

Huskers fall short with two losses

By JAY SAUNDERS
Staff Reporter

In a weekend in which the Nebraska men's tennis team was hoping to accomplish their goals, they didn't.

NU may have lost a chance at achieving its season-long goal of making the Region Five Tournament after dropping home matches to Oklahoma and Oklahoma State this weekend.

Coach Kerry McDermott said he was disappointed in the Cornhuskers' effort against OU, a match they lost 5-2 at the Cather-Pound tennis courts Sunday.

Dinko Verzi continued his hot streak at No. 2 singles winning the first game from Chris Barkula 6-4. Barkula retired leading Verzi 3-2 in the second set. Markus Bergerheim was the only other winner for NU with a 6-4, 2-6, 6-2 win over Charlie Roberson at No. 3 singles.

"We didn't compete well against OU," McDermott said. "I don't mind losing if we give 100 percent, but I was really disappointed in the effort."

The result was the same against Oklahoma State, but McDermott was much happier with the effort given in a 6-1 loss to the Cowboys. Bergerheim completed his Oklahoma sweep by beating Brad Chiller in straight sets, 6-4, 6-1. NU hung tough at the top two singles spots but came up short.

Magnus Grahn took the first set

from Pavel Kudrnac 7-6 in a tiebreaker. Kudrnac came back to win the next two sets 6-2, 6-3 and improve his record to 14-1. Verzi lost his first home singles match in two years, dropping a 2-6, 7-6 1-6 decision to Martin Dvorack.

"We competed much better against OSU," McDermott said. "We got beat hands down by a better team."

It was the all-important doubles point that may have killed Nebraska this weekend. The return of Andrew Wiese from an ankle injury wasn't enough to help the Huskers in doubles.

"It would have helped us build momentum," McDermott said. "We knew Oklahoma State was very strong in doubles and had our work cut out for us."

The two losses this weekend dropped the Huskers' record to 9-14 and knocked NU out of contention for a spot in the regional tournament, which had been a season-long goal. The Huskers losses locked NU into the sixth spot in the region. A team needs to be ranked in the top five to advance to the tournament.

McDermott said NU is not happy about not being in the regional tournament, but they can't get down on themselves before this week's Big 12 Tournament.

"When you have a goal and don't reach it, you are always a little disappointed," McDermott said. "That is the past, and now we have to look forward."

Backups busy this spring

Perino and London are still battling for a second-string spot.

By PETER MARHOEFER
Staff Reporter

The opportunity to fill the spot backing up NU quarterback Scott Frost heated up in Saturday's scrimmage at Memorial Stadium.

Jeff Perino, a 6-foot-2, 190-pound sophomore, and Frankie London, a 6-foot-2, 175-pound sophomore, who are both battling for the right to back up Frost in the fall, used the third scrimmage of the spring to try to shake up the depth chart.

"There's definitely competition between us," Perino said. "It does a lot more good than it does bad."

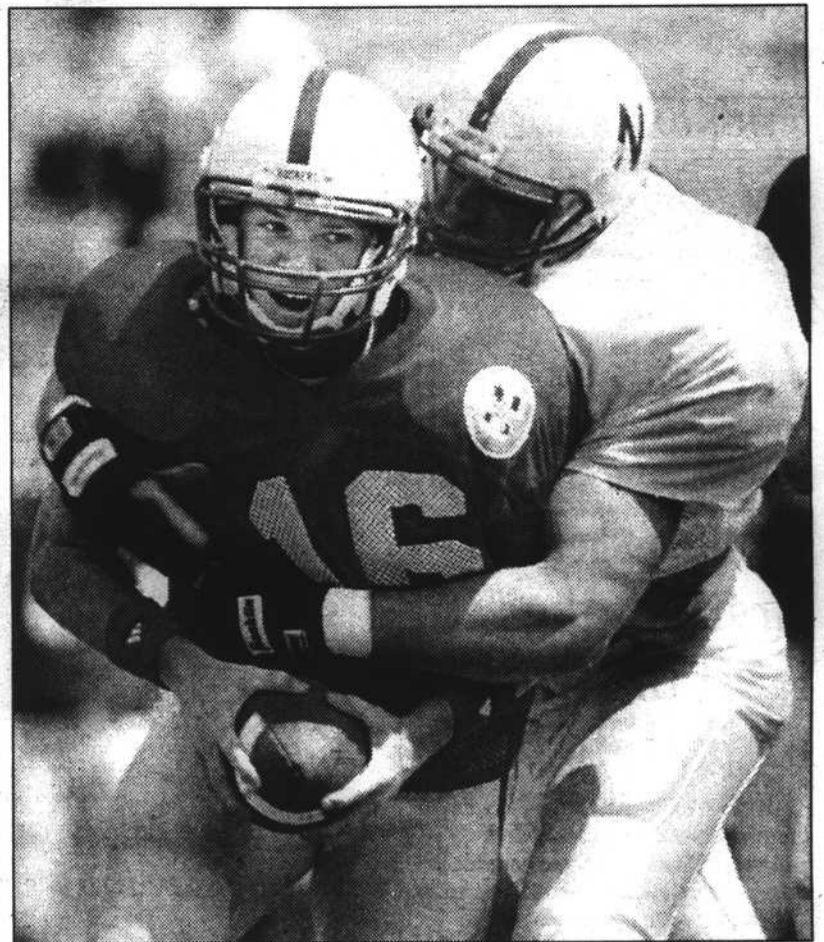
Both quarterbacks continued to make their cases Saturday in a scrimmage once again dominated by the Husker defense.

Perino completed 5 of 8 passes for 130 yards — including a 62-yard gem to Jeff Lake. London threw for 69 yards completing 3 of 11 attempts, and rushed for another 15 on nine carries. The two were forced into an interception by the NU defense.

Monte Christo was 0 for 1 before suffering a concussion after a hit near the sideline early in the scrimmage. Christo's availability for Saturday's Red-White game will be known this week. Overall, five players suffered injuries in the scrimmage.

"It was a pretty hard-hitting scrimmage," NU Coach Tom Osborne said. "You have to remember we have 14 offensive players out with injuries."

The injuries include six offensive linemen — Eric Anderson (shoulder), Jeff Clausen (knee), Adam Julch (knee), Josh Heske (foot), Brandt Wade (knee) and James Sherman (knee). The Husker team got more bad news when linebacker Casey Macken tore his anterior cruciate ligament during a non-contact drill in warmups.



MATT MILLER/DN
JEFF PERINO gets wrapped up from behind in NU's scrimmage on Saturday. Perino completed 5 passes for 130 yards.

"When you've had as many injuries as we have had," NU rush end Grant Wistrom said, "the offense isn't going to look real sharp."

The Husker offense finished the scrimmage with 406 total yards — 142 rushing and 264 passing. The offense scored two touchdowns, one on a Perino 4-yard run and a 1-yard sneak by Jay Runty. Kris Brown added a field goal to finish out the NU scoring.

"I am pleased with the defense. They are playing well," Osborne said. "I think we'll have a great offense as soon as everyone is back."

London — who is listed as second on the depth chart — should lead the

No. 2 offense in the annual Red-White game at 1 p.m. at Memorial Stadium.

"Spring ball pretty much determines what will happen in the fall," Perino said. "In the fall, coach really doesn't want to adjust who will be the backup."

In other scrimmage statistics, Jay Sims led all rushers with 26 yards on five carries and Ahman Green added 24 yards on seven rushes.

Sean Applegate led all receivers with 75 yards on three catches. Applegate was followed by Jeff Lake with 73 yards and Vershan Jackson with 61 yards both with two receptions.

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Erstad learns new position

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willing to help me learn the new position. If you can't learn from him, you can't learn from anybody."

With Murray's career winding down, Erstad said, the veteran had no desire to play the field, opting instead to fill the designated hitter role.

Erstad's bat has also drawn Murray's attention.

"He uses the whole field, which is the sign of a good hitter," Murray said. "He has some strength to hit the ball out of the ballpark and he is strong enough to knock balls over the infielders' heads when he is fighting off a pitcher's good pitch. I think he's going to be pretty good."

In two separate stints with the Angels last summer, Erstad compiled a .284 batting average in 208 at-bats. Despite struggling for playing time in a crowded outfield, Erstad said the experience he gained has helped him this season.

"You've seen most of the ballparks and you know how the pre-game routine works," Erstad said. "The faces are familiar and you don't have to go through new experiences every time. You know what to expect and that's good for your mental preparation."

Though he is more powerful and lacks the speed of a typical leadoff hitter, Erstad has spent the majority of this season as the Angels first-hole hitter. But batting-order shuffles don't concern Erstad.

"When I ask him to leadoff, I'm not asking him to be Bip Roberts or Lenny Dykstra or Brett Butler," Collins said. "I'm asking him to be Darin Erstad, period. He's a good hitter and he can run, therefore, I want him to leadoff."

"It's just a gradual learning process to make yourself a complete ballplayer."

DARIN ERSTAD
Anaheim first baseman

Erstad's attitude and approach to the game also contributed to Collins' decision to make him his everyday leadoff hitter.

"He's got a different makeup than a lot of young players," Collins said. "Nothing intimidates the guy. He's an outstanding athlete, and that helps him a lot."

"He's going to be an outstanding player. Don't be surprised one day if you look up and he's hitting 25 homers. He's got that kind of ability — and he also may steal 35 bases."

But Erstad takes things one day at a time.

Of the 59 hits he collected last season, only nine went for extra bases. This season, Erstad has improved his slugging percentage. Six of his 21 hits this season have gone for extra bases and he leads the Angels with five stolen bases.

"I don't compare stats and I don't care about that stuff. I go out and play and if we're winning, great. That's what it's all about."

"It's just a gradual learning process to make yourself a complete ballplayer. That's what I'm trying to do every single day."

Huskers swept by Oklahoma

From Staff Reports

The 20th-ranked Oklahoma baseball team swept Nebraska in a three-game series this weekend in Norman.

The Sooners, who won their 10th consecutive game, improved to 30-10 while NU fell to 22-25 after completing the sweep with an 11-9 win on Sunday.

The Cornhuskers have lost six straight times in conference play, and have not won on the road this season.

After losing 11-3 on Friday, the Huskers led OU 3-0 in the top of the first inning on Saturday when first baseman Todd Sears hit his 11th homer of the year. But the Huskers had 10 hits in five innings against the Sooners' Kevin Olsen (7-1).

Nebraska also led 3-0 on Sunday after the first inning, when right fielder Gabe Garcia had a two-run double and scored on a single by Ken Harvey. Harvey had three hits for NU and scored twice in the game. Garcia, Bryan Schmidt, and Mike Tighe also had two hits for NU.

Nebraska starter Seth Williams took the loss (1-1) after giving up six runs on five hits.

The Huskers will travel to No. 1 Texas Tech April 22 through 23 for a two-game series with the Red Raiders.