

Sports

FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 1997

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Blackshirts seek sensational end

Red-White Game will showcase young defenders and an inconsistent offense.

By MITCH SHERMAN
Senior Reporter

Raided by the NFL less than a week ago, the Nebraska defense continues its quick rebuilding project Saturday at Memorial Stadium, hoping to steal the thunder from an experienced offense in the 49th annual Red-White Game.

Although they return just three starters from last season's powerful unit, the Blackshirts hold an advantage over the Nebraska offense through 14 practices this spring.

Grant Wistrom, Jason Peter and Ralph Brown direct the young wrecking crew as the entire Cornhusker squad showcases its speed and

strength before a crowd of fans expected to reach 30,000 Saturday at 12:30 p.m.

"I've enjoyed this spring more than any of the other springs I've been through," said Wistrom, a returning first-team All-America rush end. "We know what we have to get done, and there's not a sense of urgency because everything's just gone right."

The No. 1 defense and the No. 2 offense combine to form the White Team, and the No. 1 offense and the No. 2 defense wear red jerseys. Coach Tom Osborne said the top units will square off against each other for about 70 percent of the scrimmage.

"I don't know if people ought to come in

here expecting 100 points to be scored," Osborne said. "We won't be able to run up and down the field, but it will be very competitive. I appreciate the fact that our fans are interested, and the more game-like we can make it, the better it is for us."

Injuries to many top-unit players have hampered the offense this month. I-back DeAngelo Evans hasn't played the entire spring because of a groin injury, and injuries to Josh Heskew, Aaron Taylor, Eric Anderson, Jeff Clausen, Adam Julch, Brandt Wade and Justin Ferrell have prevented the offensive line from gelling.

Most of the bruised and battered Huskers plan to scrimmage Saturday, Osborne said, but offensive consistency requires more repetition than execution on defense. The lack of production is reflected in quarterback Scott Frost's statistics. He has struggled at times in the three major scrimmages this spring, completing seven of 20 passes for 150 yards with no touchdowns



Wistrom

Football

Memorial Stadium

Red-White Spring Game

Saturday at 12:30 p.m.

and one interception.

"I think this spring could have gone better," Frost said, "but we feel comfortable with the people we've got coming back. Our whole offense has to step up and be more aggressive."

Part of the offensive problems stem from the unexpected maturity of the young defenders. Despite losing seven starters — and possibly eight

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NU on roll as it enters home stand

By MIKE KLUCK
Senior Reporter

A seven-game winning streak has given the Nebraska softball team momentum.

Maintaining that momentum is what the Cornhuskers (24-18 overall and 8-4 in the Big 12 Conference) hope to do when they play four games at home this weekend.

NU swept Iowa State 11-3 in six innings and 8-4 Thursday in Ames, Iowa. The first game was a continuation of a rain out from earlier this season when the Huskers were leading 8-0 in the bottom of the second inning.

Now, NU returns home for four games this weekend with doubleheaders against No. 8 Oklahoma on Saturday and No. 19 Oklahoma State on Sunday. Games on both days begin at noon at the NU Softball Complex.

"We need to sustain consistency," NU Coach Rhonda Revelle said. "We just don't want to start doubting ourselves now that we've got it rolling."

Nebraska didn't show any doubts against the Cyclones as NU pounded out 20 hits in the two games.

In the first game, nine different Huskers recorded hits, including Rachel Dunham and Jenny Smith, who both knocked home runs. Smith's homer was her ninth of the season, tying her for the fifth most in a season.

Also in the first game, freshman Jennifer Lizama had a perfect game at the plate, going 4-for-4 and scoring two runs. She continued her hitting in the second game, going 2-for-3, both hits home runs.

Revelle said she is happy the Husker bats, which had been quiet through most of the season, are starting to come around.

While Nebraska's hitting is coming around, its pitching is still solid.

Junior Christie McCoy held the Cyclones to five hits in the first game, while freshman pitcher Jenny Voss picked up the win in the second game. Voss (20-13) didn't give up an earned run and held ISU to two hits as she pitched her 28th complete game of the season.

She is one game shy from tying the single-season record for most complete games at NU. Her 20 wins this season puts her in a sixth-place tie with Lori Sippel for most wins in a season.

"This is our last home weekend," Revelle said. "It's a big weekend. Right now, it's nice to be playing."

NU faces stiff challenge

The Under-20 team is the best squad the Huskers have faced under Walker.

By VINCE D'ADAMO
Staff Reporter

If the Nebraska soccer team were to be accused of anything, ducking a challenge would not be a likely candidate.

For evidence, look no further than two hard-fought road victories over 1996 Final Four teams — Santa Clara and Notre Dame — this spring.

Now the Cornhuskers, who lost 1-0 to defending NCAA Champion North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C., last Friday, are 2-1-2 heading into their final contest of the spring.

Saturday night's game at 7 against the U.S. Under-20 National Team at the Abbott Sports Complex will test just how far the Huskers have come this spring.

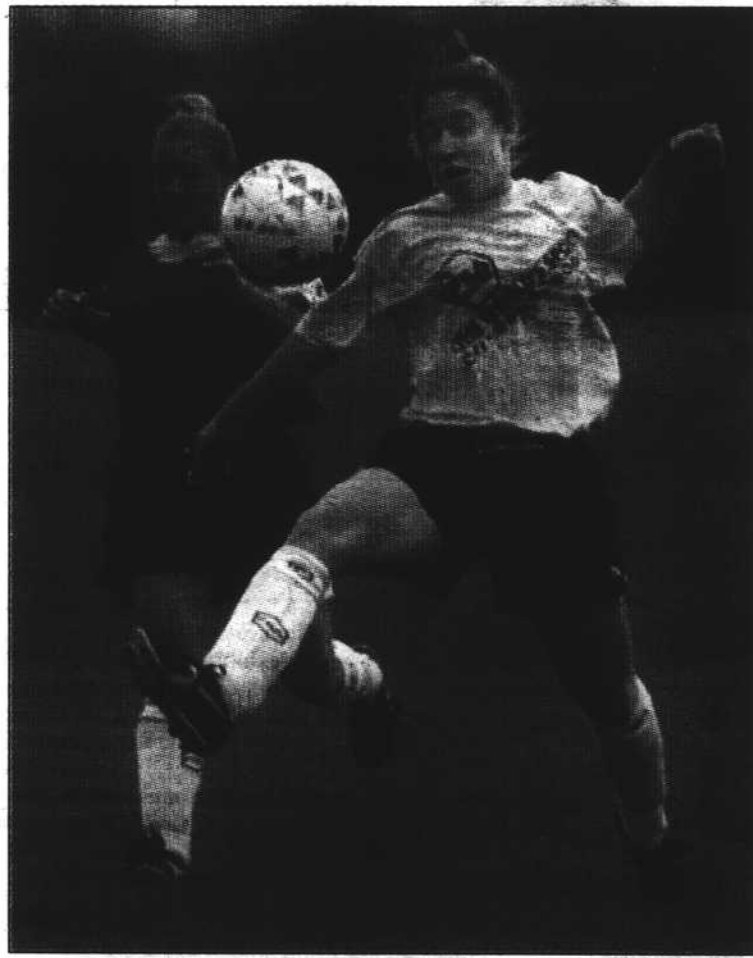
The Under-20 team is composed of 17 players, mainly from the best college soccer programs in the United States. Only two players on the roster are in high school. One of those is Millard North star Kelly Lindsey who will play soccer at Notre Dame next season.

In its college tour this spring, the Under-20 team is 4-0 with wins over Clemson (1-0), North Carolina (2-1), Duke (4-1) and UNC-Greensboro (4-0). The match against NU is the final college tuneup before the team takes a month off for training camp in San Diego. They resume competition in May and end their season August 3-8 at the Nordic Cup in Denmark.

NU Coach John Walker is no stranger to coaching at the international level. Walker has served as an assistant coach on the Canadian National and the Canadian Under-20 National Team.

"I think it's exciting," Walker said. "They're the best team we've played all year and in the history of our program. They have a lot of future Olympians. So there's no margin for error. Defensively, we'll have to be at our best."

Walker said he hopes the match



MATT MILLER/DN

KRISTEN GAY dribbles the ball upfield against midfielder Cheryl Hanson during NU's practice Wednesday. The Huskers close out the spring season against the U.S. Under-20 team Saturday night.

will be a combination of a win as well as a measuring stick of the Huskers' progress.

"We don't just want to see where we stack up because, really, you're still out to win," Walker said. "But at the same time you don't want to say, 'win, win, win, win,' and not work on the things you need to work on."

This game has special significance for two Huskers. Defender Heather Brown and striker Isabelle Morneau, who both played on the Canadian National team in 1996, said playing top-level competition will help the team.

"I still get to wear the red and white," Morneau joked. "It will be interesting to see what our level is next to them. When you play with a national team, you don't know as much about the players you play with."

Strikers Jenny Benson and

Soccer

Abbott Sports Complex

U.S. Under-20 National Team

Lindsay Eddleman are no strangers to the Under-20 squad. Both attended the U.S. Under-20 training camp in January, and Benson has played in all four games the team has played so far.

Benson said the Huskers worked on running a more crisp offense during Wednesday's practice.

"We've been working on trying to penetrate the ball more,"

NU returns home to face Cowboys

By DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

Despite losing six straight games on the road to No. 14 Oklahoma and top-ranked Texas Tech, the Nebraska baseball team returns to Lincoln today with a slim hope of qualifying for the Big 12 Conference Tournament.

The Cornhuskers (22-28 overall and 4-17 in the Big 12) will play host to No. 15 Oklahoma State (35-12 and 17-7) in a three-game series beginning tonight at 7 at Buck Beltzer Field.

"We're trying to stay optimistic as far as the season goes," NU freshman third baseman Ken Harvey said. "If we can put some wins together and a few teams lose some games, we're right back in it."

With nine games remaining in its conference schedule, Nebraska ranks second to last in the league and is 15½ games behind top-ranked Texas Tech (40-5 and 20-4), which has already clinched a spot in the league tournament.

Only the top six teams from the conference will qualify for the Big 12 Tournament May 15-18 in Oklahoma City. The Huskers are 6½ games behind sixth-place Kansas (28-18 and 12-12).

NU was weary when it returned Thursday, Harvey said, but the team came back with a positive attitude entering the final stretch of the season.

"I guess we just came away knowing that we played two tough teams and we played hard," Harvey said. "Being on the road pretty much sucks. Being at home will help us out a lot."

"I'm not saying that's the reason that we lost, but it's just really hard playing on the road — especially for me. I've never done this before."

The freshman from Los Angeles has seen action in 25 games this season and is batting .321. Ten of his 18 hits have gone for extra bases — including two home runs.

Against the Cowboys, Harvey said NU needs to continue to produce offensively. Harvey said he felt that the Huskers out-hit the Red Raiders in Lubbock, Texas, on Tuesday and Wednesday.

In the final two games of the series, NU thumped 26 hits to Tech's 27. But the Huskers knocked seven extra-base hits to the Red Raiders' six.

Nebraska will play Creighton at 7 p.m. at Rosenblatt Stadium in Omaha on Tuesday before returning home to play host to Texas May 2-4.