

Sports

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Sports Opinion



Vince D'Adamo

Long jump duo becomes more familiar this year

Be careful who you compete against because you never know when you will be teammates someday. Such is the case for Nebraska long jumpers Joe Laster and Chris Wright.

Both battled as opponents throughout their junior college careers. This season as teammates, Laster and Wright have been instrumental for the Nebraska men as successful long jumpers.

"Joe and I go all the way back," Wright said. "He's a streaky jumper. But he can jump any distance."

Mentioning one of these long jumpers without the other would be like leaving sauce off of the spaghetti.

If their recent performances are any indication, they seem primed for great results at this weekend's NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championship in Indianapolis.

The reason, the two seem to be peaking at just the right time.

Laster, a senior from Barton County (Texas) Community College, came to Nebraska last year. He made an instant impact by finishing first at the Frank Sevigne Husker Invitational and the Big Eight Championships. But he ended the year on a bad note with a 13th-place finish at the NCAA meet.

A sore back slowed Laster for much of this season. Entering last weekend's Cyclone Last Chance meet, he was on the outside looking in to qualify for the national meet. But on his only jump of the meet, Laster burst that bubble with a leap of 26 feet 3 3/4 inches — the longest collegiate mark of the season.

Wright — in his first season competing for NU — transferred from Kansas City (Kan.) Community College by way of the Bahamas.

His claim to fame comes from the 1994 Texas Relays. There, Wright out-dueled legendary long jumper Carl Lewis.

Wright had the right stuff on that afternoon and will be looking to pull off a performance of Chuck Yeager-type proportions at the NCAA's.

Wright began the season as a prospect to qualify for the national meet. He has not disappointed.

Like Laster, the 6-foot-7 Wright carries much needed momentum into this weekend. Wright had his season-best leap of 25-7/4 at the Big 12 meet two weeks ago.

Stay tuned. It's Wright's chance to continue what has already been a remarkable season. For Laster it's a chance to make amends for a disappointing finish last year.

And in Indianapolis, no matter where the two finish they will find a familiar situation awaiting them — competing against each other.

D'Adamo is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.

Longhorns corral Huskers

NU must wait until Sunday to find out its postseason fate.

Nebraska	68
Texas	74

By **MIKE KLUCK**
Senior Reporter

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Texas two stepped the Nebraska women's basketball team out of the Big 12 Conference Tournament Wednesday night.

But UT Coach Jody Conratt wasn't singing "God Blessed Texas," following 12th-ranked Texas' (21-6 overall and 13-4 in the Big 12) 74-68 win over the Cornhuskers to advance to the semifinals of the tournament against Colorado.

Instead, Conratt said the Longhorns should be singing the popular Travis Tritt hit "Here's Your Sign" — a song about having stupid people wear signs to let others know they are not so bright.

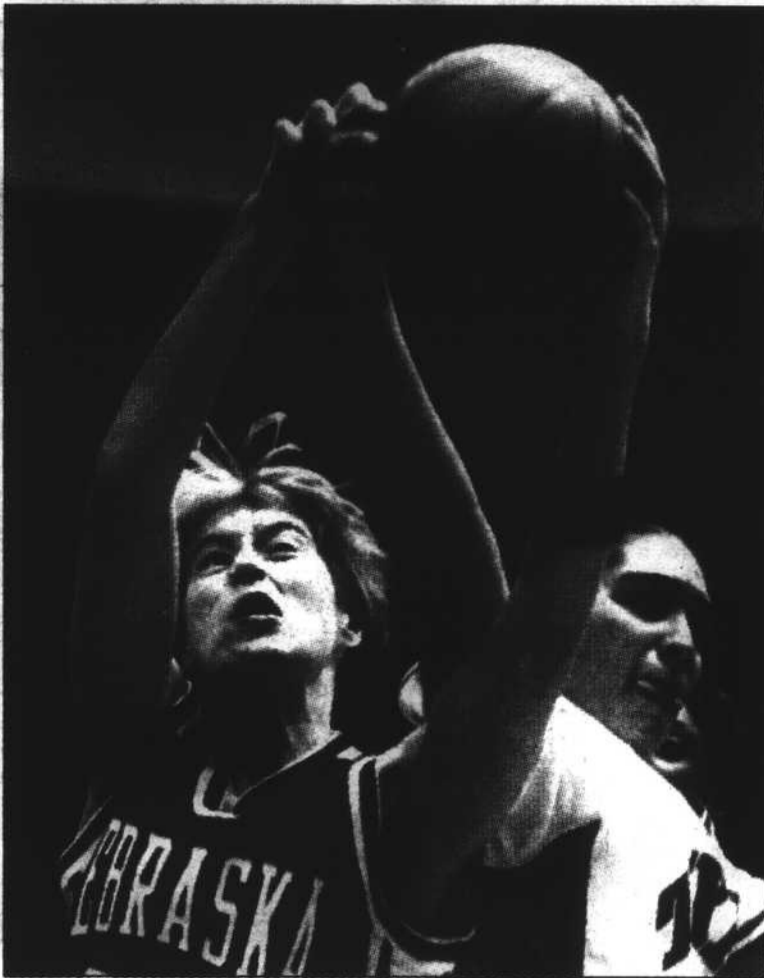
Conratt said the Longhorns should have been wearing big signs after not playing smart in the first seven minutes and the last five minutes of the game. During those two periods, NU outscored UT 24-8.

"At the end of this ballgame I ran out of signs, and I didn't have enough of them because we made some really foolish plays," Conratt said. "Obviously, we had a bad beginning and a bad ending, but the middle part was not too bad."

It was during the middle stretch of the game that Nebraska Coach Angela Beck said her team needed the signs, especially at the end of the first half and beginning of the second half.

Texas closed out the first half with a 5-0 run to take a 35-32 lead into the locker room. Longhorn senior Danielle Viglione closed out the first half scoring with a 3-pointer.

Aided by a Nebraska defensive mistake in the second half, the Longhorns came out and went on a



CHARLIE ROGERS battles Texas' Angola Jackson for a rebound in Nebraska's 74-68 loss to the Longhorns.

MATT MILLER/DN

9-0 run, hitting three 3-pointers.

Texas's Kim Lummus, who had no Husker defender on her because of NU's miscommunication, hit two 3s, and Viglione added another.

"We had a little mishap to start the second half," Beck said. "The two wide-open 3s she hit really wasn't brain surgery. Basically we didn't do a very good job. We really came out sleepwalking in the second half, and they took advantage of it."

Beck said those 3-pointers helped fire up the Horns, who hit a season-high nine shots from behind the 3-point arc.

To Nebraska's credit the 44-32 lead Texas built in the first 2 1/2 minutes of the second half was the

Longhorns' longest one of the game.

Three different times in the second half the Huskers cut the lead to five, only to see Texas respond with a run of its own.

"It gets a little frustrating to get so close, but you can't make a stop you need or the rebound or the steal you need," NU forward Annā DeForge said. "You really have to credit this team. We pulled together a lot. This is not something new for us."

NU cut the lead to five with 9:05 remaining, but Texas answered with a 10-4 run to take a 66-55 lead with less than seven minutes left.

Please see **TEXAS** on 10

Tigers, NU ready to clash

Minus Mitchell and Florence, Huskers open Big 12 Tournament.

By **MITCH SHERMAN**
Senior Reporter

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Ryan Phifer donned his new red jersey Wednesday afternoon at Kemper

Arena, setting picks for Tyronn Lue and rifling passes into the paint as Nebraska prepared for today's first-round meeting with Missouri in the inaugural Big 12 Conference basketball tournament.



Phifer

Yes, it's come down to this for the Cornhuskers.

Phifer, a 6-foot-3 walk-on guard, fills the third seat on the NU bench when the Huskers meet the Tigers at 6:08 p.m. Phifer's uniform change — from white to red — signals a dire situation for Nebraska, which must play with seven scholarship athletes tonight in the first of what the Huskers hope is four games in four days.

For unspecified disciplinary reasons, Coach Danny Nee suspended sophomores Larry Florence and Alvin Mitchell after Sunday's 85-65 regular-season-ending loss to Kansas. Mitchell and Florence did not travel to Kansas City with the Huskers Wednesday. If NU wins today, they will join the team Friday.

If needed, Nee said, Phifer will handle his role well.

"He's smart," Nee said of the junior from North Platte who has seen the court all of two minutes this season. "I think he can fill in very respectfully. I've seen him go off in practice."

Please see **TIGERS** on 10

On Guard

Coaches know backcourt players' importance

By **VINCE D'ADAMO**
Staff Reporter

Leader. Passer. Creator. Penetrator. Scorer.

When it comes to being a point guard or shooting guard, all five of those aspects help mold someone into being the best.

In the Big 12 Conference — and throughout college basketball for that matter — there is a plethora of backcourt players who possess those skills and much more.

For a team to win the Big 12 Men's Basketball Tournament, its point guard must keep the team in control or a chance at winning the league crown and a berth in the NCAA Tournament will go out the

window faster than a Jacque Vaughn-led fast break.

The tournament starts today at noon with a Baylor-Oklahoma State matchup in the first round at Kemper Arena in Kansas City, Mo., and all eyes will be on the person whose job description reads as long as a 3-pointer by Iowa State guard Detric Willoughby.

According to the coaches of the Big 12, there are six guards in the conference that fit that description. Those are: Nebraska's Tyronn Lue (who averages 18.9 points and 4.4 assists per game), Kansas' Vaughn (10.2 and 6.0), Colorado's Chauncey Billups (19.5 and 4.6), ISU's Willoughby (18.1 and 2.1), Texas' Reggie Freeman (21.9 and 4.1) and Texas Tech's Cory Carr

(23.3 and 3.1).

Looking at the Big 12's top 10 leading scorers, seven of them are guards. The Longhorns' Freeman ranks second in the league in scoring, seventh in rebounding and fifth in assists. Billups is fourth scoring wise, and third in assists. His leadership has turned a 9-18 CU team last year into a 21-8 team this season.

"I'm not into the old standard guard that just brings the ball up the court and just gets everyone involved," Baylor Coach Harry Miller said.

Miller said such players who use their ability to make the opponent look bad make an offense dif-

Please see **GUARDS** on 10



MATT MILLER/DN

JACQUE VAUGHN has been KU's creator for four years.