

Sports Opinion



Shannon Heffelfinger

## Huskers will answer big question

Nebraska volleyball coach Terry Pettit sighed, sat down at the front of the room and faced the assembled media at South Stadium Tuesday.

The room was unusually crowded, and Pettit knew why.

Everyone wanted an answer to the question.

"What happened to the team last week?" a reporter asked, referring to NU's first back-to-back losses in four years.

"I don't know," Pettit said with a smile. "El Nino?"

Sometimes, it's easier to talk about things when you're winning than when you're losing.

Two losses last week destroyed NU's 41-match home winning streak, its 22-year league victory string and marked the first time ever the Huskers had been swept by a conference opponent.

NU fell to Colorado before taking a whipping at Oklahoma — a team the Huskers had swept eight-straight years.

Why?

This is Nebraska. This is the team with a strong player-of-the-year candidate and an even stronger preseason bid to repeat as Big 12 Champions. This is the team that returned nine players from last season's team that advanced to the NCAA Final Four. This is the team that was expected to go further.

Pettit points to an injury to starter Jaime Krondak when answering the question.

His players, however, blame themselves.

"Everyone was waiting for someone else to step up and take control, but nobody did," sophomore Mandy Monson said. "It's hard to be on the court when everyone is just looking around."

Lisa Reitsma felt the frustration after OU.

"Our serving has gone down, our passing has broken down. After that goes, so does everything else," Reitsma said.

So the question remains.

This weekend is huge for NU. Nebraska travels to No. 11 Texas and No. 12 Texas A&M.

Will the Huskers regain their dominance? Where will they find leadership? Can they refocus?

"We have two losses in the Big 12, so what?" Monson said. "That doesn't mean we can't come back and win every single game we play. It doesn't mean we can't win the Big 12 Championship or the national championship."

The question will surely be answered in Texas.

Heffelfinger is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan assignment reporter.

# Let the games begin

## Lue: Attitude may be key factor for successful '97-'98 campaign

BY DARREN IVY  
Staff Reporter

NU point guard Tyrone Lue hopes an improved team attitude will lead the NU men's basketball team back to the NCAA Basketball Tournament.

"Our self-discipline and work ethic are better than in the past," Lue said. "We don't have as much talent as my freshman and sophomore seasons, but self-discipline also wins games."

Nebraska coach Danny Nee has seen the players' new attitudes four days a week during the preseason for weights and running, but Saturday will be the first time on the court.

A strong nucleus of returning players from last year's 18-15 and NIT qualifying team has Nee excited about the 1997-98 season.

"The players have a winning attitude this year," Nee said. "The players want more. They want to be competitive in the last two weeks of the season and in the NCAAs."

Sophomore Cookie Belcher said the preseason was harder this year.

"I think Coach Nee knows what kind of team we can have and that's why he worked us so hard," Belcher said.

A successful season won't just rely on the players, Nee said, but also the support of the home-court fans. On offense, the Huskers should be fast-paced team. He said team quickness and shooting are two of NU's strengths.

Belcher said home-court fans may not realize how important they are to the team.

"When they get involved, we get involved," Belcher said. "They make us want to play harder."

The fans will see returning starters, Lue, Belcher, Venson Hamilton and Larry Florence on the court. In addition to these players, Andy Markowski will start as forward, and Troy Piatkowski will likely be the sixth man, Nee said.

To win the tournament, Nee said the team will need to develop a sound man-to-man defense.

"We know if we win either (the Big 12 Conference or Big 12 Tournament), we make it to the NCAAs," Nee said. "There are a lot of good individual players in this league and to win we will have to be able to get stops on them at key times," Nee said.

To play consistent, Nee said it takes an attitude about coming out and playing hard and smart every

night.

"The players from last year understand that," Nee said. "They have had great attitudes thus far this year."

On offense, Nee said the team will be a fast-paced team. He said team quickness and shooting are two of the team's strengths.

Depth on the front line will be one of the team's weaknesses. Nee said 6-foot-10 freshman Brant Harriman will see quite a bit of playing time backing up Hamilton and Markowski.

The team's first chance to see how the defense and offense are progressing will be Nov. 5 against Pella Windows. The regular season starts at home on Nov. 16 against UNC Greensboro.

Several preseason publications have predicted the Huskers to finish in second or third place in the Big 12 North Division.

Street, Smith and Sporting News picked the Huskers to finish third behind Iowa State and Kansas, while Athlon and Preview Sports Publications picked the Huskers to finish second behind Kansas.

Nee said some of the publications do a lot of research, but he doesn't pay too much attention to them.

"I think it's great entertainment reading, but how right and how factual remains to be seen," Nee said. "It doesn't take too much to know Kansas is the best team in the conference."

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## New coach, players hope to unite as Huskers begin Sanderford era

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Assignment Reporter

The Southern style of up-tempo basketball merges with a strong Midwestern work ethic when new Coach Paul Sanderford begins practice with the Nebraska women's basketball team Saturday.

Both coach and players expect a successful union.

"The most impressive thing about this team has been the work ethic," Sanderford said. "Coaches usually spend half the time trying to get their players to play hard. We have that already, so we can spend that much more time trying to

get them to play well.

Sanderford plans to use the four weeks before the Huskers open their regular season to implement his up-tempo system. Years of coaching in an area of the country where North Carolina's Dean Smith and Kentucky's Rick Pitino dominated the college basketball landscape influenced Sanderford's up-tempo coaching-style philosophy, he said.

In the early stages of practices, Sanderford wants to concentrate on fundamental aspects of the game such as rebounding and defense.

But the new head coach hopes to have a solid offensive attack by the start of the Huskers' exhibition season Nov. 7 when NU plays host to Zala Volan (Hungary).

"It's a different philosophy than the players have seen before," Sanderford said. "Things are going to be a little faster. We're going to press more and get more people involved that way."

Nebraska's top returning scorers and three-point threats are senior honorable-mention All-American Anna DeForge and sophomore Nicole Kubik.

Also expected to contribute heavily in the paint are freshmen Lisa Bryan, Amanda Cleveland and Amanda Went.

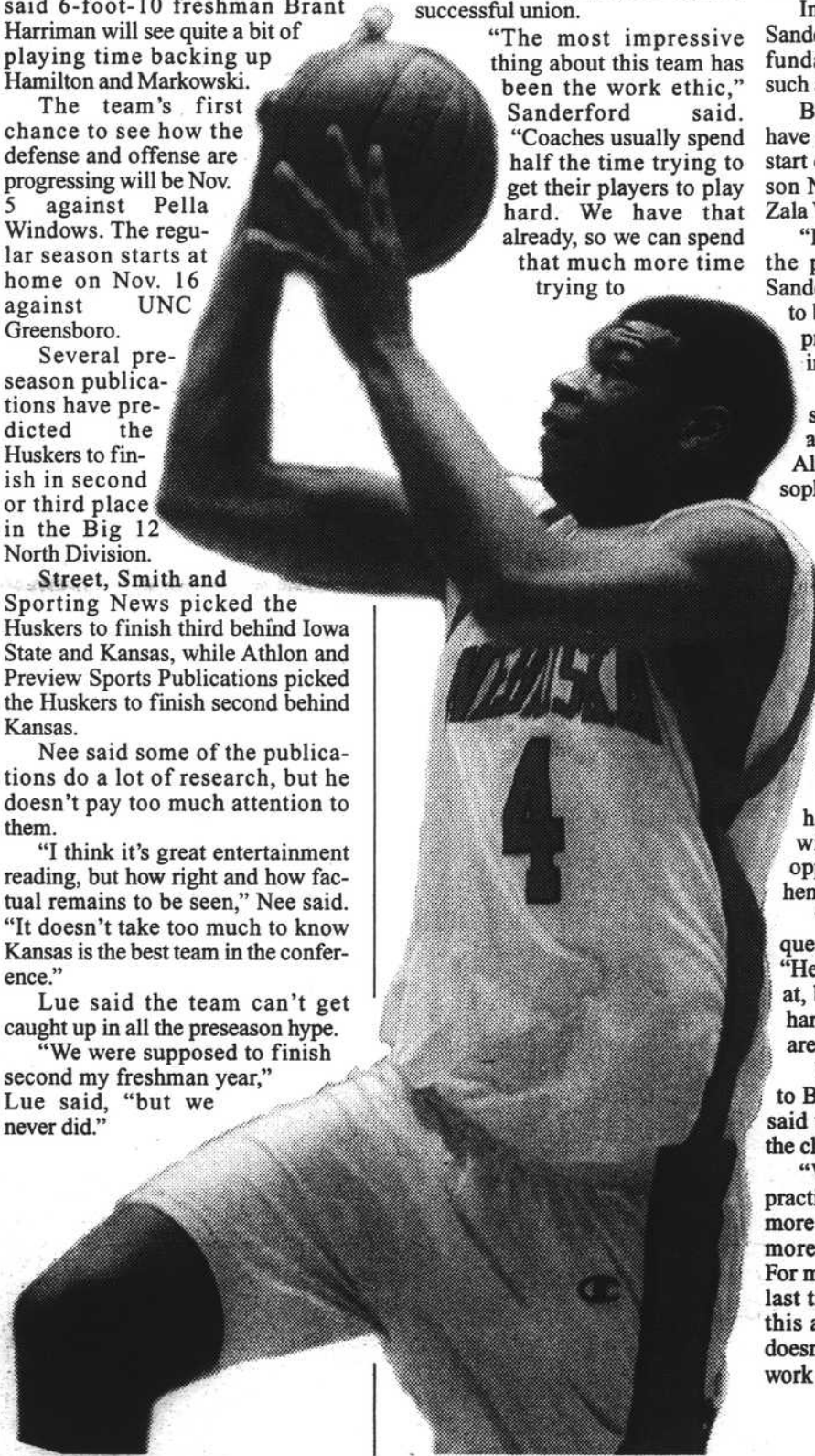
Sanderford believes good communication between himself and the returning players holds an important key to success in his first season.

Jami Kubik said the players have been meeting individually with Sanderford, giving him an opportunity to calm their apprehensions.

"It's been a chance to get some questions answered," Kubik said. "He's trying to tell us where we're at, but he doesn't really know. It's hard for him to say what our roles are going to be."

NU proceeds in early January to Big 12 Conference play. Kubik said the Huskers will be ready for the challenge.

"We were always anxious for practice to start in past years, but it's more so this year," Kubik said. "It's more excitement with the anxiety. For me, this is really special. It's the last time the seniors will be doing this and coach knows that and he doesn't let you forget it. I think we'll work really hard for him."



## Huskers hope to contain Lethridge

BY ANTONE OSEKA  
Senior Reporter

Already this season, Nebraska has seen some good quarterbacks.

Washington's Brock Huard, Central Florida's Daunte Culpepper and Kansas State's Michael Bishop have all tried their arms at beating Nebraska and have come up short.

This week, when No. 2 Nebraska (5-0 overall, 2-0 in the Big 12 Conference) faces off against Texas Tech (3-2, 2-0)

Saturday at Memorial Stadium, senior Zebbie Lethridge will be the next quarterback to try and lead the Red Raiders to a victory.

After facing good quarterbacks already this season, the Blackshirts are feeling prepared to play Lethridge.

"We're going to treat him a lot like Bishop," senior rush end Grant Wistrom said. "Hopefully, we can put pressure on him."

Wistrom said, as far as the talent NU has faced this season, he would rate Lethridge in between

Culpepper and Bishop for quarterback ability. The most dangerous part of Lethridge is his ability to run with the football.

Nebraska senior defensive tackle and All-American candidate Jason Peter said Lethridge could play running back for most schools.

But, Peter added, if Lethridge hurts you on one play, the defense can't hang its head and concentrate on it.

"If we get hurt, we need to come back into the huddle and concentrate," Peter said. "This defense

knows how to handle it."

Last season, Tech had two stars in the backfield. Lethridge was teamed with running back Byron Hanspard, a Heisman Trophy candidate, who now plays in the NFL for the Atlanta Falcons. The loss of Hanspard, Peter said, has made a lot of the Tech offense one-dimensional around Lethridge. Wistrom had a little different view.

"Zebbie's a threat all to himself," Wistrom said.

Please see LETHRIDGE on 11