

Sports

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PAGE 7

Sports Opinion



Trevor Parks Real-world experience has been fun

Seven days after what should have been NU Football Coach Tom Osborne's first national title, I walked into the basement of the Nebraska Union and found a place that has had more of an impact on my life than anything.

As a sophomore I entered the doors of the Daily Nebraskan just a week after Florida State beat Nebraska 18-16 in a gut-wrenching game at the 1994 Orange Bowl.

And what has happened in these past 3½ years are experiences that will last a lifetime.

So as I write my last story ever for the DN I would like to share a little of what I picked up.

I have covered events in 12 states and have witnessed some of the brightest — and darkest — moments this school's athletic programs have ever seen.

Two national titles by the Cornhusker football program, one by the NU volleyball team and a sort-of title by the men's basketball team as it won the National Invitation Tournament.

I was also there to cover the time when I-back Lawrence Phillips beat up his former girlfriend, the time when the basketball team lost nine straight games for the first time since 1963 and that terrible day when I saw a Piper Cub aircraft mangled in a field just north of Lincoln.

If it was important and it involved NU sports, I was there and I took pride in doing it. I can't remember when I didn't appreciate being down here. But most of all I can't remember a day when I didn't have fun.

The travel was brutal and the hours were horrible, but for a college student this was the life to lead.

But what made this job was the people and dealing with some of the biggest names in sports.

The circumstances surrounding everything I did were fun too.

The time the DN was banned from football practice by Osborne was interesting. Interviewing numerous coaches — NU has a diverse group of them — and athletes was a great plus. And partying with the NU volleyball team — crossing the boundaries of journalism — on a snowy night in Springfield, Mass., is something I will remember.

But through all the traveling, all the late nights and all the laughs, I will remember the people down here. The dedication of a group that is so different in every way to put out this paper was incredible to see and that rubbed off on me.

I will take away a lot from this real-world journalism experience, but most of all I will take away a lot of friends. That is the best part of this job.

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

Foes difficult to find for NU

Bobby Bowden says any team that plays Nebraska early in the year takes a gamble.

By **MIKE KLUCK**
Senior Reporter

Nebraska Athletic Director Bill Byrne and ABC Television are probably tired of hearing excuses.

They have heard enough of them, from not having enough residence hall rooms available to not wanting to play an early season game. Both were given as the two tried to schedule a game matching the Cornhuskers against a foe for the Pigskin Classic to be played at Memorial Stadium.

However, neither probably ever heard the main excuse teams had for not wanting to play NU in their season opener: It's too big of a gamble.

"We wouldn't want to come in there," Florida State Coach Bobby Bowden said. "I have never wanted to go in and play and get myself beat in the opening ball game on national television."

Statistics show that playing a Husker team coached by Tom Osborne — who is 19-4-1 in season openers — has had different effects on opposing teams. A win can propel a team to a

successful season, but a loss has often left teams struggling to finish above .500.

Teams that have beaten or tied NU in the season opener have gone on to compile a .717 winning percentage. One example is Alabama. The Crimson Tide defeated the Huskers 20-3 in the 1978 season opener in Birmingham, Ala. The Tide went on to finish the season 11-1 and No. 1 in The Associated Press poll.

However, teams that have lost to Nebraska in their season opener have often struggled in their next game and throughout the season.

After the Huskers defeated fourth-ranked Penn State 44-6 in the 1983 Kickoff Classic, the Nittany Lions went on to lose their next two games and finished the season 8-4-1.

In 1988 Nebraska beat No. 10

Texas A&M 23-14, also in the Kick-off Classic. The Aggies would lose their next three games before finishing the year 7-5.

Of the 13 teams that have lost to Osborne in games that were season openers for both NU and its opposition, opponents have gone on to compile a 5-8 mark the following game and finished the season with a .497 winning percentage.

"Another problem is not just losing to Nebraska," Bowden said, "it's trying to regroup the following week and coming out and getting a win."

Bowden is one of the few coaches who has had success at ruining NU's season openers. In 1985 FSU, which was playing for the second time that season, beat NU 17-13 in Lincoln in a

Please see **BOWDEN** on 8

CU Coach: NU will show

The Bluejays and the Huskers are both entering the game on losing skids.

By **SAM MCKEWIN**
Staff Reporter

Tonight's final round of the Nebraska-Creighton baseball series this season is a matchup of two teams licking their wounds from late-season slides.

And when the Cornhuskers and Bluejays meet at 7 p.m. at Rosenblatt Stadium in Omaha they both will be trying to find a way to salvage their seasons.

With this year's series in the Huskers' favor 2-1, NU (23-30 overall and 5-19 in the Big 12 Conference) enters the game two days after being eliminated from the league tournament. Creighton (24-21 and 7-10) is still fighting for a spot of its own in the Missouri Valley Conference Tournament.

A serious question lies on NU's side of the field. Now that the Huskers are eliminated from any type of postseason play, will they fail to show up in Omaha?

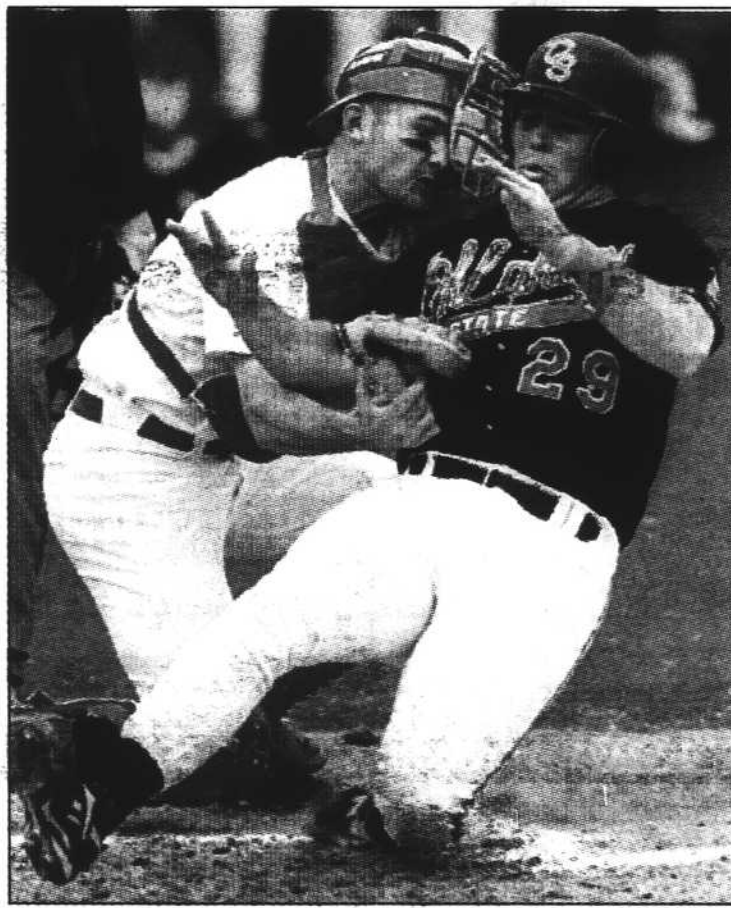
"I highly doubt it," Creighton Coach Jack Dahm said. "In fact, it may get them even more motivated for the game since they're playing us. It's a rivalry."

Another motivating factor could be the teams' play as of late. Both have lost eight of their last nine, although the Huskers' opposition has been far tougher than the Bluejays. NU lost three games to top-ranked Texas Tech, three to No. 14 Oklahoma, and twice in a three-game set to 15th-ranked Oklahoma State. Seven of Creighton's eight losses came to Iowa and Southern Illinois.

Dahm said a four-game sweep his team suffered at home over the weekend to the Salukis was especially hurtful to Bluejays' MVC Tournament hopes.

"To lose four like that at home is tough," Dahm said. "We're no longer sitting well to get into the tournament."

CU still has a sour taste in its mouth from the last meeting with NU — a 13-3 drubbing at Buck Beltzer Field on March 18 —



SCOTT BRUHN/DN

NU CATCHER ANDREW SAWYERS tags out Oklahoma State first baseman Jamey Wood during Saturday's game. The Huskers, who were eliminated from the Big 12 Tournament, play at Creighton tonight.

Dahm said. In that game, the Huskers outhit the Bluejays 12-6 and CU committed three errors.

"We can't worry about that game," Dahm said. "We have to put it behind us."

NU staff ace Steve Fish, who is 7-5 with 5.53 ERA, will take the hill for NU. Dahm said he has yet to name a starter for tonight's game.

"Nebraska has an edge in the pitching department," Dahm said. "We've got to have some guys step it up and make Nebraska hit the ball."

NU probably holds the edge in the hitting department, too. All-America candidate Todd Sears is leading the way hitting .442 with a .741 slugging percentage. Sears also has a .557 on-base percentage.

Freshman Ken Harvey has been on a hot streak of late. He is batting .339 — third-best on the team — and .462 in 10 conference games — tops for NU. Against the

Cowboys on Sunday, he blasted a grand slam for his third home run of the year.

Dahm said the key to stopping the Husker bats is shutting down the lead-off hitter Francis Collins. Collins is hitting .387 for the season.

"He really sets the table for the rest of the team," Dahm said. "We've got to keep him off the bases to win."

Creighton counters NU's power with junior catcher Adam Christensen. Christensen, who is hitting .375, is in contention to make the All-MVC team.

Although his team is struggling, Dahm said Creighton couldn't be playing Nebraska at a better time this season.

"I know the guys are going to be up for this game," Dahm said. "Nebraska is hopefully going to be the game that gets us rolling into the rest of the season."

Frost uses spring ball to mature

By **MITCH SHERMAN**
Senior Reporter

His statistics don't exactly bear proof, but Scott Frost expects his third spring at Nebraska to pay dividends on and off the football field next fall.

Nebraska's returning starter at quarterback completed just 29.8 percent of passes in four major scrimmages this spring, including a 7-of-27 performance Saturday in the Red-White Game. He didn't throw a single touchdown pass this month, and the No. 1 offense at times looked out of sync.

Still, Frost remains confident in his ability to help mold the Cornhusker offense into a powerful machine, and the 6-foot-3, 215-pound senior from Wood River said he places little stock in his spring numbers.

"I think we've thrown the ball well this spring," he said, "and we've got everybody back to have a good passing game. I think you're going to see that next year."

In his first year under center at NU last fall, Frost, a transfer from Stanford, completed 104 of 200 passes for 1,440 yards and 13 touchdowns. Much of the criticism following the Huskers' two losses fell on Frost's shoulders. Next season, he said, he'll be better prepared to handle everything thrown his way.

"I didn't have a bad season last year," he said, "but there were times when I could have been more aggressive. But that's what a year under my belt is going to help me do."

Injuries on the offensive line and among the receiving corps this spring hampered the Huskers' offensive progress. In August, with a healthy team playing alongside him, Frost said, his confidence should be sky high.

On both sides of the ball, his teammates have noticed a difference. "He assumes his leadership role a lot better than he did last year," rush end Grant Wistrom said. "That was one



Frost

Please see **FROST** on 8