

One more chance

DeForge concentrates on final opportunity for victory

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With her elbows resting on her knees and her fingers interlaced, Anna DeForge leans forward and stares at the red carpet in the women's basketball meeting room at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The senior guard has spent countless portions of her afternoons in the room discussing Nebraska's strategies. For three years, she has joined her teammates before every season to focus on new goals.

But it's different this season.

DeForge earned first-team All-Big 12 Conference honors last season. She led the Huskers in scoring 19 times and became the 16th player in NU history to score more than 1,000 points. She achieved honorable mention All-American status in 1996.

DeForge has won many honors, though her greatest goal has eluded her for three years.

Sitting in the meeting room, concentrating on the red carpet at her feet, DeForge spoke slowly, her eyes holding a steady gaze.

Planning her goals this season means more than it ever has before.

"My major focus is to win the Big 12 or just to get a ring somehow," DeForge said. "I think there would be something missing if I didn't. I would feel like I came up a little short, like maybe my four years were a little incomplete because I didn't get what I wanted."

"But either way, I'll be happy with the way our class and the

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EMILY THOMPSON
senior Husker player

classes before us have taken this program to another level. You can see the progress the team has made, and it makes you so proud.”

DeForge contributed as much as any one player to the Cornhuskers' improvement over the past three years. NU Coach Paul Sanderford said DeForge, who led Nebraska in scoring and assists and finished second on the team in rebounds last season, offers the Huskers a solid all-around package.

"She's a total player," Sanderford said. "And the thing that she presents to opponents is that she's a 5-11 guard who can take people into the post. If opponents try to put smaller or quicker guards on her, we'll take advantage of her strength down there."

DeForge — who Sanderford said has the ability to play professionally next year — does not expect her all-around responsibilities to change much in Sanderford's first season at Nebraska. DeForge spent



ABOVE: ANNA DEFORGE has made the Bob Devaney Sports Center her home the last three seasons. The senior from Niagra, Wis., wants to add a Big 12 Championship trophy to her hardware collection.

RIGHT: TYRONN LUE looks small among his teammates. But the junior point guard from Mexico, Mo., has made it a point to be a leader this season for the Huskers.

the majority of her career playing under former Coach Angela Beck.

"As seniors, we just looked at this as a new opportunity," DeForge said. "I think it could be hard if we had not chosen to look at it that way."

"This is going to be our last year, so we just have to take things day by day, knowing that it means a lot more to us."

A leader by example on the court, DeForge found herself in a new vocal leadership position when Sanderford arrived at Nebraska, one that DeForge said she isn't entirely comfortable with.

"She's not a rah-rah type player," Sanderford said. "That's just not her personality. But she's very intense, and she will become more vocal. It's something she needs to do, although I think she'd just prefer to go about business and play."

DeForge's experience and physical example on the court sets a

standard for others on the team, senior Emily Thompson said.

"Anna is so smart," Thompson said. "She really knows basketball. The coaches only have to tell her something one time, and she will remember it. If it's a mistake, she won't make it again. She really guides everybody with her knowledge of the game."

DeForge hopes to translate that knowledge and experience this season into Nebraska's first-ever league championship. NU returns 12 players from last year's 19-9 team, including its top two scorers.

"I don't think you ever want your career to end," DeForge said. "But you know it's going to end sooner or later. So I wish I weren't a senior. But because I am, I can't look to the past, I have to look to the future."

"I have to do everything I can to take advantage of this one last year."

