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NU lands four top recruits

BY ANDREW STERNAD
Staff Reporter

Four new recruits and a new baby. Wednesday was a busy day for Nebraska Soccer Coach John Walker.

In what Walker called a transitional year for the Huskers, NU was able to sign four of the top high school players in Nebraska and Colorado.

All four recruits signed Wednesday — the same day Walker's wife, Mary, gave birth to the couple's fourth child.

Topping the list for the Huskers are two girls from Omaha Burke High School.

Walker said midfielder/striker Meghan Anderson is a talented left-footed kicker — a rarity in collegiate soccer.

Joining Anderson is high school teammate Becky Preston, who has been acclaimed for her explosive speed.

"Last summer at our camp is when we really took notice to Becky, and she had a great week," Walker said. "She's just a fine attacking player with great speed."

Striker Kelly Rheem, perhaps the most-heralded recruit, came from the same high school as former Husker All-American Kari Uppinghouse.

Rheem, an All-American and member of the U.S. Under 17 National Team, is regarded as a great technical player with

1998 Nebraska Soccer Signees

The following players have signed to play soccer at Nebraska next fall.

Name	Position	Hometown
Meghan Anderson	Midfielder/Striker	Omaha Burke
Karia Ledford	Defender	Englewood, Colo.
Becky Preston	Defender/Striker	Omaha Burke
Kelly Rheem	Striker	Littleton, Colo.

a strong scoring punch.

"She's a great one-on-one player, and has that burst of speed that just makes things happen," Walker said.

The Huskers fourth recruit is defender Karia Ledford of Englewood, Colo.

Walker compared Ledford to former Huskers Stephanie Vacek and Tanya Franck, saying Ledford has the same strong physical makeup as many of NU's previous defenders.

Altogether, Walker said, the class compared well with the class of 1996, which saw four freshman see significant playing time.

"All four players have a chance to contribute right away, and sometime during the season may find themselves starting," Walker said.

The Huskers may not be done recruiting yet. Walker expects to pursue at least one foreign player during the early summer.

Allen doesn't accept status as underdog

BY DARREN IVY
Assignment Reporter

Going into a meet with the fourth- and eighth-ranked teams in the nation, most coaches would accept their team's role as an underdog. Francis Allen, coach of the ninth-ranked Nebraska men's gymnastics team, is not one of them.

Competing with a healthy team, Allen said, he didn't think Leiter Oklahoma or Ohio State could beat the Cornhuskers at tonight's meet in Norman, Okla.

"I don't see them rated ahead of us (in the polls)," Allen said. "They aren't better than us."

Last week at the Rocky Mountain Open, NU finished second, and pre-season No. 8 Oklahoma came in third. But Husker gymnasts Jason Hardabura and All-American Marshall Nelson were limited because of injuries.

During tonight's competition, Nelson and Hardabura will be competing in the all-around event.

Allen said having Hardabura in the lineup will raise the Husker's score by at least three points, maintaining that NU finished second at the Rocky Mountain Open because Hardabura was hurt.

Meanwhile, a healthy Nelson also will have a big impact on the team.

"It's like putting Jordan back in the Bulls' lineup," Leiter said. "It's a spark plug for the rest of us when Marshall hits a big set."

Although Nebraska defeated the Sooners in Colorado, Allen said he was still a bit worried about competing in Norman because he has lost there more than anywhere else.

"They think we are their rivals and get high as hell," Allen said. "But it is like the Colorado and Nebraska football rivalry. We win a lot more than they do."

Allen said the gymnastics rivalry started because of the football rivalry, and over the years it has been a healthy one.

Now the rivalry is the only one left in the Big 12 Conference because no other schools have men's gymnastics programs.

Ohio State has also been a rival of the Huskers. Leiter emphasized that it was important to send an early message to the Sooners and Buckeyes.

"We can't give them an opportunity to walk away with the meet."

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