

Sports Opinion



Andrew Strnad

## Green Bay is better at mediocrity

I CAN'T STAND GREEN BAY PACKERS FANS!

But I am a Packer fan. Let me explain.

I grew up in Milwaukee during the Bart Starr glory years. Not the glory years of Vince Lombardi, but the glory years when Starr was the coach, and the Pack was always 8-8, with an occasional winning 8-7-1 season in there somewhere.

I loved those days, when Lynn Dickey hooked up with John Jefferson and beating the Bears actually meant something.

The fans were as loyal then as they are today, but something happened after the dark Gregg and Infante days.

Some guy named Ron Wolf came along and hired a guy named Holmgren and traded for a quarterback named Favre.

Packer fans started to lose it.

I blame Pittsburgh wide receiver Yancey Thigpen. He dropped a touchdown pass in week 17 back in 1994, giving the Packers their first division title since the Lombardi days.

Ever since then, the Packers have become the most important item in the lives of all 5.2 million Wisconsin residents, most of whom are currently in San Diego for Sunday's Super Bowl against the Denver Broncos.

There was a guy who used to live near me in Milwaukee who painted his van green and gold. It had a large mural of Sterling Sharpe on one side, with Brett Favre on the other.

I've seen goal posts in people's yards, life-size cutouts of Coach Mike Holmgren in picture windows. Not to mention Holmgren look-alike contests, which are quite popular considering that nearly everybody in Wisconsin looks like him.

Big beer gut. Thick mustache. Packers coat.

I'll go to church thinking I won't see any of these wackos, and I'll see about 100 people wearing Packer jerseys, sweatpants and jackets.

Every year it's a Packer Christmas, complete with Packer rosaries. I'm not kidding.

Want to see a Packer wedding? Drive up to Ashwaubenon, Wis. — or any city in Wisconsin.

This sounds painfully similar to the obsession with Nebraska football, but there's a difference.

Packer fans can be very obnoxious. Whether at Lambeau Field or at a bar any day, any time of the week, these people live on a diet of ATF.

Alcohol, tobacco, and football.

Forget the brats and kielbasa. Give these people a case of Blatz and a Packer game to watch, and you'll get pure pandemonium.

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# Texas outguns Huskers

By MIKE FINGER  
The Daily Texan

Men's Basketball

Nebraska	91
Texas	105

AUSTIN, Texas — After posting just 53 points in its victory over Oklahoma Sunday, the Nebraska men's basketball team entered its matchup with Texas Wednesday night ready to push up the tempo.

Unfortunately for the Cornhuskers, the Longhorns gave them more than they bargained for.

Texas blew open the fast-paced contest with a 14-2 run midway through the second half, and the Horns held on down the stretch to put the Huskers away 105-91.

"It was a tough road game," Nebraska Coach Danny Nee said.

"We probably played 25 minutes of basketball, but against a team like Texas you have to play all 40."

Nebraska fell to 12-6 overall and 3-2 in Big 12 Conference, but didn't lose any ground on conference-leading Baylor (10-6 and 5-1), which lost to Colorado Wednesday. Texas improved to 8-9 and 2-4.

After leading for the majority of the first half, the Huskers fell victim to a scorching UT shooting performance after the break.

NU point guard Tyronn Lue scored 16 points and had six assists in

the first half, which helped the Huskers jump out to an early lead. Lue, who finished with 23 points, scored in double figures for the 35th consecutive game.

"(Lue) carried us and carried us tonight," Nee said. "I thought he played great, and we can't ask for more from him."

Nebraska took a 44-43 lead into the locker room at halftime, but Texas battled back in the second half.

The Horns converted on 10 of their first 12 possessions, as freshman center Chris Mihm began to take control in the paint.

Nebraska managed to match Texas' offensive output up until the 12-minute mark, when the Horns took control for good. Ahead 69-67,

UT's Kris Clack hit back-to-back 3-pointers to spark a huge Horns run that put Nebraska in a 16-point hole four minutes later.

"Everything was clicking for us," Clack said. "We knew we were going to have a breakout game someday, and I think this was it."

Both squads played solid on offense for most of the night, as nine different players combined to reach double digits in scoring.

Behind Lue, NU's Cookie Belcher added 19 points and Andy Markowski scored a career-high 17.

The Horns were led by Mihm's game-high 29 points. Luke Axtell added 25, and Clack's 22 points

Please see TEXAS on 8



MATT MILLER/DN

BILL MULHOLLAND, Nebraska's lone senior, captains the sixth-ranked men's gymnastics team this season.

## Huskers vault into action

By DARREN IVY  
Assignment Reporter

Four returning national qualifiers and a top recruit have Francis Allen excited about his team's chance to win a record-tying ninth national championship.

"If we can stay healthy, we will be as good as any team in the country," said Allen, coach of the Nebraska men's gymnastics team.

Avoiding injuries will be important, because there are only seven athletes on the team. Allen said five of the gymnasts will compete in the all-around this year.

One of the top returners who will compete in the all-around for the first time is Marshall Nelson, a two-time NCAA champion, four-time All-American and school-record holder in the parallel bars.

In 1997, Nelson competed in five of the six events — excluding the still rings — and claimed national titles in the parallel bars and pommel horse while earning All-America status in the vault.

Allen thinks Nelson should be considered a favorite to win the all-around this year.

"I think he is going to be the most decorated gymnast at the NCAA Championships," Allen said. "He is definitely a key player and one of the

leaders on the team.

"He has established a name for himself. When he competes, people know he is a champion. Marshall is going to reap the harvest this year. He is going to see some really good scores, and he's earned it."

Another gymnast who has established himself is senior Bill Mulholland, a two-time NCAA qualifier. Last year he ranked eighth nationally in the all-around and his average score was 57.247.

"I often tell people that scoring a 57 in the all-around is like running a four-minute mile," Allen said. "Bill averaged better than a 57 all year. That is a tremendous feat. He looks like he is going to have a tremendous year, and I think he is going to average no less than a 57.50."

Other returning national qualifiers are sophomores Derek Leiter and Blake Bukacek.

Last year, Leiter, a Lincoln Southeast graduate, was ranked 10th in the all-around and ended the season with a 12th-place finish at the NCAA Championships.

Bukacek, a Lincoln High graduate, qualified for nationals in the horizontal bars.

NU also will rely heavily on 22-year-old freshman, Jason Hardabura, a member of the Canadian National Team since 1993. Hardabura will be Allen's first foreign athlete, but

"We are going to set the tone at this meet for the year."

BILL MULHOLLAND  
Nebraska captain

according to Allen he has the potential to be one of the best gymnasts in NU's legendary history.

"He's the best recruit coming in here in a long, long time," Allen said. "He's not the best 18-year-old freshman, because he's not 18, but he is the best freshman I have had, other than Jim Hartung. He's better than Scott Johnson, and (Johnson) was an (Olympic) gold medalist in 1984."

The Huskers' first test of the year will come Friday and Saturday at the Rocky Mountain Open in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The meet will feature five of the top 19 preseason teams including No. 4 Oklahoma and No. 10 New Mexico, but Mulholland said NU is just worried about itself.

"We are going to set the tone at this meet for the year," Mulholland said. "We won this meet last year, and we are going back to win it again this year."

Women's Basketball

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## NU women can't handle Bear attack

By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Senior Reporter

Nebraska Women's Basketball Coach Paul Sanderford knew the Cornhuskers needed to enter their Wednesday night game against Baylor mentally prepared.

But the game appeared to be the furthest thing from the Huskers' minds.

Baylor (11-5 overall and 4-2 in the Big 12 Conference) defeated 19th-ranked NU (14-6 and 3-3) 76-71 at the Ferrell Center in Waco, Texas.

Nebraska is now 1-4 on the road in league games.

"I don't know what the heck we were doing," Sanderford said on his post-game radio show. "We were space cadets out there."

Despite NU's lack of concentration, the Huskers put themselves in position to steal a road victory late in the contest.

After trailing by more than 10 points for most of the second half, NU cut Baylor's lead to five when Anna DeForge hit two consecutive 3-point field goals to make the score 71-66 with 2:06 left in the game.

BU and the Huskers then traded turnovers before DeForge — who led the Huskers with 28 points and 12 rebounds — nailed her second shot in a minute, bringing NU within three. DeForge scored 10 points in the final 1:31.

But foul trouble and poor free-throw shooting were too much for Nebraska to overcome in the final minute.

The Huskers converted only 16 of 35 free-throw attempts

Jami Kubik, Nicole Kubik, Brooke Schwartz, Charlie Rogers and Cori McDill fouled out of the game, while DeForge played part of the second half with four fouls.

"I'm not complaining about the officiating," Sanderford said, "but for the last three weeks the Big 12 teams have been beating each other up. Then tonight, we have the commissioner and a supervisor there, and they call every touch. We didn't adjust our defense to that."

Sanderford said Baylor's pressure defense also hurt Nebraska, which plays host to Texas next Wednesday.

"Mentally, we were in left field all night," Sanderford said. "I'll take the blame. The girls played hard but they didn't execute. We weren't prepared tonight. I'll have them prepared next Wednesday."