

Sports Opinion



Shannon Heffelfinger

## Patience will bring more fans

What's the secret to getting more fans at Nebraska women's basketball games?

NU Coach Paul Sanderford was confident the answer would come after viewing fans at other Nebraska sporting events.

"I walk into the Coliseum and see 4,000 fans cheering at volleyball games," Sanderford said earlier this season. "and it makes me believe that there isn't any reason we can't get it done for women's basketball."

Four months later the answer is still a secret because, well, it's just not happening.

And if attendance figures through NU's first 20 games are any indication, it's not going to happen soon. The Cornhuskers are averaging 2,068 fans at home games this season.

The number is about 1,300 less than last season's record-setting total, but it's expected to go up because several key conference games have yet to be played.

But 2,068 is about 10,000 fewer than Sanderford would like and about 2,000 fewer than what could be considered a reasonable goal this season.

So what's the deal? Nebraska plays the majority of its home games on Wednesday nights, so there's not a lot of other things for it to compete with.

And the Huskers are fun to watch. So is Sanderford. Their up-tempo style and sound defense vaulted them to a No. 11 ranking earlier this season. The ranking was the highest in the program's history.

Sanderford, who has grown a little impatient with the lack of fan enthusiasm, has targeted students. First, he arranged for "reminder" tickets to be mailed to students, who can attend NU's games for free.

He's even started a shuttle service from the residence halls to the Bob Devaney Sports Center on game nights.

But for all of this, students have been practically nonexistent at Husker games.

Sanderford is determined, but he is not a patient man. He wants to win, and he's probably going to. He wants fans in the seats, and he wanted them there yesterday.

But yesterday is too soon when you're trying to create an image for a program which few students knew anything about until a couple years ago.

There's no secret to getting fans in the seats at women's basketball games. The only answer is time.

And, of course, a little patience.

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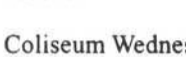
# NU falls flat in second half

BY ANDREW STRNAD  
Staff Reporter

MANHATTAN, Kan. — It was just one of those nights.

A second half in which the Nebraska basketball team could score only 19 points doomed the Cornhuskers (13-7 overall and 4-3 in the Big 12 Conference) as Kansas State downed NU 72-49 before 9,085 at Bramlage Coliseum Wednesday night.

Belcher



Men's Basketball

Nebraska 49  
Kansas St. 72

Things started off poorly for the Huskers. The Wildcats (13-5 and 4-4) raced to a 17-9 lead with the help of four 3-point baskets. That early run was an omen for the things to come. Kansas State later went on runs of 7-0, 10-2 and 17-2 near the end of the game.

"It was our worst performance of the year," NU Coach Danny Nee said. "We couldn't stop their runs during the game. They ran the show from start to finish."

The Huskers shot a season-low

33 percent in the game, including a wretched 8 of 41 (19.5 percent) in the second half.

At one point Nebraska went 6:44 without a single field goal in the second half. A KSU "defense by committee" kept NU junior Tyrone Lue to a season-low seven points, more than 14 points below his average. It was the first time Lue was kept out of double figures in 36 games. He finished 3 of 14 from the field, and 1 of 4 from 3-point range.

Lue was guarded by as many as four different players during the game, and they forced Lue to make his teammates create offensively.

"They kept a man waiting for me in the middle of the lane," Lue said. "They just played great defense on

all of us."

Junior Venson Hamilton and sophomore Cookie Belcher were the only Huskers to contribute much offensively. Belcher scored eight of his 10 points in the second half, while Hamilton had a team-high 15.

The Wildcats had no problem distributing the ball. Four players finished with more than 10 points for KSU, led by Shawn Rhodes, who had 16.

Belcher said the quick start by the Wildcats hurt the Huskers early in the first half, leading to a poor night of shooting by NU.

"They came out hitting 3-point-

Please see KSU on 8

## DeForge spells UT's demise

Women's Basketball

Texas 75  
Nebraska 87

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Senior Reporter

Everything that could have gone right Wednesday night for the Nebraska women's basketball team did, and the result was just what the Cornhuskers wanted.

NU (15-6 overall and 4-3 in the Big 12 Conference) employed a nearly flawless offensive attack to defeat Texas 87-75 in front of 2,525 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. The Longhorns fell to 7-10 and 2-5.

The Huskers improved to 11-0 at home this season.

"We met almost every goal we set tonight," Nebraska Coach Paul Sanderford said. "We wanted to score 85, and we scored 87. We wanted to shoot 50 percent, and we did. We wanted to have a good assist-to-turnover ratio and we did that too."

"Offensively, we knew what we were looking for."

The Cornhuskers looked early and often to Anna DeForge. The All-America senior — who has scored 20 or more points in five of NU's last six games — punished the Longhorns' defense for 25 points and six assists while playing all 40 minutes of the contest.

"Anna played her best game of the year," Sanderford said. "She did several good things out there for us tonight."

With UT leading 20-12 with 11:49 left in the first half, DeForge helped ignite Nebraska with three field goals during a 15-0 Husker run.

Jami Kubik, Nicole Kubik, Brooke Schwartz and Emily Thompson also contributed to the scoring in the Huskers' key run.

"We didn't show patience in defending DeForge," Texas Coach Jody Conradt said. "There's no doubt that she is a star. No one will shut her down."

"But tonight, the others were also effective. We gave up easy baskets to players who do a very good job of filling their roles around DeForge."

Nine players scored for Nebraska, and the bench account-



SCOTT MCCLURG/DN  
NU GUARD Anna DeForge attempts a shot over Texas' Vanessa Wallace in the first half Wednesday night at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. DeForge finished the game with 25 points as the Huskers defeated the Longhorns 87-75.

ed for 28 points and 15 of NU's 39 rebounds.

Sanderford was also pleased with the play of centers Thompson and Rogers, who combined for 12 rebounds and 20 points.

"That was really huge," Sanderford said. "People forget that when we were beating teams like Alabama, we were getting 20 to 25 minutes out of Emily."

"She went into a funk, and it's tough to get that back. But she's a totally different player than she has been the last few weeks."

But Conradt said it was the

Huskers' defense that hurt Texas.

Nebraska relied on a 1-3-1 zone in an attempt to limit the Longhorns' offensive production in the post. Center Angela Jackson scored a season-high 18 points, but Conradt said NU's trapping out of the zone confused UT at times during the first half.

"We had some difficulty adjusting," Conradt said. "Then we never could dig ourselves out of the hole we made."

"Good teams don't let you come back on their home floor. It was hard for us to find momentum after we lost it."

## Hawaii lineman commits

BY DAVID WILSON  
Sports Editor

Tony Tata had never seen snow until he arrived in Lincoln for the first time earlier this month.

"It was awesome," Tata said with a laugh from his home in Honolulu.

But it wasn't just the cold weather that impressed the 6-foot-3, 235-pound defensive lineman.

Tata became the 21st high school athlete to give a verbal commitment to Nebraska Wednesday.

"They're, like, No. 1," Tata said. "What else is there to say? They have everything top-notch. There's nothing else."

Though he also visited Arizona, Colorado, Utah and Washington, Tata said he was impressed with nearly every aspect of the Nebraska program — especially the coaching staff. NU Coach Tom Osborne's retirement last month did not affect Tata's thoughts on the program.

"I talked to Coach Osborne, and I truly believe that nothing will change," Tata said. "There's no difference."

As a senior at St. Louis High School last fall, Tata recorded 74 tackles — including 23 for losses — and wrapped up 10 sacks. The Honolulu Advertiser's defensive player of the year, Tata helped St. Louis High School win its 12th consecutive championship.

Raised in Samoa, Tata moved to Honolulu when he was a sophomore in high school. Leaving Hawaii for college doesn't concern him, he said.

While visiting Lincoln, Tata's host was NU offensive lineman Dominic Raiola, also from St. Louis High School.

"He loves it up there," Tata said.

Tata will become just the second Husker football scholarship recipient from Hawaii. High school athletes cannot sign letters of intent until Wednesday.

Though Tata said he will likely redshirt next fall, he said he hopes to make an impact for the Huskers as soon as he can.

But Tata, who benches 365 pounds and squats more than 400, said he was told by NU Coach Frank Solich that he has some things to work on.

"He's real straightforward," Tata said of Solich. "He told me exactly what I can improve on." Solich and NU Defensive Backs Coach George Darlington visited the Tata household on Wednesday night.