

Sports Opinion



Antone Oseka Exhibition games are important

It's hoops season, baby!
Pella Windows invades the Bob Devaney Sports Center tonight to take on a Cornhusker squad picked to finish fourth in the Big 12. NU has never lost to this squad, a forceful team named after a window company.

In fact, Nebraska can nearly look through this competition to the slick Marathon Oil game next week. It makes me wonder, does Marathon Oil provide Coach Danny Nee with free hair products? Is that why we play them every year?

Anyway, Neebasketball is gearing up for a good season, one in which it could finish high in a weak league and qualify, finally, for the NCAA Tournament in March. Facing the facts, Nebraska can compete with 10 of the other teams in conference. NU has no chance against Kansas.

KU is going to be too tough and too big for many of the teams in the league. In fact, Kansas sports two of the best players in the country in Raef LaFrentz and Paul Pierce.

Nebraska, however, has a chance to make a run through the conference around Kansas. The problem with Nebraska, which won't be shown for a couple of weeks, is NU has no bench. Nebraska will rely on Tyrone Lue, Cookie Belcher, Venson Hamilton, Andy Markowski and Larry Florence to put most of the points on the board.

If you're a Husker fan, pray none of these five guys gets hurt. The only name you'll even recognize on the Nebraska bench is Troy Piatkowski, a junior who did see playing time last season.

Seniors Ryan Phifer, Michael Johnette and Chad Burbach rarely even get a chance to take their warm-ups off.

As a matter of fact, the Nebraska basketball team didn't have a Midnight Madness show at the start of the season because it was past most of the backup players' bed times.

Even Nee admitted his top five guys were 90 percent of this team. At Big 12 media day last Thursday in Kansas City, Mo., Nee said he didn't have the horses to run a full game with a tough team like Kansas.

So they better concentrate on the invisible defense of Pella Windows or the slick press of Marathon Oil. All the guys on the team are going to need these contests to work the bugs out of their respective games. For the starting five, that's concentrating on Nee's offense and defense schemes.

For some others, they need practice tearing those warm-up pants off.

Oseka is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.

Husker men seek new image

Basketball
Pella Windows vs. Nebraska
7:05 p.m. Bob Devaney Sports Center

By DAVID WILSON
Senior Reporter

If Coach Danny Nee and junior point guard Tyrone Lue have their way, Nebraska basketball will be different this year.

Though it appears to lack the talent and the experience it's had in the past, the Cornhuskers have vowed to improve their character and work to develop a strong team chemistry.

The Huskers will face their first test tonight in an exhibition game

against Pella Windows at 7:05 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Along with developing the NU newcomers, the preseason matchup will give Nebraska an opportunity to display its new attitude.

"Anyone that has had a perception of Nebraska basketball in the past, I think you should take it, erase it and throw it out," Nee said, "because I think we are going to rewrite and have a new impression. Even the coach is going to be nicer."

Nebraska returns four starters to its lineup, and Nee said three of the five incoming freshmen will also be given an opportunity to play tonight. Six-foot-10 freshman center Brant Harriman will back up Venson Hamilton; 6-6 forward Chad Johnson

will backup Andy Markowski, and Rodney Williams, a 6-3 guard, will also see playing time.

Freshman guard Todd Smith is recovering from surgery, in which rods were inserted in both of his lower legs, and won't be available to play until next month. Freshman guard Cary Cochran will redshirt this season, Nee said.

Sophomore guard Cookie Belcher, junior forward Larry Florence along with juniors Lue and Hamilton have starting experience, and Markowski played in 31 of 33 games last season. But other than the starting five, only sophomore guard Troy Piatkowski played in more than four games last year. Piatkowski could see significant playing time

tonight because Belcher is recovering from a hamstring injury.

"We have to develop that bench, and the only way we can do that early in the season is to get people like Chad Johnson, Rodney Williams, Brant Harriman, Troy Piatkowski some playing time just to see what we have," Nee said. "At the same time, I don't want to wear out any of those starters, but there are going to be times when some of the starters are going to have to step up and play X amount of minutes."

Lue, who started in all but three games his first two seasons, has been helping the freshmen adjust to college both on the court and off it.

Please see HOOPS on 8

Losses take toll on NU volleyball team

Middle blocker continues to feed off Husker fans

By ANDREW STRNAD
Staff Reporter

The crowd loves her and she loves it.

For Nebraska sophomore Tonia Tauke, the volleyball fans at the NU Coliseum are some of her closest friends.

Each time she steps on the floor, the Council Bluffs Abraham Lincoln graduate gets a feeling she's never felt before.

"I feel the love out there," said Tauke, a 6-foot-3 middle blocker. "I just want to go up to everyone and give them a hug. Nowhere else in the country can you feel the love, like you do here."

And Tauke isn't afraid to show her love for others in the coliseum.

During timeouts, Tauke can be seen hugging Shannon Young of the Husker Yell Squad.

Young electrifies Husker fans with his acrobatics at NU football games and volleyball matches.

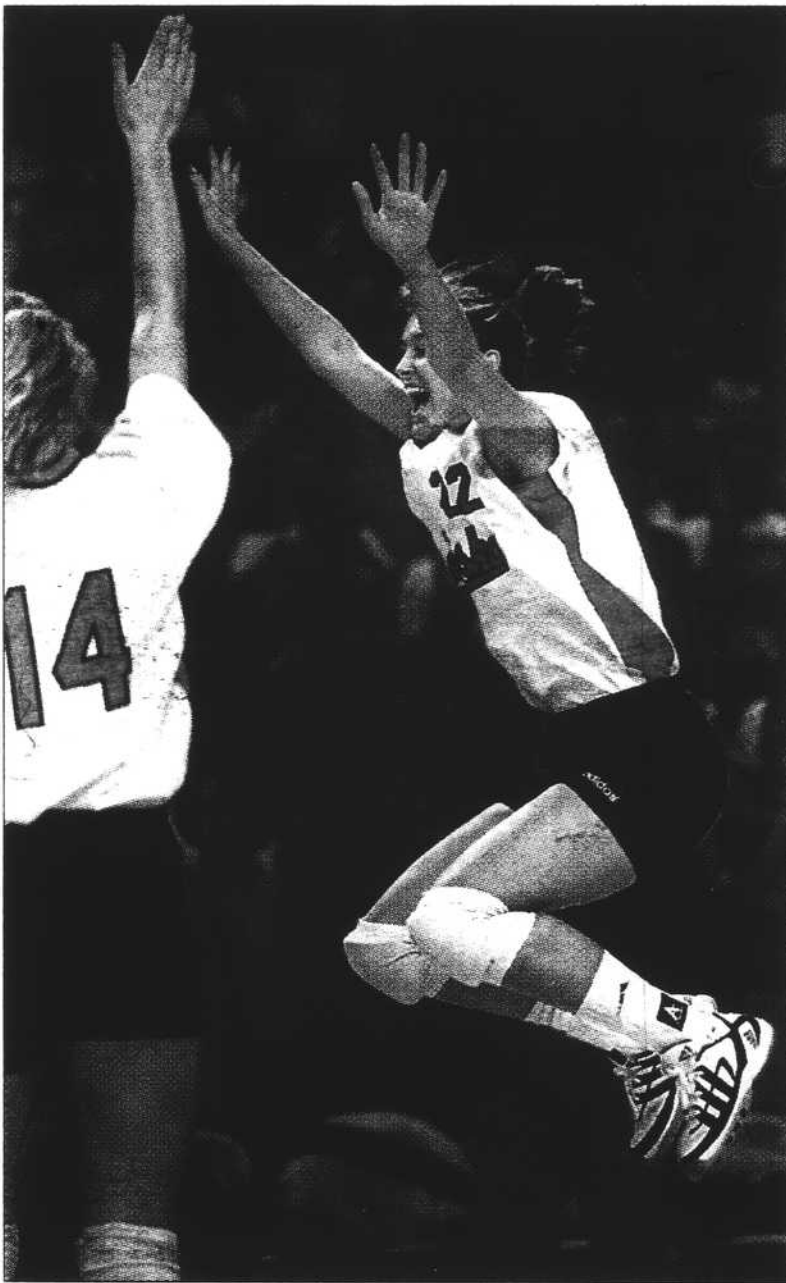
"The cheerleaders, they love to cheer for us, and I love them. The band, I love them all," Tauke said.

Tauke's roommate, junior setter Fiona Nepo, said Tauke's enthusiasm doesn't stay at the coliseum. It follows her home.

"She's so active. I mean, when I'm tired I need to sleep, but she always has to be doing something," Nepo said.

Tauke made an immediate presence when she came to Nebraska last year.

Please see TAUKE on 8



MATT MILLER/DN
TONIA TAUKE brings a big block and a spark off the bench for the Huskers this season. Tauke, a fan favorite, averages more than one solo block per game.

Reitsma finds new feelings in final season

By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Assignment Reporter

Uncertainty is not a common feeling for Lisa Reitsma.

An outside hitter on the Nebraska volleyball team, Reitsma has played in two Final Fours and one national championship match.

Reitsma, the Cornhuskers' only senior, has earned two first-team All-America honors while playing on teams that lost only six matches in three seasons.

But NU's four losses in its past seven matches have left Reitsma and the Huskers searching for answers to questions that never seem to disappear.

Nebraska's six defeats this season equal NU's total losses in Reitsma's first three years. And for the first time while playing at Nebraska, uncertainty consumes Reitsma.

"I'm frustrated in the way things have been going and in myself," Reitsma said. "I've never lost in anything in my life."

"I told the team I didn't know what to do. I said 'What do you need me to do?' But I guess I just need to play with confidence. I need to play with joy and energy and not fear."

Reitsma said the entire team needs to play with that philosophy, something she said it accomplished Saturday in a three-game victory over Oklahoma.

Reitsma showed few signs of fear against the Sooners, hammering hitting .529 with 30 kills, a school

Please see REITSMA on 8

California fills empty spot in NU football schedule

By SAM MCKEOWN
Staff Reporter

Next season, Nebraska football fans can pencil in a trip to the golden state of California for a Cornhusker road game.

The University of California at Berkeley, a member of the Pacific-10 Conference, has been selected as the final opponent for NU's regular season, non-conference schedule in 1998 and 1999, replacing Houston. The Cougars

dropped the Huskers from their schedule last month.

NU will play at California on Sept. 11, 1998, and the Golden Bears will visit Lincoln on Sept. 11, 1999.

Nebraska Athletic Director Bill Byrne said California became an open school when it was forced to drop San Jose State, opening up Nebraska as a possible opponent for a home-and-home series.

"It was lucky on both parts," Byrne said. "It was lucky that we were at a joint meeting together

and we sat down and talked about it, and that's how it got done."

Byrne said it will be a good opportunity for 20,000 NU alumni living in northern California to see the Huskers. The university is near the San Francisco/Oakland area.

California Athletic Director John Kasser said Nebraska provides the Golden Bear fans with one its best non-conference games ever.

"We really wanted to upgrade our schedule because that's what the fans want," he said. "We think

bringing in the No. 1 team in the country is a terrific draw."

California is 3-5 this season and 1-4 in the Pac-10. California has made trips to the Aloha, Alamo, and Florida Citrus bowls in the past six seasons.

Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said the addition of California to the next two schedules is positive for the Huskers, who wanted avoid a situation like this year, when Akron and Central Florida were

Please see BEARS on 8