

Kickers Kosch, Brown eye Husker record books

KICKERS from page 33 improved significantly, but did not have to learn as much technique as a punter.

"I would say that kicking for me is 85 percent mental," Brown said. "There's not as many mechanics with kicking as there is with punting. We both try to put ourselves in as much of a game-like situation in practice as we can. That way, when a game comes around, you're prepared."

As a true freshman, Brown assumed the kicking duties, replacing Erstad, who was the No. 1 pick in

the June 1995 baseball draft by the Anaheim Angels. Brown made 13 of 16 field goals and 58 of 61 extra-point attempts giving him 97 points on the season. Last year, Brown made 12 of 19 field goal attempts — including a career-long 51 yarder — and 50 of 51 extra points.

"He has a great desire to contribute to the success of the team," Young said. "He'll do anything he can."

Though Brown and Kosch are the only two kickers among the 105 players in fall camp, two quality backups will rejoin the team when school starts.

Backing up Brown is senior Ted Retzlaff, who will also take over for graduated wingback Jon Vedral as the Huskers' holder.

Retzlaff is 26 for 26 in extra-point attempts during the regular season, but was 1 for 2 in the 1996 Fiesta Bowl.

"Retzlaff is a very solid kicker," Young said. "If Kris had any real serious injury, we wouldn't be in any serious trouble."

Behind Kosch is junior Bill Lafleur, who has punted three times in his career. Also a walk-on, Lafleur redshirted in 1994 and has backed up Kosch for the past two seasons.

Kiptarus, Boor return

BY SAM MCKEWIN
Staff Reporter

In every successful collegiate program, there is a season that establishes the school as a top 10 power, a season in which the team proves that its previous success was not a fluke. For the Nebraska men's cross country team, this is that season.



Dirksen

Seniors Cleophas Boor and Jonah Kiptarus, both from Kapsabet, Kenya, return to anchor a team that finished seventh at the NCAA Championships last year and is seeking to do better this year. Kiptarus finished second at the NCAA Championships last season and Boor finished third.

NU Coach Jay Dirksen does not think the two will miss a beat in 1997.

"Jonah and Cleophas are exceptional athletes and really talented cross country runners," Dirksen said. "They are truly stars for this team."

Other than the NCAA Championships, Boor and Kiptarus did not finish out of the top two at any meet all season long. Boor ran track in the spring, and Kiptarus went home to Kenya. He is expected to return this fall.

Dirksen said Boor and Kiptarus run their best together.

"They really complement each other well," he said. "Each has strengths, which is the other's weakness. They are so good because they help each other."

While Boor and Kiptarus may be the stars of the team, the key to a great season may rest on the shoulders of NU's No. 4 runner, Phillip Maiyo. Maiyo, also from Kapsabet, was injured much of the season a year ago, but returned to perform well in the District Five NCAA Qualifier Meet and the NCAA Championships.

When healthy, Dirksen said, Maiyo is as solid a performer as anyone on the team. He is also a critical element for NU to reach the next plateau.

"Philip being healthy and ready to run is key to us having a great team," Dirksen said. "He is so skilled a runner that he can put together some great finishes for us. Hopefully, he's ready to run for us."

Another key addition is freshman Jeroen Zitte from Utrecht,

Netherlands. A runner for the Netherlands junior team, Zitte has considerable big-meet experience for a freshman.

"Jeroen has a great chance to be an impact runner right away for us," Dirksen said. "He has the mental toughness it takes to be a great runner."

Dirksen said he expects the Big 12 Conference to be full of good competition, with Colorado and Oklahoma State leading the league along with Nebraska.

If everything falls into place, Dirksen said, NU could finish among the nation's top five teams.

"We have the runners to be one of the five best teams, but we've got to stay healthy," Dirksen said. "If we're not healthy, it's going to be tough for us to get in the top five."

While the women's team doesn't have such high expectations, the team should be good enough to be in the top 20.

Led by senior captain Nora Shepherd, the NU women finished 20th at the NCAA Championships last year. NU returns all but one runner from last season, but the Huskers are still young, with Shepherd being the lone senior.

While the team doesn't have any standouts, the five core runners are solid and perform consistently, Dirksen said.

"We have five young women who are really good and run the same time, but we don't have any stars on the team," Dirksen said. "It's the one thing we need to make that this team great."

Freshman Amy Wiseman could add a boost to the lineup. A native of Lee Summit, Mo., Wiseman was a member of the U.S. Junior Cross Country Team and has significant meet experience.

"Amy could be a star in the future for our team," Dirksen said. "She's going to give a consistent effort every time out for us. It's rare for a freshman to have that much experience for this team."

Colorado is expected to win the Big 12, with Baylor, Iowa State, and Missouri, providing strong competition. Dirksen said he expects his team to have to work hard at the Big 12 and NCAA Championships.

"A lot of how good we'll be has to do with how much work they put in the summer," Dirksen said. "I expect them to do better than last year, but they have to perform."

Dirksen said he's upbeat about both team's chances.

"I'm looking forward to (the season)," Dirksen said. "Both teams want to do well this year, and they both have the talent to do it."

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