



MATT MILLER/DN

FORMER HUSKER Erica De Vitis hugs longtime friend and former soccer teammate Jenny Benson after the Huskers' win over USC Sunday. De Vitis transferred to USC after two seasons at NU.

De Vitis finds bittersweet return

BY DAVID WILSON
Senior Reporter

Erica De Vitis doesn't like bugs, and she doesn't like cold weather. So after starting on the Nebraska soccer team for two seasons, the junior midfielder decided it would be in her best interest to transfer back home to Southern California.

De Vitis returned to Lincoln with the Women of Troy Sunday to take on her friends and former teammates.

"It was so hard," De Vitis said after USC lost 2-1 to the Cornhuskers. "There are no words to explain it."

As a starter for Southern California, De Vitis saw action on the same side of the field as Nebraska midfielder Jenny Benson, who played club soccer with De Vitis in California. But the two put their friendship aside at game time.

"It was hard because you didn't want to knock one of your best friends," De Vitis said. "But you have to realize you're in a Division I match."

Knowing De Vitis' tendencies didn't help or hurt the Huskers, Benson said.

"I think she played well," Benson said. "She was definitely an offensive threat to us."

Nebraska coach John Walker, who visited with De Vitis on Saturday, said he also put friendships aside.

"Once the game got going, you didn't really think of it," Walker said.

Walker said he would have to review the tape before knowing how well De Vitis played.

But Southern California coach Jim Millinder said he was satisfied with her performance.

"She's doing well," Millinder said. "It's good that she came from a winning team at Nebraska. Nebraska has a hell of a program."

Millinder said playing against former teammates may have helped De Vitis.

"They know each other so well," Millinder said. "I think it was a motivating factor for her."

De Vitis, who was named the Huskers' most creative player by her teammates in 1995, scored three goals and had seven assists as a freshman at Nebraska. Last season, she scored two goals with four assists.

"I loved the coaches and the players," De Vitis said of her former team. "The soccer was amazing."

But De Vitis said she had no regrets about her decision to transfer to Southern California. Originally from Coto de Caza, Calif., De Vitis was recruited by Millinder out of high school. Knowing the coach and the program at Southern California helped her decision, she said.

"I love it here," De Vitis said. "I love the school and I love the atmosphere."

Backfield regains its health

■ Sims, Alexander and Evans return to practice after win over Akron.

BY DAVID WILSON
Senior Reporter

Jay Sims has been dubbed "RoboCop" by some of his teammates.

Not because he enforces the law, but because of the equipment he wears to practice — ankle braces, arm pads, and his most recent addition, a brace on his right knee.

Sims, who suffered a knee strain during two-a-day practices last month, returned to practice Monday along with fellow I-backs DeAngelo Evans and Dan Alexander. All three could be ready to see playing time against Central Florida on Sept. 13.

The Cornhuskers will practice in full pads today and scrimmage on Friday.

"We feel a little uneasy putting a guy in a ballgame if he hasn't taken some hits," Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said.

Since returning to practice, Sims has been wearing a yellow jersey — meaning he shouldn't be hit.

"At this point," Sims said, "I'm certainly not ready to take a hit. I anticipate by the Central Florida game, I should be ready to go."

NU running backs coach Frank Solich said Sims and Alexander

should be ready to play against the Knight. The return of Evans, Solich said, is questionable but not ruled out.

Alexander tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee in the Spring Game last April and dislocated his toe two weeks ago. The redshirt freshman said he is looking forward to Friday's scrimmage.

"I haven't done too much hitting since the Spring Game, and that's one of the things I like to do," Alexander said. "I just want to be able to go in there and see where I'm at. Right now I'm still kind of leery about hitting, but I'm feeling better everyday. A scrimmage would not only tell me but tell the coaches where I'm at with this knee."

Evans, who rushed for 776 yards as a freshman last season, has been slowed by a pelvic stress injury and only made it through part of practice Monday and Tuesday. But Solich said he has seen improvement in the 5-foot-9, 215-pound back.

"I think he's gaining more confidence," Solich said. "It's just a matter of getting into playing shape. I think he'll be able to make it through full practices shortly and he's well on the way to recovery."

When they do return, the three backs will have new competition.

True freshman Correll Buckhalter took advantage of the injuries as the second string I-back in Saturday's 59-14 win over Akron. The 6-foot-2, 210-pounder rushed for 61 yards on 11 carries and scored two touchdowns against the Zips.

"I thought he played very well," Solich said. "But I felt going into the game that he would play well. I think that he can certainly be thrown in the mix with the other I-backs, and we'll just see how it all comes out."

"Certainly those guys that were injured will come back with the positions that they held prior to their injuries. But we'll continue to evaluate practices, and we'll see how everybody plays in the games. The depth chart can still go up and down with that in mind."

Starting I-back Ahman Green, who has had back trouble recently and suffered back spasms in Saturday's game, practiced Monday and Tuesday.

Football Top 25

Below are the USA TODAY Top 25 Coaches Poll and The Associated Press Top 25 Poll for college football

AP Top 25

Rank	School	Record	Pvs
1	Penn St. (23)	0-0	1
2	Florida (14)	1-0	2
3	Tennessee (7)	1-0	5
4	Washington (9)	0-0	4
5	Florida St. (6)	0-0	3
6	Nebraska (4)	1-0	6
7	North Carolina (4)	0-0	7
8	Colorado (3)	0-0	8
9	Ohio St.	1-0	9
10	LSU	0-0	10
11	Notre Dame	0-0	11
12	Texas	0-0	12
13	Miami	1-0	14
14	Michigan	0-0	15
15	Alabama	1-0	16
16	Auburn	0-0	17
17	Stanford	0-0	18
18	Clemson	0-0	20
19	BYU	0-0	19
20	Iowa	0-0	21
21	Kansas St.	0-0	22
21 Tie	Northwestern	1-0	24
23	Southern Cal	0-0	23
24	Colorado St.	1-0	-
25	Michigan St.	0-0	25

USA TODAY/Coaches Top 25

Rank	School	Record	Pvs
1	Florida (25)	1-0	1
2	Penn St. (13)	0-0	2
3	Tennessee (10)	1-0	5
4	Washington (7)	0-0	3
5	Florida St. (3)	0-0	4
6	Nebraska (2)	1-0	6
7	Colorado (1)	0-0	7
8	North Carolina (1)	0-0	8
9	Ohio St.	1-0	9
10	Texas	0-0	10
11	LSU	0-0	11
12	Miami	0-0	14
13	Notre Dame	0-0	12
14	Michigan	0-0	13
15	Alabama	1-0	15
16	BYU	0-0	17
17	Stanford	0-0	18
18	Auburn	0-0	19
19	Iowa	0-0	20
20	Clemson	0-0	21
21	Southern Cal	0-0	22
22	Kansas St.	0-0	23
24	Northwestern	1-0	-
25	Colorado St.	1-0	-

Soccer team struggles to defeat DePaul, USC

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Walker said. "We struggled in our first game last year, too."

The Huskers did not have as easy of time against USC, a team that just missed qualifying for the NCCA Tournament last season. The Women of Troy came into Lincoln for what Walker called "an NCAA-Tournament type of game."

Nebraska freshman Christine Gluck opened the scoring in the 28th minute, putting in a rebound off of a Sharolta Nonen shot.

In the second half, All-American midfielder Kari Uppinghouse scored her first goal of the season, getting a shot past USC goalie Karin Puccinelli.

NU seemed to have the game wrapped up when USC senior Kim Clark, who provided much of the Women of Troy's offensive attack, put a shot past Hornbacher with 23 minutes left in the game.

"It would have been nice to finish them off," Walker said. "It was a dogfight until the end."

The dogfight was won by the Huskers, who played most of the last 20 minutes in the USC end of the field.

The Huskers didn't add an insurance goal, even though they had plenty of chances. Kristen Gay hit the crossbar in the 72nd minute, and Puccinelli blocked junior Kim Engesser's penalty kick with two minutes left.

Walker said the team missed the services of striker Becky Hogan. Hogan, who sat out the two games with a crack in her tibia. The junior striker is scheduled to miss the Huskers' first four games. Sophomore Amy Walsh did not play against DePaul because of a hip pointer.

Engesser replaced Hogan and made an immediate impact as a Husker. Engesser scored Nebraska's

"We played well in spurts, but not for 90 minutes."

JOHN WALKER
NU soccer coach

first goal of the season at the three-minute mark of the DePaul game on a pass from sophomore Jenny Benson.

"It was fun," Engesser said. "The team is coming together, but there is definite room for improvement."

Nonen said this weekend gave the Huskers an example of how teams will come to Lincoln looking for an upset of the sixth-ranked Huskers.

"We didn't lose our composure," Nonen said. "It was a battle, but we did well. This was a test of our will."

The Huskers now go on the road, facing Big 12 rival Colorado on Friday in Boulder, Colo.

Gay, who scored the Huskers' fourth goal against DePaul, said the intensity level will have to be raised for the team to have continued success this season.

"We need to come out with a little more intensity," Gay said. "We just can't turn it on and off, because there are a lot of tough teams on our schedule."

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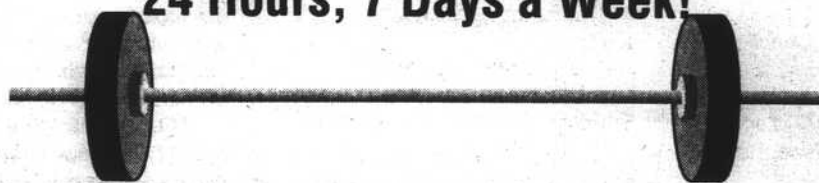
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