks back home that see this and get a chance to see how I play now," Brandt said.

Nebraska Coach Danny Nee—who goes for his 200th win as the Huskers; coach against the Bears—said the Huskers tried to recruit Brandt five years ago.

"We were really hoping that he would sign late, but he signed (with Baylor) early," Nee said. "We were really disappointed."

Brandt said the Bears (16-9 overall and 4-8 in the Big 12 Conference) will have to play solid defense to counter the athleticism of the Huskers (14-11 and 5-7).

"We'll have to keep them off the boards and stop their transition game," Brandt said. "They're a very athletic team."

Both teams are closely matched at each position, Brandt said, but playing the Huskers at the Ferrell Center

Please see **BRANDT** on 8

Bears, NU enter game on skids

By MIKE KLUCK
Senior Reporter

Over the past two weeks the Baylor women's basketball team and Nebraska have fallen on hard times owning a combined 2-9 record.

The Cornhuskers (17-5 overall and 7-5 in the Big 12 Conference) have lost four of their last five games following a 71-70 overtime loss to Texas on Monday night, while the Bears have lost four straight games, including five of their last six, and have dropped their last five road contests.

But tonight at 7, when the two skidding teams meet at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, the outcome of the game might determine where each team goes with only four conference games remaining.

A win for the Huskers helps to solidify their chances for a possible NCAA Tournament berth. A loss, NU Coach Angela Beck said, will put the Huskers' "backs against the wall," in an attempt to make the tournament for the second consecutive season.

"This is a very important game for us as far as having an opportunity to go to the NCAA's," Beck said. "We are going to have to take care of our homestand. This is a situation where I expect us to come out and play very hard and very well."

"I really think we have a lot at stake. It's not like we've got 10 more games left in the season—this is the crunch."

After tonight's game, NU plays host to Iowa State for the Huskers' final home game of the year before finishing the season with road contests at Kansas and Oklahoma State.

The Bears (11-11 and 4-8) are playing for pride. Baylor needs to win three of its final four games to post its first winning record since finishing 15-12

Please see **BEARS** on 8

Huskers outlast Antelopes

By DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

The University of Nebraska at Kearney baseball team didn't go down without a fight Tuesday.

Nebraska used 10 pitchers and two big offensive innings to spoil the Antelopes' attack, defeating UNK 6-1 and 8-6 in a doubleheader at Buck Beltzer Field.

The Cornhuskers, who improved to 3-0, will face their first Division I competition in the Rawlings Spring Training Tournament, which begins Thursday.

The Antelopes (0-2) took a 1-0 lead into the bottom of the eighth inning of game one, but Nebraska exploded for six runs highlighted by a three-run double by third baseman Ken Harvey.

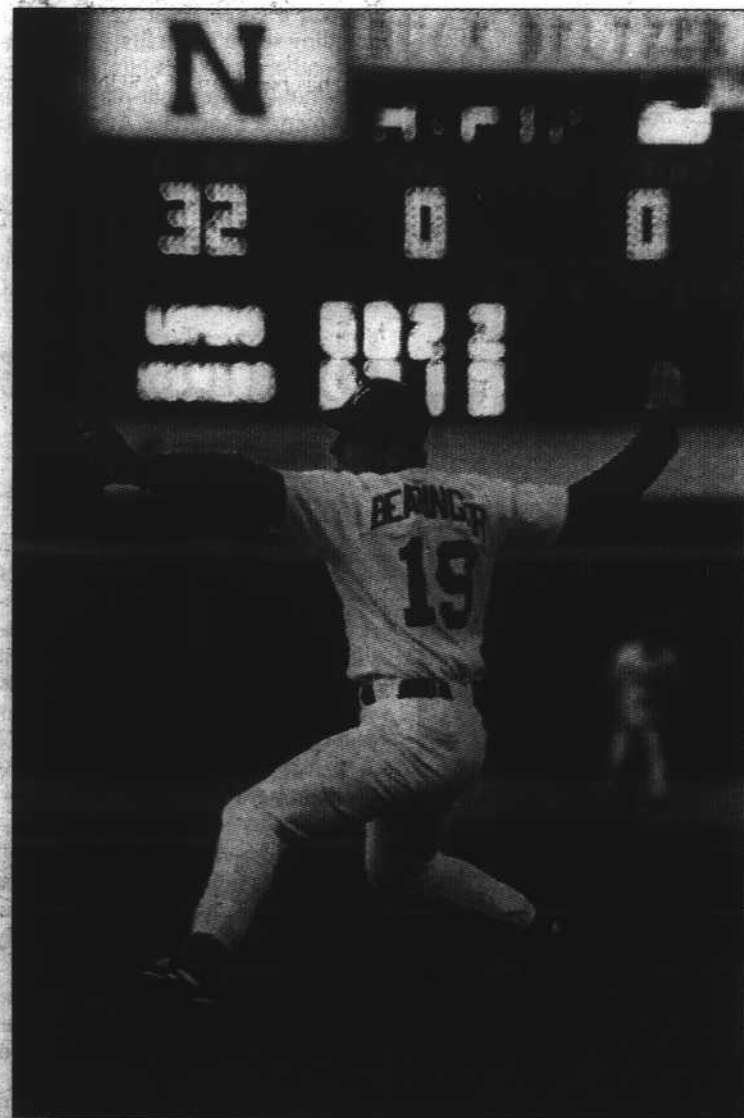
UNK starting pitcher Neal Arnold held the Huskers to just four hits while striking out seven.

"He threw well and commanded well," NU Coach John Sanders said. "He's going to win some games. He could pitch in Division I right now."

Pat Driscoll threw 5 1/3 innings of no-hit ball for the Huskers and struck out six before being replaced by Steve Fish. Fish (1-0) threw 2 2/3 innings to earn the win.

In the nightcap, Nebraska broke a 4-4 tie in the fifth inning by scoring four runs. Catcher Michael Knust—playing in his first collegiate game—doubled home two and scored on a balk to put the Huskers ahead 8-4.

Senior Jonas Armenta started game two for NU, throwing just three innings, and striking out five. Sophomore Jarod Bearinger threw



DANIEL LUEDERT/DN

JAROD BEARINGER throws a pitch during the second game of NU's doubleheader with Nebraska-Kearney Tuesday.

two scoreless innings and was credited with his first win of the season.

Sanders said he is pleased with NU's overall effort, but would like the Husker hitters to cut down on their 18 strikeouts.

"We just need to do a better job of avoiding the strikeout by putting the ball in play with two strikes," Sanders said.

The 10 Nebraska pitchers combined to fan 23 Antelopes down on strikes.

"This game we tried to get as

UNK	1	6
Nebraska	6	8

many as we could on the mound and get them feeling good about themselves," Sanders said.

Three pitchers—Brandon Banuelos, Derek Adair and Kerriek Jackson—made their Husker debuts allowing one hit.

"I think there were some cases where there may be some nerves," Sanders said. "The fact that we were able to experiment was huge."

Erstad moves to first base

Former Husker starts spring training today for Anaheim.

By DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

Darin Erstad has found his place at first base for the Anaheim Angels.

The former Cornhusker, who fought for playing time in a crowded Angel outfield last season, will be the team's starting first baseman when he reports to Mesa, Ariz., today for spring training.

"I've been told by the manager (Terry Collins) and the G.M. (Bill Bavasi) that it's basically my job to lose," Erstad said. "If I do what I'm supposed to do and show them that I can be solid on defense, they are going to give me every opportunity to start."

The position opened when Anaheim traded first baseman J.T. Snow to San Francisco. Snow started at first base the past four seasons for the Angels.

Erstad, who hit .284 in two separate call-ups last year, said he would like to earn his keep this season.

"Everybody says it's easy to get there," Erstad said, "but the toughest thing is to stay. That's my main concern right now."

"I'm just a guy who goes out and plays the game. I keep my mouth shut and try not to get in too many faces. I definitely haven't established myself by any means."

The opportunity came for Erstad

Please see **ERSTAD** on 8