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Injuries plague Huskers

BY DARREN IVY
 Staff Reporter

The training room served as a second home for five Nebraska basketball players during the off-season.

But Coach Danny Nee said freshmen Cary Cochran and Todd Smith are the only players who will not be ready for the season opener on Nov. 16.

"Everything is progressing well," Nee said. "I think we are going to be OK by the time the season starts."

Cochran and Smith, along with forward Andy Markowski, guard Tyrone Lue and center Brant Harriman all suffered injuries that required them to spend time rehabilitating in the training room this fall.

Smith, a 6-foot-3-inch guard from Marysville, Ga., had rods inserted in both his legs on Aug. 26 to help cure stress fractures he has had since his senior year of high school.

Smith said it has been hard not being able to work out with the team.

"I was planning on working on my game at least 1½ hours a day," Smith said.

Although Smith has not been able to work out on the court, he has been lifting weights and running in the pool. Smith said he hoped to be shooting around in four or five weeks and return to game action by the end of November.

"Someone put this injury in my way for a purpose. It is just an adversity test for me."

CARY COCHRAN
 NU guard

Cochran, from Minden, Iowa, had surgery to repair bone spurs and an avulsion in his ankle Sept. 16. The 6-2 guard wore a walking cast from Oct. 1 until Wednesday, when he had the cast removed. He has not been able to start rehabilitation yet.

But Cochran has not let his injury get him down mentally.

"Someone put this injury in my way for a purpose," Cochran said. "It is just an adversity test for me."

Cochran said his goal is to play in the first part of December.

"Everything is progressing well for Cary," Nee said. "We are cautiously optimistic though."

The three other players who were injured are all playing near 100 percent, Nee said.

Lue, a second team All-Big 12 selection last season, suffered a nerve injury to his lower leg while he was training with the USA 22-and-under

National Team. He iced his leg too long and lost feeling in it.

Nee said Lue is playing at about 95 percent right now, but said he expects Lue to be at 100 percent by the season opener.

Markowski, a 6-8 junior, had arthroscopic knee surgery in September to repair a torn meniscus in his left knee. Markowski started working out with the team earlier this month.

Harriman, a 6-10 freshman from Mason City, Iowa, had a screw put in his finger on July 14. Harriman broke his left ring finger during the summer while playing in a tournament in Australia.

Nee said he expected good things from this year's squad — especially when all the players are healthy.

"We have a solid nucleus of six players," Nee said. "It is going to be an exciting and up-tempo team."

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Tennis team prepares for indoor tournament

BY DARREN IVY
 Staff Reporter

By the end of the first matches of the Region V Rolex Tournament in Wichita, Kan., the Nebraska men's tennis team should have a pretty good idea how the rest of the matches are going to finish in the tournament.

NU No. 1 singles player Magnus Grahn said how a player does in a tournament usually depends on his first match.

"It sets the tone for how you will play," Grahn said. "If you come out and play well it's a good sign, but if you struggle then anything can happen."

The Region V Rolex Tournament also presents the Cornhuskers with another challenge as they will be competing in the first indoor tournament of the season. Grahn, who said his style of play is suited more for outdoors, said it takes a while to get adjusted to indoor play.

Husker Coach Kerry McDermott said the ball travels faster indoors, which benefits the big servers. In order to get adjusted to those circumstances, the team has practiced indoors this week.

"I think the guys are ready to have a good tournament," McDermott said.

At the tournament, the Huskers will try to do something they haven't done in five years — have a

team member advance to the semifinals. The last time NU had someone playing in the semifinals of the Rolex was in 1992.

Grahn and the No. 1 doubles team of Dinko Verzi and Markus Bergerheim have the best shot since they are expected to be seeded in the top eight, McDermott said.

Grahn said a lot of the top singles players competing in the Rolex Tournament are even.

"It will come down to whomever plays the best this weekend," Grahn said.

NU will take eight players to the 15-team tournament, but only Grahn, Verzi, Bergerheim and Jorge AbosSanchez are guaranteed a spot among the 64 singles players.

Andrew Wiese, Roshan Fernando and Joakim Larsson will play in a pre-qualifying tournament today with a chance to advance into the qualifying bracket.

The top 32 doubles teams in the region also will play, McDermott said.

A good individual showing from all the players at the tournament should earn NU an invitation to the Region V Team Tournament next weekend in Tulsa, Okla., McDermott said.

The Region V Team Tournament is for the top six teams in the region, McDermott said.

"If we do good as a group of individuals, it shows we will be a good dual team in the spring," McDermott said.

NU tight ends adapt, excel

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combination of the two elements.

Carpenter said with all those abilities in one game, NU has one of the best tight end threats in the nation.

"You put us all together, and you've got one heck of a tight end," he said.

Vershan Jackson has more than the responsibilities of the tight end position to deal with. As one of the four elected captains for the 1997 Huskers, he must handle the role of team leader.

"You really want to make sure the players are ready to play the game," he said. "It's been good to talk to the team before every game and lead them on the field."

Vershan Jackson said his main motto to the team before any Husker contest is simple and to the point.

"Just get the job done," he said. "When you're out on that field, I don't care if you're hurt or sick or whatever. It's time to put your thinking caps on, concentrate on what you're doing, be physical, and get it done."

Carpenter said he and the two Jacksons have done that at tight end this season.

"We don't really need the glory and we don't need to catch the ball to know we're doing a good job," he said. "Everybody on our offense plays a role in the success, and we've got a job to do."

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