

Sports Opinion



Darren Ivy Transfers should be free to go

How can the NCAA let its coaches harm student-athletes?

Isn't the NCAA supposed to be representing the student-athlete? If it cares at all about its athletes, then it needs to pass some kind of legislation that allows student-athletes to transfer without the consent of their former coach or athletic director.

Unfortunately, for several current Nebraska athletes, any new legislation would already be too late.

Track sprinter John Dessoye is the latest casualty of a bitter coach not releasing an athlete. This year he transferred to Nebraska from Tulane, but can't compete as a Husker because he wasn't granted permission by his former coach.

Beck, Hornbacher, a former NU soccer player, and Meka Rembert, a NU sprinter, both lost entire seasons because their coaches broke promises with them and failed to release them before they came to Lincoln.

Megan Korver, a Husker volleyball player, wasn't released either, but she petitioned her former school, George Washington University, and the athletic director decided to release her. Why should a coach have any say?

The rule exists so athletes don't skip from one school to another. But athletes are already deterred by the fact that they can only transfer once without having to sit out a year. Football and basketball players must sit out a year the first time they transfer.

So, back to the question of why a coach should have a say.

If an athlete is not happy at a school and want to leave, why would a coach want to keep them around? Many coaches hold personal grievances against the athlete — especially if the athlete is one of their best.

"If you are a good athlete, don't even think about getting released for a transfer," Rembert said.

Rembert didn't get released from Kentucky, but two of her teammates who left the same year did. She also didn't get a hearing from Kentucky, which was against NCAA rules.

If athletes don't get released by an athletic department, they can write a letter requesting a hearing at the school from a committee separate from the athletic department. That is what Hornbacher and Korver did. Korver was released before the hearing, but Hornbacher had her hearing and lost a year of eligibility.

Schools don't benefit by not releasing an athlete. All they do is harm the athlete who transferred. Let's take the revenge out of the transfer process and do what is best for the athlete.

Ivy is a sophomore mid-distance runner on the Nebraska track team and a Daily Nebraskan assignment reporter and copy editor.

NU hopes to rebound from losses

BY MIKE KLUCK
Staff Reporter

Playing to win instead of playing not to lose will be one of the main goals of the Nebraska baseball team as it plays its home opener this weekend against the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The Cornhuskers (0-3), who were swept by Minnesota in a three-game series last weekend in Minneapolis, will play host to the Panthers in a doubleheader beginning at 1 p.m. on Saturday and a sin-

gle game starting at 1 p.m. on Sunday.

"After going on the road and losing three games — three games in which we were in every one — our kids are real disappointed," first-year Nebraska Coach Dave Van Horn said. "We are ready to prove we are a better team."

Van Horn said he was disappointed that the Huskers didn't play as aggressive as he would have liked in their series against the Gophers.

Nebraska lost the first game in extra innings and led 4-3 in the sixth inning of the second game before

"*We are ready to prove we are a better team.*"

DAVE VAN HORN
NU baseball coach

falling 11-4. Then in the third game, after trailing 5-1, the Huskers battled back to within two runs in the seventh inning. NU had runners on base with no outs, but was unable to score.

"We had a chance in all three games to finish them off, and we didn't do it," Van Horn said. "I just see it in (the players') faces right

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LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN

NU SOPHOMORE GUARD Cookie Belcher says he is working to step up his game to reach an all-conference level.

Nee: Belcher is NU's 'next star'

BY SAM MCKEOWN
Senior Reporter

Ask Nebraska Coach Danny Nee and he'll tell you Cookie Belcher has the tools to be one of the best players in the Big 12 Conference.

But the sophomore guard from Mexico, Mo., isn't ready to be counted among the Paul Pierces and Tyrone Lues of the Big 12 — yet.

"I think he's an all-conference-type player," Nee said. "But I just know he can play better. I know he can lift his game in all areas."

Belcher, who leads the team with 2.19 steals per game, agreed with Nee both in terms of his ability and his level of play.

"I know that right now I'm not at an all-conference level," Belcher said. "But that's where I want to be. I have to step it up that much more."

Ranking third on the team in scoring at 10.6 points per game, Belcher has experienced somewhat of a roller coaster season so far.

It hit a high point again Wednesday with a 19-point performance against Missouri after four straight single-digit scoring games. Throw in eight rebounds, five assists, and four steals, and Belcher said he had his most complete game of the season.

This is a trend he hopes to continue Saturday as NU (16-10 overall and 7-6 in the Big 12 Conference) takes on Colorado (12-11 and 6-7) in a 7 p.m. game at the Coors Events

Men's Basketball
Nebraska at Colorado
7 p.m. Saturday
Coors Events Center
Boulder, Colorado

Center in Boulder, Colo.

Shooting is where most of Belcher's struggles originated, Nee said. Last season, Belcher shot 45.7 percent from the field and 39.5 percent from the 3-point line.

This year, while his shooting percentage of 43.7 percent is close to last year's mark, Belcher's 3-point shooting has dropped sharply. He has made only 17 of 68 shots (25 percent) from beyond the arc.

"It's all predicated on the outside shot for him," Nee said. "When it doesn't go, it bothers him. Belcher's got to play through that."

NU has employed a shooting doctor, Jack Johnson, to get Belcher's jump shot back on track, Belcher said, and it's starting to work.

"I'm getting the ball in my hand the way I want it," Belcher said. "I've been working on getting a good clean shot."

Belcher continues to be one of NU's best defensive players, a role Belcher said could put him on the Big 12's all-defense team. He needs seven steals to surpass former Husker Erick Strickland for the best two-season total in steals at 146.

"How I start out on defense is what gets the team really going," Belcher said.

Another role that Belcher has had to assume this season is backing up

"*I know right now I'm not at an all-conference level. But that's where I want to be.*"

COOKIE BELCHER
NU guard

Lue at point guard. With freshmen Todd Smith and Rodney Williams unable to take the reins, Belcher has taken a crash course at the position.

Belcher's ability to run the point was best shown when he helped lead Nebraska to 12 straight points while Lue was injured in a 66-55 win over Baylor Saturday.

"I think he did a great job," Lue said, "considering when I went out we were down by 10. He's come around and done a good job."

With Lue's possible departure to the NBA after this season, Belcher may be counted on to become the team's go-to player next season.

In fact, following NU's 63-49 win over Iowa State Jan. 24, Nee named Belcher the team's "next star" after he had 15 points and 10 rebounds against the Cyclones.

If that's the way Nee wants it, Belcher said, that's fine.

"I don't mind it," Belcher said. "I got that put to me in high school, too. I'll play with it and not think about it."

Women's Basketball
Colorado at Nebraska
3:05 p.m. Sunday
Bob Devaney Sports Center

Huskers still wary of Buffs

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior Reporter

Although Paul Sanderford has seen Colorado before, the Nebraska women's basketball coach still isn't sure what to expect from the Buffaloes this Sunday.

That's because the last time the Cornhuskers played CU Jan. 7, the Buffaloes were a hot team.

Colorado entered the game at Boulder, Colo., with an 8-4 record (including exhibition games) and handily defeated the Huskers 84-78. Many expected the Buffaloes to be among the league's top four teams and challenging for an NCAA Tournament bid by now.

But after their win over NU, Colorado compiled a 3-9 record in the Big 12 Conference, and its hopes for an NCAA bid appear dim.

"It's hard to say what's happened with Colorado," Sanderford said. "They've really struggled."

Despite the Buffaloes' apparent turn for the worse, Sanderford said he still expects a fight.

Nebraska (20-7 overall and 9-4 in the league) plays host to Colorado Sunday at 3:05 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"They're very good talent-wise and they have the players," Sanderford said, "so they are a dangerous team. Nobody looks forward to playing them."

Nebraska enters the game on an upswing, having won at home against Kansas and on the road against Oklahoma and Missouri during the last two weeks.

But Sanderford said NU must compensate for the loss of Charlie Rogers in the post. Rogers, who has been out with a leg injury since Feb. 7, averaged 5.4 rebounds per game.

"I can't explain how we could lead the nation in rebounding margin and then be so nonexistent on the boards," Sanderford said. "Part of that is a mental situation. We've got to get back to that solid rebounding and defense."

Sanderford said he also wants to see improvement against Colorado's pressure.

"Colorado forced us to mishandle the ball," Sanderford said. "They put pressure on the ball and at the wings, which caused us to rush our offense instead of being patient."

"I'd hope we're better than we were Jan. 7 when we played Colorado last time."