

# Coaches gearing up for future

BASEBALL from page 6

stands to L. Dale Mitchell Park this season. Next year, the Sooners will build a national championship room on the third base side of the ballpark, OU Coach Larry Cochell said.

But some coaches in the Big 12 feel that no matter how many stadium improvements are made, the schools in the northern half of the conference will still be competing at a disadvantage with the southern schools because of the weather.

Although Nebraska and other northern states have experienced above-normal temperatures the last couple of days, the weather in the south is still much warmer. The National Weather Service forecast a high of 49 degrees in Lincoln on Friday, while in Austin, Texas — home of the Longhorns — a high in the lower 70s was forecast.

"I would like to see the season pushed back," Kansas Coach Bobby Randall said. "We all struggle with weather through March. We need to finish the basketball season first so we can promote baseball the way it should be."

The weather also affects team's schedules, Iowa State Coach Lyle Smith said. The Cyclones play their first 24 games on the road this season, which will wear the students and on the institution financially, Smith said.

"Moving the season back would allow the northern schools to get off to a solid base," Smith said. "Obviously, it is easier to win at home."

However, Texas A&M Coach Mark Johnson said moving the season back three weeks probably wouldn't accomplish the goal coaches have in mind.

Johnson said if they move the season back, it should be moved to summer — but even that would generate problems.

"I don't see a great attendance increase at the end of the year," Johnson said. "There is never a level playing field in any sport, and weather certainly will play a factor when talking about baseball. But moving it back three weeks is like barely fixing a flat tire."

# NU's Brink back in swing of gymnastics

BY DARREN IVY  
Assignment Reporter

Watching from the stands at the 1996 Olympics, Heather Brink couldn't help but be proud of Shannon Miller, Kerri Strug and the rest of the United State's gold-medal gymnastics team.



**Brink**  
Newcomer of the Year.

But in the back of her mind were the "what if" questions.

What if she wouldn't have gotten hurt at the 1995 World Trials when she was ranked 10th among American gymnasts? What if she wouldn't have gotten burned out on gymnastics and quit after the world trials? Could that have been her out there winning a gold medal?

"I couldn't blame anyone but myself," Brink said. "I had just had enough of everything and didn't want to deal with (gymnastics) anymore."

One could hardly blame Brink for being exhausted.

She started tumbling on the mats when she was 4 years old. Brink said her parents sent her to the Nebraska School of Gymnastics because they thought she had "too much energy and was ruining the house."

After eight years of gymnastics in Lincoln, Brink said she had learned all she could from her coaches. But she wanted more — she wanted to be an Olympian.

So she left her family in Lincoln and moved to Oklahoma City, where she trained with Miller and six or seven other elite gymnasts at the Dynamo Gymnastics Club.

Though it was hard at first being away from her family, she said the six days a week of eight-hour practices kept her busy.

But after her last of four knee surgeries in 1995, the eight-hour days and

five years away from her family proved too much for Brink, and she quit gymnastics altogether.

She graduated a semester early from Santa Fe High School and returned to Lincoln.

"I had been away from home for so long and I really missed my family and friends," Brink said.

She said the extra time at home and year off from competition helped her regain her love for gymnastics. Once she got her love for the sport back, she decided to stay at home and attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"I made up my mind before looking anywhere else," Brink said.

Coach Dan Kendig was glad she didn't look anywhere else.

"Each year there are a handful (of recruits) that are program makers, who can help take a program to the next level, and she was one of them that year," Kendig said.

As a freshman at UNL, Brink finished 12<sup>th</sup> in the all-around and eighth in the vault at the NCAA Championships.

Looking back on her gym experiences, Brink doesn't regret moving away from home and training at the elite level because she knows that experience has helped her at the collegiate level.

However, four-hour college practices and training in a team atmosphere make college gymnastics more enjoyable, she said.

"Dan and the team have taught me how to make it fun again," Brink said.

Now that she's having fun, Kendig said, Brink's scores could go up.

Another reason Brink's scores could improve is because of the increased difficulty of her routines, Kendig said.

Saturday at a 7:30 p.m. dual with Missouri at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, Kendig said, Brink will become only the second Husker gymnast to do the double layout on the floor exercise.

Brink said she is finally regaining the form that made her one of the best gymnasts in the country as a teen.

"It has taken a year to get back to where I was," Brink said. "I am just starting to add more skills."

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