

Sports Opinion



Mitch Sherman

Barnes finds a new home as NU coach

Minus the snow, ice and wind, Nelson Barnes thinks Nebraska might be the perfect place.

The new Cornhusker assistant football coach, in charge of the NU rush ends and Sam linebackers, officially began his on-field duties this week. Barnes immediately liked what he saw.

"Up until this day," Barnes said Monday, "I've been a little nervous about it. I had no idea how they structure their practices, and unless you come out here and see it, it's really kind of hard to picture."

The former Texas and Kansas State assistant, who fills the position vacated by Tony Samuel, grows more accustomed to Lincoln each day. He's been here for nearly two months, but still, the weather bothers him.

"I've adjusted," he said, "and I've stopped complaining about it."

Well, not exactly.

"You think this is a nice day?"

Barnes yelled Monday afternoon, the last staff member to leave the turf as a strong wind whipped through Memorial Stadium. "You hang out with me. I'll show you a nice day."

Lincoln's not exactly Austin, Texas, where the 38-year-old Barnes spent the last three seasons coaching the Longhorn defensive line. But that's not necessarily a bad thing.

"These guys pay attention when you're not talking to them," Barnes said of his Nebraska pupils. "That's scary. You know you're going to be teaching guys who want to learn."

Coaching at NU excites Barnes, who beat the Huskers in his regular-season finale at Texas last December. The native of Alvin, Texas, grew up a fan of UT football and cheered the Longhorns to national titles in 1969 and 1970, when Texas shared the crown with Nebraska.

Other than what he saw on film and in person during his one-year stint at Kansas State in 1993, Barnes knew little about the Nebraska program when he visited Lincoln for his interview in the midst of Nebraska's harsh winter.

"If you've grown up with this," he said, "you know it. I didn't know the history of it. You come here and you walk through the hallways, and you see the All-Americans and you see the tradition and the records. Needless to say, you are impressed."

Grant Wistrom, Barnes' new star student, impresses the coach, too. But from Wistrom on down, Barnes said, the Huskers own the tools of which coaches dream.

"You don't have to prod them," Barnes said. "You simply tell them. They're not interested in any B.S., and you can see it in their eyes. There's a difference. You can see it."

Now if only Barnes could get over that weather thing.

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



SANDRA NOETZEL has become one of the Huskers' top tennis players in her first season after coming to Nebraska from Germany.

MATT MILLER/DN

Noetzel swings into success

Nebraska's No. 1 singles player has had to adjust

By JAY SAUNDERS
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska women's tennis team is off to one of its best starts in school history, and a large part of that success has been because of No. 1 singles player Sandra Noetzel.

Noetzel, a freshman from Hannover, Germany, has compiled a combined 21-8 record this year (including doubles and singles matches) for the Cornhuskers.

But her quality on-court play is not her main attribute, NU Coach Scott Jacobson said.

"She is a humble leader, which is an extremely admirable quality," Jacobson said. "She is probably the finest talent that has played at our institution."

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SCOTT JACOBSON
NU women's tennis coach

man native, Jennifer Thoste, to post a 9-4 record at No. 1 doubles.

Noetzel is backing up Jacobson's words on the court this season.

An experienced freshman at age 20, she has played some of the top singles players in the country, coming out on top in 12 of her 16 matches. Noetzel has also teamed up with another Ger-

man native, Jennifer Thoste, to post a 9-4 record at No. 1 doubles.

"She has not only helped us in singles, but her doubles skills are tremendous," Jacobson said. "In doubles, you need someone who will serve and volley and take chances. She is the complete package."

Noetzel's success has not been easy

this season. In her native Germany, she plays on mostly clay courts, very different from the hard courts in the United States. The clay surface creates a much slower-paced match than the faster hard-court surfaces.

"I had difficulties adjusting to the fast play," Noetzel said. "It took a couple of months to get used to."

The hard courts have allowed Noetzel to apply pressure on opponents with her serve and with her record; it seems the pressure is working for Noetzel. However, she is hoping it can get even better.

"It is good for me to play on the hard courts so I can play hard and apply pressure," Noetzel said. "My serve

Please see NOETZEL on 10

Rutgers job interests Nee

Husker coach expects to know his fate by Thursday.

By MITCH SHERMAN
Senior Reporter

Danny Nee confirmed on Tuesday that he is interested in the head-coaching position at Rutgers University, and the 11-year Nebraska basketball coach recommended an NU replacement if he is hired by the New Brunswick, N.J., school.

Nee said he met with Rutgers President Francis Lawrence and Scarlet Knights' Athletic Director Fred Gruninger Monday in St. Louis for 1½ hours to discuss the coaching position.

"I love Nebraska," Nee said Tuesday on Sports Nightly, the radio call-in show on which he is paid

to appear each week. "There's absolutely no question, and I love coaching at Nebraska."

"But when you're 51 years old, you know there's only so many pages left, and you have to start thinking about where you're going to be in five years."

Gruninger originally approached the Cornhusker coach Friday in Indianapolis, Nee said, and the two met again on Saturday to discuss a possible contract. Nee flew home to Lincoln Sunday and back to St. Louis on Monday.

"If they met all that I wanted contractually," Nee said, "I would be very serious about it. The opportunity to go home ... would be attractive."

Sources close to the situation say Nee and Rider Coach Kevin Bannon appear to be the finalists for the spot, which opened when Rutgers fired nine-year coach Bob

Wenzel March 6.

If Nee leaves, he said he would strongly recommend that Athletic Director Bill Byrne hire NU Associate Head Coach Jimmy Williams, a five-year member of Nee's staff.

"If the whole staff leaves Nebraska," Nee said, "I think it would push Nebraska back three, five, six years. I want to see Nebraska do well, and if I'm not the coach, I want to see Jimmy Williams be the coach for at least one year."

Nee said he expects to know his fate by Thursday.

While in contact with the Rutgers officials, Nee said he has implemented a "24-hour-hold" period on recruiting.

Nebraska has currently received at least one verbal commitment, from Houston guard Rodney Williams, and coaches are pursuing several other players to fill five scholarships.

NU game canceled

From Staff Reports

The Nebraska baseball team's contest with Division II Wayne State has been canceled.

The game, scheduled to start at 5 p.m. at Buck Beltzer Field, was canceled because of the Cornhuskers' long trip back from the Bank of America Easter Classic in Honolulu.

NU (16-18 overall and 2-7 in the Big 12 Conference), which went 3-4 on its trip to Hawaii, will resume play on Friday, beginning a five-game homestand with a league contest against Kansas State.

NU will play the Wildcats twice over the weekend before playing host to Oral Roberts for two games next week.

Currently, there are no plans to reschedule the game with Wayne State. The Huskers beat the Wildcats 6-5 in the season opener for both schools.