

Sports Opinion

Cleveland faces inner battle

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior Reporter

Tonight at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, bright lights, blaring music and the noise generated by 3,000 cheering people will descend upon the members of the Nebraska women's basketball team as they prepare to battle Missouri.

The contest marks the beginning of a two-month long fight to earn an NCAA Tournament bid.

Also tonight, Amanda Cleveland, the Huskers' freshman forward, will be sitting at her home in Lancaster, Texas, fighting a different fight and a much

bigger battle.

She'll be fighting the biggest battle of her 18-year-old life.

There won't be many people there. Cleveland can't be exposed to large crowds. And forget the bright lights and blasting music, because this battle isn't taking place in an arena for all the world to see.

The battle facing Cleveland lives within her body.

She was diagnosed in December with aplastic anemia, a disorder that results from the unexplained failure of the bone marrow to produce blood cells. Aplastic anemia affects eight in every 1 million people worldwide. It is a rare and life-threatening disease.

Sometimes, the mental and physical pain of the disease is too much for Cleveland to bear.

"Every day I cry," Cleveland said. "I tell myself, 'You'll be okay. Stop crying.' Then I turn to my mom. She talks to me and tells me I'll get through it. She says, 'When you get through this, you'll be able to look back and see how strong it made you.'"

Just the facts

When functioning properly, the bone marrow produces red blood cells, which carry oxygen throughout the body and live for 120 days. The marrow also produces platelets, which carry chemicals to clot the blood and live for six days. White cells, which fight infections, live for one day or less.

Continuous production of blood cells is necessary all through life because cells don't have infinite life spans once they leave the bone marrow and enter the blood.

"Bone marrow is like a factory in

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Andrew Strnad Tracksters' popularity doesn't last

Track and field - it's considered the crown jewel of the Summer Olympics.

Unfortunately, for those who participate, the general public only pays attention once every four years.

Remember all of the talk about how great sprinter Michael Johnson's accomplishments were?

Well, of course they were great; the man obliterated the world record in the 200-meter dash and was the first to record wins in the 200- and 400-meters in the same Olympiad.

Too bad Johnson and all of the other great feats from Atlanta were soon forgotten.

Fortunately, Nebraska has the luxury of having its own collegiate track team.

Since 1980, the Husker track team has won 48 of a possible 72 indoor and outdoor conference championships.

In addition to winning 34 of the last 36 conference titles, the NU women's team has claimed three indoor national championships (1982-84) and has 27 top 10 finishes.

Individually, NU has produced more than its share of Olympians.

Does the name Merlene Ottey ring a bell?

Ottey, a 14-time national champion at Nebraska, has captured five Olympic medals - including three in Atlanta.

Overall, seven former Nebraska athletes represented six different countries at the '96 Olympics in Atlanta.

At the root of the Husker's success is a coaching staff with more than 70 years of experience at Nebraska.

When it comes to accepting acclaim for NU's accomplishments, Coach Gary Pepin time and time again has said the credit goes to all of the coaches and athletes.

The coaches, Jay Dirksen (distance), Mark Colligan (throws), Billy Maxwell (sprints and hurdles), Mark Kostek (multi-events) and Steve Smith (sprints and multi-events) have coached well over 100 NCAA All-American athletes.

Meanwhile, the beat goes on for the athletes as the team has already posted several NCAA provisional marks and figures to send a strong contingency to Indianapolis for the NCAA Indoor Championships in March.

Who will be the next All-American at NU? Who will be the next Husker athlete going to Sydney, Australia, for the 2000 Olympics?

Don't ask me. Just go to the Bob Devaney Sports Center track and see for yourself.

Andrew Strnad is a senior broadcasting and political science major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.

NU hopes to trap Tigers at Devaney

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior Reporter

January offered both the bad and the good for Nebraska Women's Basketball Coach Paul Sanderford and his team.

The Cornhuskers suffered three tough losses on the road, including a four-point disappointment at Baylor.

The loss to the Bears ended a two-week span in which NU played six games, three of them on the road. His players returned exhausted and drained.

But January was also the month in which the Huskers began their climb to what Sanderford hopes is their peak level of play, embarrassing Texas A&M, Kansas State and Oklahoma State.

Now, as the Huskers (16-6 overall and 5-3 in the Big 12 Conference) kick off play in February against Missouri tonight at 7:05 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, Sanderford wants to get rid of the bad and begin focusing on the good and the future.

"It's been a long year," Sanderford said. "People look at me everyday and tell me I look tired. But I'm excited about the progress we are making as a basketball team. It's fun to go to practice."

"I see a lot of consistency and maturity. We're not so careless with the basketball. We're passing and handling the press well."

Tonight's game against Missouri (10-9 and 2-7) marks the beginning of a

"Missouri is a scary team. They've beaten some pretty good basketball teams ..."

PAUL SANDERFORD
NU women's basketball coach

possible run for the NCAA Tournament, which begins the second week of March.

"Missouri is a scary team," Sanderford said. "They've beaten some pretty good basketball teams like Iowa State. They are scary even at 2-7. Anybody is capable of winning in the Big 12."

The Tigers return four starters from last season's team and are led by Julie Helm. A 5-foot-11 guard, Helm leads Missouri with 20.5 points per contest.

Center Kesha Bonds contributes 15.4 points per game and 10.7 rebounds per game.

The Tigers, who favor a slow-tempo, half-court set, have held their opponents to an average of 52.8 points per game. The Huskers are averaging 78 points per game.

"The Tigers are everything we

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NU football recruits become official today

BY SAM MCKEWIN
Senior Reporter

The future of Nebraska football will take shape today as recruits will sign on the dotted line to play for the Cornhuskers in the 1998 season.

NU has received at least 21 verbal commitments from high school seniors who are expected to sign letters of intent today. Several other players said they would not make their final decisions until this afternoon.

Derrick Harmon, a defensive back/receiver from Memphis, Tenn., gave a verbal commitment to the Huskers Tuesday, but Memphis East High School Coach Wayne Randall said Harmon may change his mind today.

Even Harmon said his decision wasn't firm.

"I can't be completely for sure," Harmon said Tuesday evening. "But if I had to decide right now, I'd go to

Nebraska."

Harmon initially made his decision Monday but wavered his thoughts after being pressured by coaches at the University of Memphis.

Randall said Harmon was targeted as Memphis' "number one recruit" and is a key player in the Tigers rebuilding process after three straight 4-7 seasons.

"They've told him that if he goes there, two or three other guys are going to come, too," Randall said. "The Memphis coaches really want him to come there."

Harmon said he has received plenty of advice over the past 24 hours.

"A lot of newspapers came up to the school to try and talk me out of it," Harmon said. "I got a lot of crap at the barber shop, too."

But Harmon will ultimately make his decision today, Randall said.

"If I had to bet one way or the other,

Please see **RECRUITS** on 10



MATT MILLER/DN
NU GUARD BROOKE SCHWARTZ and the Huskers play host to Missouri tonight at 7:05 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Rivalry heightens with NCAA quest

BY DARREN IVY
Assignment Reporter

After losing to Kansas Sunday, the Nebraska men's basketball team's quest for an NCAA

Tournament berth reaches a critical point this week.

The Cornhuskers (13-8 overall and 4-4 in the Big 12 Conference) travel to Columbia,

Mo., tonight to face the Tigers (12-9 and 4-4) at 7:08 at the Hearnes Center.

"It's survival of the fittest," NU Coach Danny Nee said. "The teams that raise their levels and find ways to win in February are going to be the ones who have successful years. The teams who don't are going to have mediocre or bad years."

Because a .500 record in the conference probably won't be good enough to get into the NCAA Tournament, NU point guard Tyrone Lue said it is important the Huskers win at least six of their last eight games.

Lue, who leads the Huskers with an average of 20.3 points per game, will play a key factor in NU's success.

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