

## Sports Opinion



**Trevor Parks**

### Ten years later Husker program in same place

The date was March 21, 1987. The place was the Bob Devaney Sports Center. I remember it was an afternoon game between Nebraska and Washington in the quarterfinals of the National Invitation Tournament. A win sent the Cornhuskers to the NIT Final Four in New York. NU earned that trip to the Big Apple with an 81-76 win over the Huskies behind the hustle and grit of Husker folk heroes Brian Carr, Derrick Vick, Henry T. Buchanan and Bernard Day.

They went to New York finishing third in Coach Danny Nee's first year — his first NIT at Nebraska.

Now nearly 10 years later, Nee leads the Huskers into another NIT — his fifth at NU. And the opponent is again Washington. The players are different and the Nebraska program has grown some under Nee in 10 years.

But the fact is it can't grow anymore.

Yes four NCAA appearances — which seem like eons ago, actually it was three years — and more than 200 wins at the school are impressive. Five 20-win seasons — two have come at the expense of numerous NIT victories — are something to shout about.

Coaching at a school where the football team casts a large shadow over the Devaney Center is hard.

And things have gotten harder for Nee the past two years, especially when March rolls around.

Last season, the Huskers had a nine-game losing skid in February, lost 10 of their last 11 and people were calling for Nee's head.

This season the situation is very similar. NU owned a 16-12 entering a game with top-ranked Kansas. A win puts the Huskers in position to finally make the Big Dance.

But after losing that game by 20 points, things have fallen apart. An all-too-common theme for Nebraska basketball.

In 1987, things were good.

Nee replaced the slow style of Moe Iba with what he called in March of 1986 "A Big East style." Fans were anxious for change and liked Nee's hard non-Midwest style.

There were struggles as NU went 40-52 in the three seasons following the third-place finish in New York. No one really complained.

Then came a run of four consecutive appearances in the NCAA Tournament. Everyone was happy.

Now three years of the NIT and three years of troubled times have changed everything.

It seems like NU and Nee are back at square one, and if another win over Washington comes tonight you just have to wonder if the program has really improved at all.

Parks is a graduate student and the Daily Nebraskan Sports Editor.

# Huskies ready for NU

Although it's only the NIT, Washington is excited to play.

By GREGG MADSEN  
Staff Reporter

The mission is clear. Even though the Nebraska basketball team will not appear in the NCAA Tournament for the third consecutive season, the Cornhuskers begin their quest for a second straight National Invitation Tournament championship. The Huskers (16-14) will start their defense of the NIT title tonight at 7 against Washington (17-10) at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. The winner will face the winner of tonight's

Fresno State-Nevada game. Both NU and UW enter the tournament having lost two of their last three regular-season games, but both are determined to make the most of their circumstances.

Washington center Todd MacCulloch, a 7-foot, 280-pound sophomore, said the Huskies are excited about playing in the NIT.

"We're not playing just for fun, even though we love playing ball," MacCulloch said. "There's a championship to be won here."



Bender

The Huskies 17-10 record is their best since a 20-win effort in 1987. Ironically, that is the same year the Huskers' ended UW's season with a 81-76 loss in the third-round of the NIT at the Devaney Center.

Washington finished sixth in the Pacific 10 Conference with a 10-8 mark — its first winning league record since 1987.

The Huskies finished the regular season with a 94-84 win over NCAA Tournament-qualifier Southern California.

Nebraska had dreams of making the NCAA tournament after its 79-67 upset of Iowa State on Feb. 16 in Ames. But losses to Baylor, Kansas and Missouri ruined the Huskers'

Please see HUSKIES on 12

## Men's Basketball Starters

Today, 7:05 p.m.  
Devaney Center  
National Invitation Tournament

Nebraska 16-14				
Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
F 4	Venson Hamilton	6-9	240	So.
F 5	Larry Florence	6-5	225	So.
C 22	Mike Moore	6-11	220	Sr.
G 30	Cookie Belcher	6-3	200	Fr.
G 10	Tyrone Lee	6-0	170	So.

Washington 17-10				
Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
F 3	Mark Sanford	6-9	210	Jr.
C 50	Todd MacCulloch	7-0	280	Sr.
G 5	Jan Wooten	5-10	155	Jr.
G 13	Donald Watts	6-4	200	So.
G 25	Jamie Booker	6-4	190	Sr.



MATT MILLER/DN

AFTER FOUR YEARS, Kim DeHaan has led the Cornhusker women's gymnastics program to new heights. Sunday afternoon against Penn State, DeHaan will perform at home for the final time.

## DeHaan still motivates NU

By GREGG MADSEN  
Staff Reporter

Kim DeHaan is spending her senior year on the Nebraska women's gymnastics team in a position she never expected to be.

DeHaan spent her first three years as a Cornhusker making a name for herself in the all-around. Her tenacity on the vault, grace on the balance beam, pizzazz on the floor exercise and perfection on the uneven bars made her a constant scoring threat.

In her final season, however, a chronic back injury has limited DeHaan to competing in just two events — the bars and the floor exercise.

But DeHaan, a native of Sioux Falls, S.D., hasn't let her intensity or leadership role for the team diminish. And even though she is in unfamiliar territory without the all-around, NU Coach Dan Kendig said DeHaan's contribution to the Husker gymnastics program will never be forgotten.

"She is still contributing tremendously to this team right now," Kendig said. "We can almost count on a 9.9 (out of a possible 10) from her in both events every time she steps on the floor. And it won't be long until it's a 9.9 and better."

In 10 meets this season, DeHaan has finished first in the uneven bars and the floor exercise

twice, despite competing in pain.

For DeHaan just competing this season has been short of a miracle.

"This season has been hard on me because of my back," DeHaan said. "It's really frustrating, but about a week before the season I didn't know if I was going to compete at all. Now that I am doing two events at least I can compete out there."

Kendig said DeHaan's injury was caused by a forward shift in one of her lower back vertebrae.

The spring-loaded landing pad of the floor exercise and the more gentle dismounts off the uneven bars pose much less danger, he said, so DeHaan's repertoire has been limited to those two events.

"I know she's hurting," Kendig said. "But I tell you what, just for her to keep going and to keep working the way she does, I'm really proud of the effort she gives and the way she competes. That's just part of being a veteran."

DeHaan was the Big Eight newcomer of the year in 1994 and she set the school floor exercise record as a sophomore in 1995 with a 9.95 at the Big Eight Championships.

She has scored a 9.925 on the uneven bars five times in her career. The school record of 9.95 is one Assistant Coach Rob Drass said DeHaan is capable of breaking.

"She is unbelievably clean on

"She is still contributing tremendously to this team right now."

DAN KENDIG  
NU gymnastics coach

bars," Drass said. "I don't think Kim misses at all. I don't remember her falling very often — only a handful of times in her four years."

DeHaan's greatest accomplishment hasn't come in the gym, it's been in the classroom, where she owns a 4.0 grade-point average in biological sciences.

Saturday against Penn State, DeHaan will compete at the Bob Devaney Sports Center for the final time in her career.

Kendig said it will mark the end of an era of Nebraska gymnastics when DeHaan walks out of the gym for a last time.

"The consistency that she has brought," Kendig said, "the that she has and the consistency that she has in the classroom, as well as the gym has been amazing."

## Bergman makes big splash

By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Staff Reporter

Danny Bergman opened the eyes of the Nebraska diving coaches last year when he won the one- and three-meter springboard competitions in his first collegiate meet.

But after failing to qualify for the NCAA Championships by one place in the final contest of the season, Bergman wanted to close his.

"I was pretty disappointed," Bergman said. "I was really hoping to make it, and it was hard to miss it by one spot."

Narrowly missing the NCAA's in an otherwise successful freshman campaign has driven Bergman this season, giving him the motivation to improve this year.

"Coming into this year," Bergman said, "subconsciously, I was expecting to do well and to come out on top in a lot of the meets. Fortunately, that happened."

And fortunately for the Nebraska men's swimming and diving team, it has happened more than once. Bergman, a native of Alpine, Utah, has been nearly unbeatable this year.

The sophomore from Alpine, Utah, has posted victories in 16 of 18 six-dive competitions in dual meets while sweeping both the one- and three-meter springboard events seven times.

Bergman said he is not surprised by the success he achieved in only his second season.

"You always hear that saying, hope for the best and expect the worst," Bergman said. "Well, I was always hoping for the best and I never expected the worst."

After finishing third behind Big Eight Co-Divers-of-the-Year Kris Hoffman of Kansas and Travis Niemeyer of Nebraska on both the one- and three-meter boards at the Big Eight meet last season, Bergman finished second in both events at the inaugural Big 12 Conference meet. In doing so, he established career-best scores of 514.4 and 554.15.

Please see DIVE on 12