

Sports Opinion



Antone Oseka Tech would have made bad match

Tom Osborne's biggest criticism of the Big 12 Conference championship game was almost realized in only the conference's second season of existence.

When the game was proposed, Osborne was against it, saying that if a team were running for the national championship, it could play a team it's already beaten. Many people said that if a team loses to a team in the other division, it wouldn't be the best team in its own division. Osborne's argument, they said, was unfounded and shouldn't happen.

Let's look at this season and see how close the 25-year coach of the Huskers was to being on the money.

Nebraska beat Texas Tech 29-0 the fifth game of the season. Tech lost again in the conference, to North Division team Kansas State, but is undefeated in the Big 12 South Division. AND, the Red Raiders already played the two teams they're tied with for the Big 12 south lead: Texas A&M and Oklahoma State.

The result - Tech beat both teams and proved itself the best team in the South, at a 5-4 overall and 4-2 record in the conference. It should be facing the Huskers for the conference championship. Instead, Nebraska will face the 7-2 Aggies on Dec. 6 for the Big 12 title. Why isn't Tech facing Nebraska again?

Honor. Tech declared itself ineligible for postseason play after an embarrassing situation earlier this year. Tech had numerous academically ineligible athletes competing on grass and floors all over Lubbock. In fact, it had two players academically ineligible on its 1993 national championship women's basketball team. Tech knew it was wrong and is willing to discipline itself. That makes Tech look better than a Longhorn miracle last season.

It seems the arguments that were unfounded were the people who tried to prove Osborne wrong. A team can lose all the non-conference and out-of-division games it wants to. What matters is its record in its division.

For now, Osborne doesn't have to face off against Spike Dykes and a familiar Tech opponent. He can hold his criticism for at least one year longer.

But, it does kind of make you wonder, huh?

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

Huskers face second test

By SAM MCKEWON
Staff Reporter

Men's Basketball
Western Illinois vs. Nebraska
Bob Devaney Center, 7:05 p.m.

Despite not having a senior in its starting lineup, the Nebraska men's basketball team has an advantage in experience over its second opponent of the young season, Western Illinois.

The Leathernecks welcome nine new players to their roster after a 19-10 campaign in 1996 and a second-place finish behind Valparaiso in the Mid Continent Conference. WIU also lost its two top players in the front court, forwards Janthony Joseph and Clint Ford.

Western Illinois Coach Jim Kerwin said it will be a tough task to beat the Huskers (1-0) tonight at the Bob Devaney Sports Center at 7:05 with such a young team.

"It's hard to start out the season against a veteran team when you're not one," he said. "We know this is not going to be an easy game for us."

Despite the Leathernecks' youth and their preseason loss to Pella Windows, a team the Huskers beat by 20, NU Coach Danny Nee is expecting a tougher game than the one Nebraska experienced Sunday against UNC-Greensboro. Nebraska beat the Spartans 75-51, and at one time led by 39 points.

Nee said there's plenty to challenge the Huskers beyond WIU tonight.

"We still have a lot of things that we have to work on," Nee said. "Our defense can still get better, and we need improvement offensively, too."

Nebraska has already seen improvement in the play of junior forward Andy Markowski. Markowski set career highs in both points and rebounds against UNCG, with 16 and

11, respectively.

Markowski has become a central key to the success of NU's system, Nee said.

"He just has so much more confidence now," Nee said. "He is the perfect complimentary player to this team. We're asking him to do a lot of things now."

Containing Markowski and NU junior center Venson Hamilton could be a problem for the Leathernecks. Kerwin said he had yet to decide on front court starters, saying that only senior guards Mark Buckingham and Tony Ackerman and junior guard Brandon Creason will be penciled in as starters before game time.

Kerwin said he has a great deal of respect for Nebraska's inside/outside combination of Hamilton and junior guard Tyrone Lue.

"Hamilton is a force in the middle who can move around and knows how to block shots," Kerwin said. "You

put him with Lue, who is one of the fine guards in the nation, and there's a lot you have to stop."

Nee said he will start Lue, sophomore guard Cookie Belcher, junior forward Larry Florence, Markowski, and Hamilton. Florence did not play in the first game because of disciplinary reasons.

Note:

Freshman guard Todd Smith returned to practice Monday, and Nee said Smith is planned for a tentative return to action by the Ameritas Classic by Dec. 5.

Smith will be groomed as the backup to Lue at point guard, which Nee said is an important piece to the NU puzzle.

"Todd played the point all through high school, so that's his natural position," he said. "We would certainly like to have a guy that can back up Tyrone when we need him."

Western Kentucky awaits Sanderford

By DARREN IVY
Staff Reporter

A great basketball team wins even when it's not playing its best.

In a WNIT second-round game against Alabama on Sunday, the Nebraska women's basketball team committed 30 turnovers, but still won 74-66.

"I am proud that we found a way to win," said Coach Paul Sanderford whose team entered The Associated Press rankings at No. 21 on Monday. "We are not nearly the team we are going to be later in the season."

The Huskers were able to win because they outrebounded and outshot the Crimson Tide from the free-throw line.

But the turnovers were a problem, Sanderford said.

In the Huskers' first-round game against Miami (Ohio) on Friday, the Huskers had 30 turnovers but still won 88-54. In the two exhibition games NU had 17 and 29 turnovers.

"We have to cut that number in half to have a chance to win (against Western Kentucky)," Sanderford said. NU plays its WNIT semifinal game Thursday at 4 p.m. against No. 15 Western Kentucky, a team Sanderford coached for 15 years before taking over the NU coaching position this season.

Sanderford said the turnovers are coming as a result of two things: unfamiliarity with the offense and

impatience with the ball.

"The good thing about our turnovers is that some of them are coming when we are going north and south," Sanderford said. "If you run and push the ball, you will turn it over some. That's part of the game and we don't worry about that a whole lot."

The thing that bothers Sanderford, he said, are the unforced turnovers.

"Things like forcing the ball in the post, not catching the ball or bouncing it off our foot are the turnovers we can not have," Sanderford said.

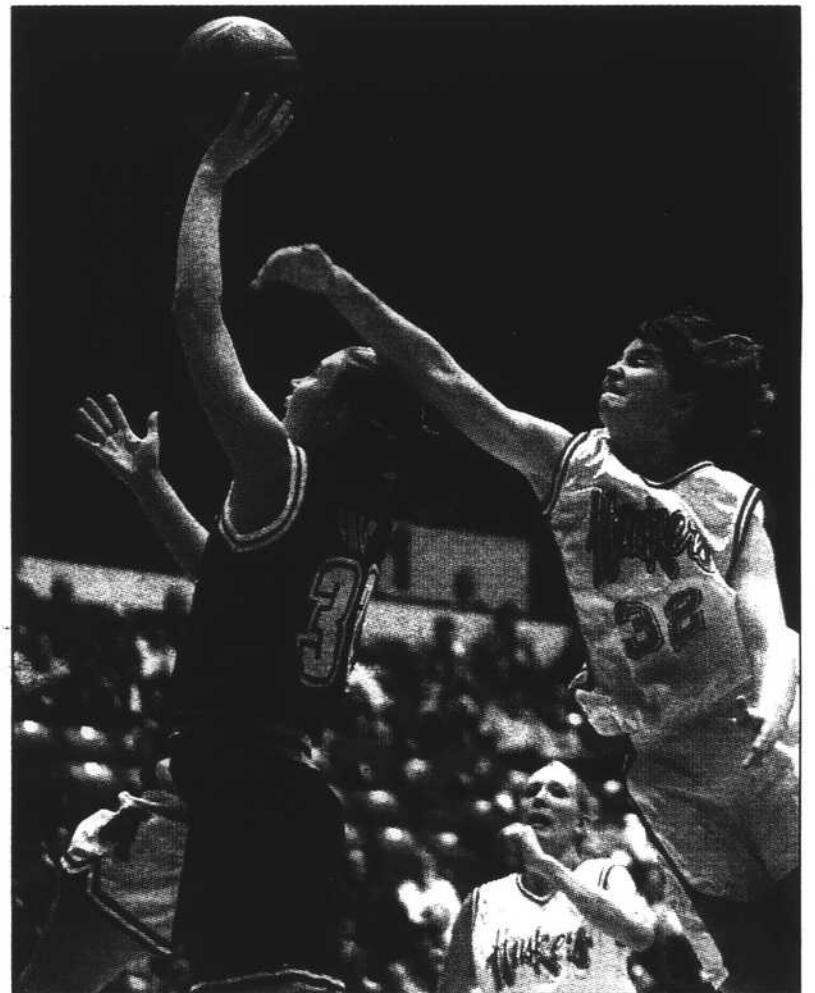
If NU can cut down turnovers and continue to rebound and shoot free throws, it will have a chance to win against Western Kentucky and other top teams in the country, Sanderford said.

Against No. 11 Alabama on Sunday, NU had 44 rebounds, compared to 33 for UA. NU also outshot Alabama from the line. NU shot 84 percent, and UA was 54 percent for the game.

Free-throw shooting has improved from 52 percent in the first exhibition game against Slavyanka.

Senior forward Jami Kubik said NU has worked on free-throw shooting in practice and outside of it because the Huskers know it is a big factor. She said they have a drill where they start with 21 points and then shoot free throws.

"If we don't get down to zero, we run a line drill for each one above zero," Kubik said.



RYAN SODERLIN/DN
NEBRASKA GUARD Nicole Kubik tries to block Alabama guard Leah Goss' shot Sunday. Kubik led the Huskers in steals with five.

Tournament challenge excites Franck

By JAY SAUNDERS
Assignment Reporter

Tanya Franck loves a challenge.

Ever since the defender from Toronto arrived at Nebraska from Arkansas-Little Rock in 1994, she has had to overcome a great deal of obstacles.

Those obstacles, Franck said, have only made her stronger.

"I live for a challenge," Franck said. "It gets the adrenaline rushing. To have something you have to overcome is a big boost."

After a 5-1 first round NCAA Tournament win over Michigan, NU Coach John Walker said Franck played a great game.

"I live for a challenge. It gets the adrenaline rushing."

TANYA FRANCK
Nebraska defender

"On Sunday she played really well," Walker said. "She won so many balls. That is such an overlooked statistic."

One of the biggest challenges of her college career is staring down at her Sunday as the seventh-ranked Huskers prepare to play No. 2 Notre Dame.

A win against the Irish, a perennial soccer power, would extend Franck's career. But a loss would mean her college soccer career is over.

A lot of people may buckle under that pressure, but Franck said she thrives on it.

"(The Notre Dame game) could either extend my college career or end it quickly," Franck said. "It makes the game a little more exciting. I get more pumped up."

To get to this point in her career, Franck has had to come a long way. In her first year at Nebraska, she tied for third on the team in points scored. Franck had an assist on the Cornhuskers' first-ever goal.

Then in the beginning of the 1995 season, Franck tore the anterior crucial ligament in her left knee. She was gone for the entire season. But for Franck, it was just another challenge.

"I knew I would come back," Franck said. "There was no doubt."

She did come back to Nebraska, and to the Canadian National Team.

In the 1996 season, Franck contributed on a Husker team that finished with a 23-1 record.

That summer, Franck played with the Canadians. She played the entire game against the U.S. National Team.

Please see FRANCK on 8