





Lane Hickenbottom/DN
NEBRASKA FRESHMAN Jeroen Brockzitter prepares for his first cross country meet in the United States.
Brockzitter, who is from Utrecht, the Netherlands, will participate in the Wildcat Invitational on Saturday.

Broekzitter expected to star

By Sam McKewon Staff Reporter

With the loss of two of its top five runners for the season, the Nebraska men's cross country team has had to turn to a freshman – one who has never run a cross country race in the United States – to carry the load this season.

Jeroen Broekzitter, a freshman from Utrecht, the Netherlands, will run his first race Saturday at the Wildcat Invite in Manhattan, Kan. Broekzitter is expected to help fill the loss of seniors Jonah Kiptarus and Philip Maiyo. Kiptarus has not returned to the Huskers this season, and Maiyo is out with a knee injury.

Broekzitter said he wasn't going to be nervous for his meet on Saturday.

"It's really just a practice meet," he said. "It's going to be a shorter race and I'm not too worried about running it."

Nebraska coach Jay Dirksen said that while it will be tough for Broekzitter to make a wholesale replacement for the two runners, he does have the talent to become as good as either of the two by his senior season. Last year, Kiptarus finished second in the nation at the NCAA Championships.

"He picked himself some good parents," Dirksen said. "He definitely has the kind of talent it takes to be as good as Jonah was last year when (Broekzitter) is a senior. He was blessed with a great cardiovascular system."

The first time Broekzitter set foot in the United States was before the spring semester of 1997. He said he was surprised by the size and the space In my country, people really don't care (about athletes). I'm just some crazy fella running the streets."

JEROEN BROEKZITTER cross country runner from the Netherlands

of Nebraska.

"It was an alien experience," he said. "Everything was so big. The houses and restaurants and other buildings were all so far apart."

Broekzitter said the weather in Nebraska was also quite an adjustment.

"It was so, so cold here," he said of Nebraska's winter. "In my country, it is mild for most of the year. Here, it gets very hot and very cold. It is extreme."

There are also cultural differences to be found between the United States and Holland. Broekzitter said his homeland does not have university sports, but rather club sports, where the runners have more time to improve themselves, as opposed to the four years of eligibility imposed on college athletes here.

He also said there is a difference in the way the two countries see athletes. "In the United States people look

"In the United States, people look up to you and they admire you more," Broekzitter said. "In my country, people really don't care. I'm just some crazy fella running in the streets."

tem."

Despite the cultural and physical differences, Dirksen said Broekzitter the United States was before the bas fit in nicely.

"He really has made quite a transiteam is a huge one."

tion, if you think about it," he said. "I think it was hard on him at first, but now he's in a position where he feels pretty comfortable."

As far as his running goes, the strongest part of Broekzitter's style would seem to be the end of the race where his kick ranks among the best around, Dirksen said.

Broekzitter said that in the past he had never really considered himself a solid runner at the end until he realized his strong kick.

"I discovered it one day while I was running," he said. "I had always thought that I was kind of a slow runner, but it turned out that I can run the last part of a race very well."

As for trying to replace Kiptarus this year, Broekzitter rates his chances

"You can't replace a guy like that," he said. "We'll do the best we can, but we can't make up for what we lost. It's a pity."

Still, Dirksen said, Broekzitter is a critical part of Nebraska's success, regardless of how much he makes up for the loss of Kiptarus and Maiyo.

"If there's a guy who can plug the dike, it's him," he said. "His role to this team is a house one."



Huskers aim to sweep

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But Korver agreed with Nepo that the Huskers need to win all three matches this weekend. Nepo, 6-foot-1, expects a week of tough practices to benefit Nebraska. NU, which totaled a .106 hitting percentage in the Florida loss, hopes to find a cure for its early offensive woes. A low number of attack attempts for All-American outside hitter Lisa Reitsma and the middle blockers factored into the lack of offensive output.

"I didn't set the middles as much as I needed too," Nepo said. "We need to balance things if we want to free up Lisa (Reitsma) on the right side and Jaime (Krondak) on the left. I wasn't mentally into it in Florida. I just need to try to stay calm and

relaxed and go with the game plan."
Pettit credited NU's problems to
early season inconsistencies. A posi-

tive from the Florida match, he said, is that they were exposed early.

"We're playing teams that could beat us, but I think the risk is worth it in the long run," Pettit said. "It prepares you for the conference and the NCAA Tournament. I feel confident that we'll play better this week. There are some things that you can only learn in competition. I think a lot of the inconsistencies will be taken care of this weekend."

Korver said the Huskers have learned lessons from their loss in Florida.

"I think it was an eye opener,"
Korver said. "We can't just go out
with all the talent that we have and
expect to win. It's important that we
maintain our confidence. There is no
doubt in my mind or anyone else's
mind that we can win this tournament."