

Sports Opinion



Mike Kluck

Memories surface as career ends

At the beginning of this semester I wrote a column saying that at times this season, I was going to sit back and just savor Tom Osborne's 25th season.

Considering the events of last week, I'm glad I did.

I walked the sidelines as I watched Nebraska's dominating win over Washington. I stood on the Memorial Stadium turf as the fireworks exploded for Osborne's 25th victory, and I yelled at Missouri fans to get off the field when Matt Davison made his diving catch in Columbia, Mo.

Then on Wednesday I sat front and center at the press conference that, as a journalist, one wants to attend, but as a Nebraska fan one never wants to see — Osborne's retirement announcement.

Now it's on to the Orange Bowl to watch, view or soak in Osborne's final game.

If only this game was played in the old Orange Bowl and not Pro Player Stadium. For it was the old Orange Bowl where Osborne's legend truly began and a 17-year-old's admiration and respect for the coach blossomed.

In 1983, NU completed an undefeated season and went to Miami to face the hometown Hurricanes for a championship battle.

I was 17 at the time, a senior in high school. Somehow I convinced my parents 10 days before the game to let me go — by myself.

After two days in Orlando, I flew down to Miami on Jan. 2, 1984. I got a \$70 room near the airport — it makes many dorm rooms look spacious — and I took a city bus to the stadium.

I bought every souvenir I could: two hats, a program, a foam hand with a No. 1 index finger and two shirts.

I sat in the stands as two Miami fans walked by and jeered the Husker fans and then shivered as the guy two rows behind me stood up and yelled, "Go back to Cuba."

I cheered my voice away as Nebraska pulled within one point with 48 seconds remaining, and then I shouted and cursed when Turner Gill's pass hit the turf.

Then slowly, and at times thinking I was going to die, I made my way with my souvenirs out of the Orange Bowl and back to the bus stop.

Despite the loss, and disappointment, I was proud to be a Nebraskan that night, for we had a coach with the courage to go for the win.

It's those memories and that game that will always stay with me, and it's something Tom Osborne has given to me and countless Husker fans.

So as one last memory in Miami awaits, thanks for everything, Coach.

Kluck is a journalism graduate student and the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.

Long Beach slugs NU

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Assignment Reporter

LONG BEACH, Calif. — The conclusion to a seasonlong lesson hit the Nebraska volleyball team with a final realization Saturday night.

Top-ranked Long Beach State schooled the young Cornhuskers on the 49ers' home court in the NCAA Tournament Pacific Regional championship match. A 15-9, 15-9, 15-3 loss ended NU's year and taught the Huskers that, at the highest level, youth plus enthusiasm and heart equals nothing but a broken heart when facing experience.

"Long Beach was just a better team than us," NU Coach Terry Pettit said. "They exploited our weaknesses before we really had a chance to make a run of it."

"But I was proud of our team the entire match. We are a team that was rattled at midseason, but we hung in there and we came back and made a good run at the end of the season."

Long Beach advances to the Final Four, where it will play Stanford Thursday in Spokane, Wash. Penn State and Florida meet in the other semifinal.

The Huskers (27-7), who list 10 freshmen and sophomores on their 15-player roster, entered Saturday's battle riding a 12-match win streak after losing four of six in October. But the Huskers could not overcome the firepower of the 49ers (33-1).

Defensively, Long Beach limited the Huskers to a .142 hitting percentage, while outdigging Nebraska 75-53.

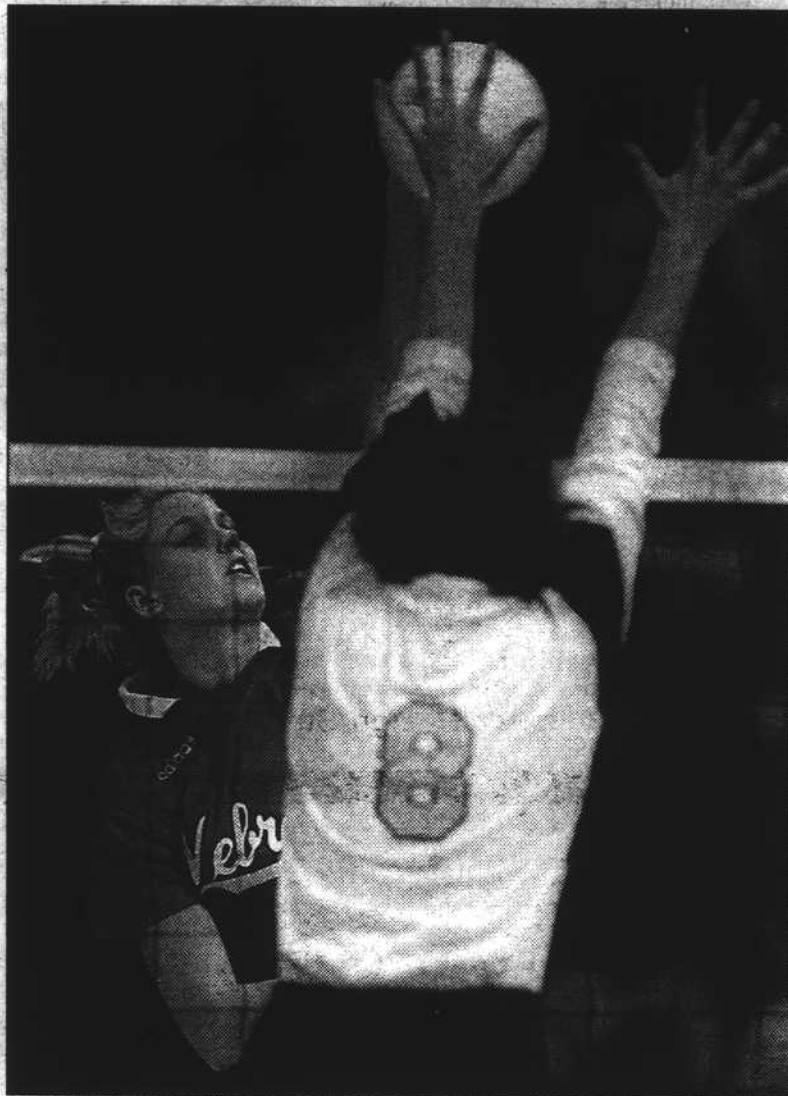
LBSU setter Misty May, the Pacific Region's most valuable player who is considered a favorite to win the national player-of-the-year award, stung the Huskers with 38 assists, 10 kills and 15 digs.

But more often than not, Nebraska played the part of its own worst enemy.

After recording 19 service errors in a 15-13, 12-15, 14-16, 15-7, 15-12 victory over Southern California Friday night, Nebraska erred 14 times at the service line against the 49ers.

NU, ranked No. 9, lost the first game when Nepo and middle blocker Katie Jahnke failed to connect at the net, the second game on a shot to the floor by LBSU middle blocker Benishe Dillard and the third when Dillard and Dana Bulteman blocked Angie Oxley.

"We weren't as good as we needed to be to compete beyond nine points,"



ALL-AMERICAN Lisa Reitsma hammers an attack against the block of Long Beach State's Anja Grabovac Saturday night. The 49ers swept NU to end the Huskers' season.

Pettit said. "We had some windows of opportunity, but we didn't play well enough to step through them."

Playing in her final match, NU's lone senior Lisa Reitsma led both teams with 17 kills after pounding 28 kills with a .390 hitting percentage against USC. Mandy Monson totaled nine kills and a .333 hitting mark but left halfway through the match with a pulled hamstring and an injured knee.

Senior Jenn Snyder led Long Beach State with 12 kills.

Nepo, who joined Reitsma on the Pacific all-region team, said NU expects a different outcome in 1998.

"Whenever a team loses, the younger players are already looking to next season," Nepo said. "We've

matured this season. Everybody on our team made the decision (during NU's slump) to refocus. We weren't just along for the ride."

That was clear as the young Huskers embraced Reitsma, as she cried at center court after the match.

"I'm very optimistic," Pettit said. "We lose a great player in Lisa Reitsma, but we're really a good young team that's just going to get better. I was glad we were able to push ourselves to this point so that we could experience this."

"And I told the team that while I was proud of them, our goal next year is not to finish second in the regional finals."

Stakes set high in Miami

BY ANTONE OSEKA
Senior Reporter

Peyton Manning isn't a happy man right now. Too many things have gone wrong for him the past few days.

Manning, the seasonlong favorite to win this year's Heisman Trophy, sat and watched while Michigan cornerback Charles Woodson brought home the Manning award Saturday night in New York, the first defensive player ever to win the award.

A few days earlier, one of the most revered coaches in college football, Tom Osborne, retired — three weeks before Manning's Tennessee Volunteers play Osborne's Nebraska Cornhuskers in the Orange

Bowl at 7 p.m., Jan. 2, at Pro Player Stadium in Miami.

The matchup in Miami now appears less appealing for No. 3 Tennessee (11-1).

No. 2 Nebraska comes in undefeated at 12-0 and looking to give Osborne his 25th victory and at least a share of his third national title in his last game.

"Maybe if we can take him out, we can move our draft status up a few spots," senior defensive tackle Jason Peter joked. "He's probably the best player in college football. He's a great quarterback, and he can move. Peyton can run, but he's not a blazer."

It's not Manning's speed that worries Peter. It's Manning's ability to pick apart a secondary while secure in the pocket.

"You know the kid's got to be good if he's on Letterman already," Peter said of the record-setting quarterback, who will leave Tennessee third all time on the NCAA passing-yardage charts. "(The Nebraska

Orange Bowl
Nebraska vs. Tennessee

defensive backs) are going to have to do their job. I know when they want to play, they're one of the better defensive secondaries in the country."

NU Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride said Manning, with the combination of receivers that Tennessee fields, isn't a good thing to dream about at night.

"We always get put in the position where we don't have a choice," McBride said of playing Manning. "Peyton's a little more mobile, I think. He has a little bit more flexibility. With those receivers, it isn't real fun to go home, lie down and think about it."

"Boy, we played some great quarterbacks. There hasn't been one of

Please see MANNING on 9

Men's Basketball
Nebraska 85
Minnesota 68

NU men outlast Gophers

BY DAVID WILSON
Senior Reporter

MINNEAPOLIS — For the first time away from the Bob Devaney Sports Center this season, the Nebraska men's basketball team left the court smiling Saturday night.

The Cornhuskers put their road woes behind them with a 70-66 victory over Minnesota before 14,040 at Williams Arena. NU improved to 8-2 after its first road win of the season as the Gophers fell to 4-3.

"We were down mentally after losing to Creighton," Nebraska guard Cookie Belcher said. "We had to come back and win this one."

After an 84-73 loss to Creighton in Omaha Wednesday, the Huskers regrouped and refocused, point guard Tyrone Lue said.

"Everybody was upset by the Creighton loss," Lue said. "Everybody was mad. We came out here with a lot of intensity and jumped on them early."

Nebraska scored the first 10 points of the game and never looked back. But the Gophers, who made the NCAA Tournament's Final Four last season, didn't go down without a fight.

With 42 seconds remaining, Minnesota guard Sam Jacobson closed the Huskers' lead to one point with a layup that made the score 67-66. The bucket capped a 15-6 Gopher run.

Jacobson then fouled out of the game and sent Lue to the free-throw line with 23 seconds on the clock. Lue buried both shots to the dismay of the hostile crowd, which had erupted during Minnesota's comeback.

"They really picked us up several times through the ballgame," Minnesota Coach Clem Haskins said. "That's one of the key reasons we got back in the game."

Trailing 69-66, Minnesota forward Quincy Lewis, who scored a game-high 24 points, followed by missing two 3-pointers with nine and four seconds remaining.

"The second one looked good," Lewis said. "I thought it was in."

NU center Venson Hamilton grabbed the rebound and, after being fouled, sank a free throw to finish the Gophers.

Hamilton scored 18 points and snagged 15 rebounds as he recorded his eighth double-double in 10 games. Lue also finished with 18 points.

One key to Nebraska's success, Haskins said, was the Huskers' height advantage. NU out-rebounded the Gophers 45-30.

"They miss those big guys," Nebraska Coach Danny Nee said. "That's obvious."

The Huskers also held Jacobson, who was averaging a team-high 13.5 points per game, to just six points.

"It's difficult," Jacobson said. "It's a big change from last year. We just need to get the flow of the offense down."

Nebraska returns to action Dec. 27 in the first round of the Rainbow Classic against Virginia in Honolulu.

"This makes Christmas a little bit more acceptable," Nee said. "We held on at the end and found a way to win."