

Sports Opinion



Antone Oseka NU schedule bashers lack a foundation

Would everyone please leave Nebraska's non-conference schedule alone!

NU has tried to schedule good teams, but they just didn't want to play here. 'Nuff said.

It's not the worst Husker non-conference schedule in history; it's not even the worst non-conference schedule in the Big 12 this year.

At Big 12 media day in July, the Texas media made it obvious they thought NU's non-conference foes left a lot to be desired. Take a look in your own state before you criticize out-of-state teams, or at least give the guise of being objective.

Did they even consider R.C. Slocum's career-saving schedule at Texas A&M? Here's a team that has as much national prominence as Nebraska, with a schedule that features Sam Houston State (toughie), Southwestern Louisiana (to whom the Aggies LOST last year), and that huge battle against rival North Texas (which will be played on neutral turf in Irving's Texas Stadium). This coming from an Aggie team that is supposed to challenge for the Big 12 championship.

Texas A&M was also one of the teams that dropped its contract with Nebraska when the two teams joined the Big 12 Conference.

Then, what about Kansas State's non-conference schedule? The Wildcats play Northern Illinois on the road, Ohio in Manhattan and Bowling Green in Manhattan. A few years ago, Nebraska was criticized for playing Northern Illinois, but it's OK for K-State.

This season, Nebraska was scheduled to play Arkansas, which backed out when the Razorbacks joined the Southeastern Conference. The Huskers also had tentative contracts Southern California, Utah State and Arkansas State. All backed out.

The only teams that would fill those gaps were Akron and Central Florida.

At least Nebraska plays Washington. The Huskies will provide a good test for Nebraska, even if the preparation lacks a little with the Zips and the Knights.

Also, let's face it. This isn't the worst Husker non-conference schedule in history.

Remember 1990? The stellar NU non-conference schedule featured Baylor, Northern Illinois, Minnesota and Oregon State. NU suffered the consequences later that season, losing to Colorado, Oklahoma and Georgia Tech.

If you want great non-conference foes for the Huskers, just give NU a little time. In a few years, Iowa and Notre Dame appear on the schedule in the same season.

But they have time to pull out, too.

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

NU loses Kiptarus, Maiyo

BY SAM MCKEON
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's cross country team has been dealt two severe setbacks with the loss of two of its top three runners, seniors Jonah Kiptarus and Philip Maiyo.

Kiptarus, who was supposed to return to Nebraska this fall after taking the spring semester off to help his family in Kenya, has not reported for fall practice and can't be located, Coach Jay Dirksen said.

Dirksen said the last time he talked to Kiptarus was July 13 by phone from Kenya. At the time, Kiptarus said he would return for his senior season.

Kiptarus was supposed to fly to the United States from Italy on Aug. 15, but he never arrived. Attempts to contact him in Italy and at home in Kapsabet, Kenya, have failed.

"We have no idea where Jonah is right now," Dirksen said, "and we really don't think he has the right papers to get in the country if he could come back. The chances of Jonah running for us this year

are slim to none, and slim is on his way out of town."

Kiptarus finished second last year at the NCAA Championships and was a preseason favorite to win the NCAA title this season. Last season, Kiptarus became the first ever Husker to win the District 5 title.

Maiyo, also a native of Kapsabet, Kenya, is also out for the year because of knee surgery he underwent Friday.

The loss of Kiptarus and Maiyo takes Nebraska from a team looking to contend for a top-five national finish to a team that will have to adjust quickly, Dirksen said.

"We have gone from top-10 team to a team that will probably be in the middle of the conference," Dirksen said. "You don't just lose a guy that was second in the nation and a guy that was third in our lineup and expect to be strong."

The loss of Kiptarus and Maiyo will put more pressure on senior Cleophas Boor and freshman Jeroen Broekzitter to fill the void.

Boor, a senior, finished third last season at the NCAA

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JAY DIRKSEN
NU cross country coach

Championships. Broekzitter, a freshman from Utrecht, the Netherlands, will compete with NU for the first time this season.

"Cleophas and Jeroen have really run as well as they can so far," Dirksen said. "Cleophas is one of the two or three best in the nation still, and Jeroen is in the top 25 to 50 runners around the country. So we're going to be solid at one and two."

Dirksen has to figure out who will run at the third, fourth and fifth spots for the Huskers.

Dirksen said his team would be better off trying to make the best of the 1997 season.

"I'm figuring that if anybody redshirts, it will only be one guy," he said. "You're better off - if you

have a good team - to go with it then to try and make a guess on next year."

The team's fate for the 1997 will be determined by runners who had not anticipated to play a big role this season, Dirksen said.

"We really don't have a lot of choices at this point," Dirksen said. "We need guys who really didn't expect to be in big meets to step up and run their best."

No matter how well the team rallies, Dirksen said, the damage has already been done for the 1997 season.

"There's no way we can replace the caliber of runners that Jonah and Philip were, no way," Dirksen said. "The potential for this team has changed."

Osborne defends schedule

BY DAVID WILSON
Senior Reporter

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne has been criticized for scheduling home games against Akron and Central Florida to open the 1997 season.



Osborne

But the Cornhuskers didn't really have another choice.

"It's gotten harder and harder to get people to come in here," Osborne said. "Some of it is conference realignment; some of it's just basic philosophy."

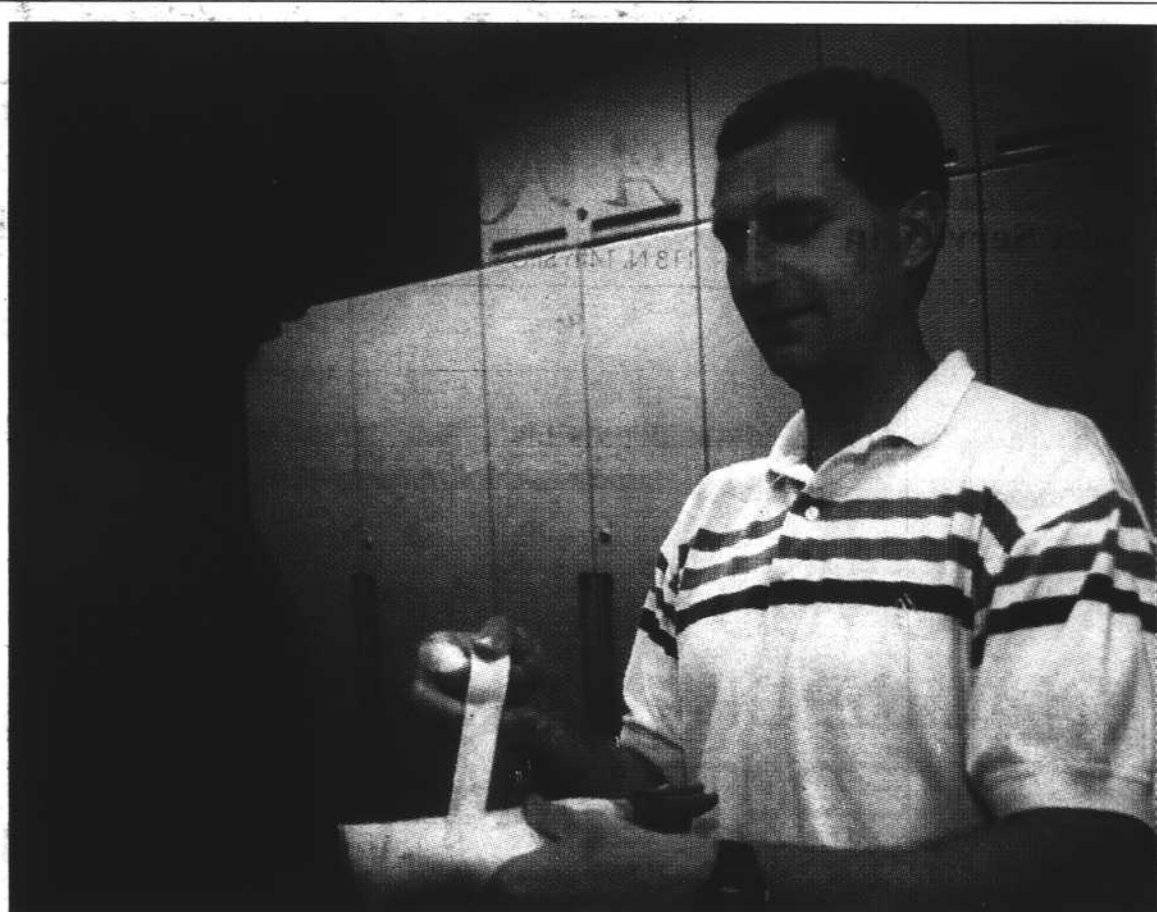
In recent years, Osborne said, the Huskers have had to "fight like mad" to keep some good teams on their schedule.

"I had head coaches call me and say, 'We don't want to play you,'" Osborne said. "I said, 'Well look, we've got a contract and we don't want to play you either, but we're going to play you.' If we would have let all the people out of their contracts that wanted out, we'd have had a real problem."

Nebraska had originally scheduled Arkansas to play in Saturday's season opener, Osborne said, but the Razorbacks had to back out when they joined the Southeastern Conference. Southern California was then tentatively scheduled, but no contract was ever signed. Osborne said Utah State and Arkansas State were also penciled in before Akron agreed to play the Huskers in Lincoln.

In the second-game slot on Sept.

Please see **SCHEDULE** on 8



MICHAEL WARREN/DN

ASSOCIATE HEAD ATHLETIC Trainer Doak Ostergard tapes the wrist of Mike Rucker. Ostergard's main responsibility before football practice is to make sure the players are taped.

Ostergard aids NU athletes

BY NATE ODGAARD
Staff Reporter

During spring practice, Nebraska I-back Dan Alexander made a big enough impression that both coaches and fans were expecting big things this fall from the freshman.

But one day after the spring game in which Alexander rushed nine times for 89 yards and two touchdowns, NU trainers discovered Alexander had torn the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee.

For many athletes, an ACL injury requires at least a year of recovery.

But through Alexander's hard

work and the work of Nebraska trainer Doak Ostergard, Alexander has been able to practice during the fall camp and could play as soon as NU's Sept. 13 game against Central Florida.

"I wouldn't say I'm the key person," said Ostergard. "It takes a combined effort from everybody - doctors, the training room and strength staff."

Alexander's recovery is one of the fastest Ostergard has ever seen.

Ostergard was named NU's head football trainer in July, but he has been a part of the Huskers' recovery team for nine years.

After earning his master's degree in 1989 from NU, Ostergard worked with reconditioning injured basketball players for two years.

Since then he has worked with football players.

Nebraska head athletic trainer Jerry Weber said Ostergard's experience made him an obvious choice for the job.

"With a program like ours, you want someone who knows the system, the coaches and what their expectations are and how to deal with the athletes appropriately," Weber said. "He's got a good relationship with everyone he has to deal with."

"I don't think there is any athlete who doesn't feel they can't work with Doak on a daily basis," he said.

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