

Big 12 Notebook

The Big 12 offensive player of the week is Texas tailback Ricky Williams, who had 249 yards rushing on 28 carries and five touchdowns in the Longhorns' 38-31 comeback win over Rice in Houston.

The Big 12 defensive player of the week is Colorado senior linebacker Ron Merkerson, who had 12 tackles. Merkerson also had a 33-yard fumble return that helped set up Jeremy Aldrich's 18-yard field goal with three seconds left, giving the Buffaloes a 20-19 win over Wyoming.

Colorado also had the Big 12 special teams player of the week in freshman defensive back Ben Kelly, who brought CU back into the game against Wyoming with a 100-yard kickoff return for a touchdown.

Nebraska senior offensive guard Aaron Taylor and defensive end Grant Wistrom were named semifinalists for the 1997 Lombardi Award.

The Huskers and Washington were the only teams with two players among the 12 semifinalists. No other Big 12 school had a semifinalist.

The list of 12 semifinalists will be narrowed to four on Oct. 31, and the award, which recognizes the nation's top lineman, will be presented Dec. 10 in Houston. Last year, NU defensive end Jared Tomich was one of the four finalists before losing out to Ohio State offensive lineman Orlando Pace.

Missouri senior running back Brock Olivo became the all-time leading rusher in Tigers history with a 4-yard run in MU's 31-10 loss to Ohio State Saturday. Olivo has rushed for 2,612 yards in his four-year career with the Tigers. Olivo is also trying to become the only player in MU history to lead the team in rushing yards all four years.

What's the secret of the Nebraska football team's success? Baylor coach Dave Roberts said it's the Huskers' extensive walk-on program.

"They have something like 110 guys who want to walk on and play for Nebraska, where as we're lucky we get 15 guys who will," Roberts said. "Any time you have that kind of tradition, there's going to be some good football."

The great escape of the week happened in Boulder, where the Colorado Buffaloes overcame a nine-point deficit in the last five minutes to beat Wyoming 20-19. Ben Kelly returned a kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown to cut the lead to 19-17, and after a fumble recovery, CU drove to the Wyoming 1-yard line before place-kicker Jeremy Aldrich booted an 18-yard field goal with five seconds left for the win.

"We were lucky to get out of there with our lives," CU coach Rick Neuheisel said. "But when you've got kids that believe good things will happen, you can come back."

This week's Big 12 schedule

Texas at Oklahoma State
Iowa State at Missouri
Oklahoma at Kansas
Texas A&M at Colorado
Texas Tech at Baylor
Kansas State at Nebraska

Big 12 Notebook compiled by staff reporter Sam McKewon.

Team USA invades coliseum

■ Pettit expects a thankful crowd to honor Allison Weston, who returns tonight for an encore performance.

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Assignment Reporter

For the first time this season, the Nebraska volleyball team enters a match in which winning won't be connected to the final score.

The Cornhuskers expect a loss at the NU Coliseum tonight at 7 when they play host to the U.S. National Team. But just competing against the national team, which features former Husker All-American Allison Weston, will benefit Nebraska and its program in several ways, NU coach Terry Pettit said.

"It's just a win-win situation," Pettit said. "Imagine if the basketball team had the Chicago Bulls come in. How could you lose in that type of situation?"

The most important positive of the match, Pettit said, will occur before the teams step onto the court.

Nebraska will retire Weston's No. 18 jersey.

A three-time All-American, Weston earned national player-of-the-year honors in 1995, guiding Nebraska to its first-ever national title.

After serving as an assistant coach for the Huskers last season, Weston competed with the national team this summer. The all-time career kill leader for NU secured a starting position with the team because of her solid all-around game, Pettit said.

"Of course the pinnacle for any female volleyball player in this country is playing on the U.S. Olympic team," Pettit said. "The way I understand it, (Weston) may be their most stable player. I don't know that we've had anybody who's done more for Nebraska volleyball than Allison."

"It's heartening to see our players go on, like Lori Endicott and Weston, and see how eager they are to come back. I want the place packed for Allison. I want her to see that people appreciate how much she did for Nebraska volleyball and the university in general."

A current Nebraska All-American, Lisa Reitsma, also stands to benefit from tonight's match. Reitsma trained with the national team for one month this summer, and U.S. coach Mick Haley said he was

impressed with the senior right-side hitter's blocking and attacking ability.

Haley already extended an invitation to Reitsma to join the national team in the spring, but Reitsma said she hopes to make a positive impression on Haley tonight.

"I definitely want to play well and I want the whole team to play well," Reitsma said. "It's a little bit of pressure, but (Haley) knows what I can do already."

"Just the excitement of it gets the adrenaline going, and you just pick it up and play really well."

The national team played Kansas State Monday night, the first stop of a nationwide college tour.

The Huskers turned in a solid performance last October against the national team in Lincoln, when several Huskers had breakthrough nights. Sophomore Mandy Monson, who slid into her first starting role when regular starter Jaime Krondak was struck with the flu, played especially well, Pettit said.

Finding motivation tonight won't be a problem, middle blocker Megan Korver said.

"You're playing a high-quality team, and that's what volleyball's about," Korver said. "Last year, we actually stuck with them a little bit. It gave me confidence that our side of the net could play with their side of the net."



MATT MILLER/DN

AMY WALSH has made a smooth transition from McGill University to the Nebraska soccer team this season.

Walsh shines in reserve role

BY NATE ODGAARD
Staff Reporter

Her coach says she is good enough to be a starter, and after sampling a taste of it she wants it back. Her performance against Arkansas even indicated she is deserving of a starting position.

Despite all she has going for her, Amy Walsh still hasn't earned that starting role for the Nebraska soccer team.

But that doesn't mean the sophomore midfielder hasn't contributed to the No. 10 Huskers' 8-2 record.

Against the Razorbacks on Sept. 21, Walsh came off the bench to score her first two goals as a Husker and added an assist in NU's 8-0 victory.

Walsh's first goal of her NU career came off an assist by Sandy Smith at the 33:06 mark to give the Huskers a 3-0 lead against Arkansas. Later in the same game, Walsh passed the ball to freshman Lauren Tatum, who scored her first goal of the season, giving Walsh her first assist.

Nebraska coach John Walker said

Walsh, who has two goals and two assists this year, gives the team a tremendous boost.

"It was nice to see her score two goals for us because she's done a lot of good work this year, and she hadn't scored yet," Walker said. "That's a big boost for us to bring in a player of that quality, who's obviously good enough to start, but understands right now this is the role we need her in."

Standing in Walsh's way are the top seven returning point earners from last season's 23-1 squad.

In addition, Walsh must contend with junior Kim Engesser, who has a team-high 10 goals this season.

But starting is not Walsh's top priority, as long as she knows she is helping the team win, she said.

"It felt good to be able to say that I contributed to a part of the win," she said of the game against Arkansas. "It's a way of showing that, yeah, you're doing your job."

Walsh averages about 70 minutes on the field per game, she said.

"Everyone knows the role they have to play," she said. "It's a new role for me, but I'm happy with it."

Walsh passed up an opportunity to start, and shine, on a less-talented team this year in Montreal.

"I realized it wasn't going to be the level of soccer I expected," she said.

Walsh wanted to play at a top-notch program, she said, and since she knew Walker, choosing Nebraska was easy. Walsh had played on the Canadian Under-20 National Team, for which Walker was an assistant coach last season.

Through the under-20 team, Walsh has also played with junior Heather Brown. She has also played with sophomore Isabelle Morneau on the club, provincial- and national-team levels.

Walsh said she likes Walker because he demands hard work from players both in practice and in games.

"With John, you know you're getting better every time you go out," she said.

Though she is content with her status on the team, Walsh ultimately hopes to become a full-time starter. She's started one game this season, a 1-0 loss to Texas A&M.

NU places 6th, 9th at Griak Invite

■ Broekzitter and Boor finish in the top five for the Husker men.

BY SAM MCKEWIN
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's and women's cross country teams held their own in their first encounter with top-10 competition at the Roy Griak Invitational in Minneapolis on Saturday.

The No. 20 NU women's team finished sixth out of 18 teams. No. 6 Wisconsin won the invite with 53 points, while fourth-ranked Providence came in second with 93 points.

The NU men's team finished ninth out of 15 teams.

"I was very pleased with both teams," Husker coach Jay Dirksen said. "They competed well this weekend."

On the women's side, freshman Amy Wiseman led all Huskers with an 11th-place finish while senior Nora Shepherd finished 19th and sophomore Jaime Pauli finished 33rd.

Dirksen said the women's team, which finished with 160 points, made a statement.

"We proved that we're as good as our ranking, if not a little better," Dirksen said. "We're running really well right now."

The men had two runners in the top five. Freshman Jeroen Broekzitter finished third, and senior Cleophas Boor finished fifth. No. 15 Nebraska was the only team to complete such a feat.

While the men's team didn't finish in the top half of the field, Dirksen said, the team made marked improvement over the past week.

"It's good to see we're not cashing in the chips on this season," Dirksen said. "We're committed to putting together a good season."

Both teams compete again at the Furman Invitational in Greenville, S.C., on Oct. 11.