

The basketball diaries

Although Nee has contributed, his day has passed



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Change is not a bad thing. It's not a bad thing at all. I think that should be the attitude NU Athletic Director Bill Byrne takes when considering the future of Nebraska men's basketball.

I don't want to be the sniveling, whiny newspaper guy that sits behind his computer and criticizes coaches for their every shortcoming. I don't like that guy. But I do think that when a sports program reaches the highest level it can under its current leadership, and that that level happens to be at mediocrity, changes need to be made.

Now I don't have anything against Danny Nee personally. I've never met him. He might be a really nice guy. I don't know. But I do have the right, as a citizen of this great nation and as a student at this fine institution, to openly criticize a public figure like Nee.

But before the mudslinging begins, let's give Coach Nee his proper. He is the only coach in school history to have taken 10 teams to postseason play (five NAAs and five NITs). He has led the Huskers to six 20-win seasons.

Nee also has directed teams that have won the Big Eight Tournament title and the NIT championship. His 223 victories in 12 seasons are second only to Joe Cipriano's 253 wins in 17 seasons with NU from 1964-1980.

Ironically, Nee's own mild

success at Nebraska may have helped contribute to some of his recent criticisms. Let me explain.

Nebraska basketball historically has been ... well, crap. We were and still are a football school. No one ever expected anything from the Husker hoops team.

Then Nee came along and, although struggling a bit at first, gradually managed a few winning seasons. Nebraska basketball suddenly rose out of nowhere. Rich King, Carl Hayes, Tony Farmer, Beau Reid and Clifford Scales became household names across Huskerland.

Oh, those bittersweet basketball memories. Remember the time Jamar Johnson hit that shot at the buzzer to beat top-ranked Kansas? That was awesome. Ever wonder whatever happened to Jose Ramos? I think he took my order at Burger King last week.

Chris Cresswell, Tom Best, Chris Salle, Keith Moody. Names so obscure and nearly forgotten they bring a smile to the face of only the most loyal Husker hoops fans.

Those were the good old days — a time when Nebraska basketball was young and innocent and full of hope. There was hope that the Huskers might someday soon be able to hang with the big boys; hope that one day we could reach the level of a Kansas or an Indiana.

But that day never came. Nee created his own monster. Fans who at one time expected nothing special from the Huskers now expected a team that would annually be in the top 25 and would be competitive in the NCAA Tournament.

Not getting that type of team from Nee, many fans have taken to criticizing him. If he can't take the Huskers to the next level, it might just be time to find someone who can.

That may not seem like a fair way to treat the man who built the program, but that's the way the

game is played. It's pure, unadulterated capitalism, baby. If something isn't fully meeting your expectations, you find something or someone else that will.

Sure, Nee's Husker teams have made it to the Big Dance a few times, but only to get dumped on in the first round by those perennial powers of college basketball Xavier, New Mexico State, Penn and, most recently, a deflated Arkansas team. We even won the NIT once. Boone, Strickland and company proved to the nation that NU was undoubtedly the 65th-best team in the country in 1996.

But Nebraska has yet to reach the level that it hoped to realize in its early days of tentative success under Nee. His Huskers have repetitively shown that they are not up to the caliber of college basketball's best.

Yep, Neebasketball appears to be stuck in a pedestrian rut. It's not really getting any better, and it's not getting any worse. Danny Nee accomplished some good things for Nebraska basketball, and fans should be appreciative of that. He got the Huskers to what they are: a solid, halfway respectable team. He was able to recruit some great players: Eric Piatkowski, Eric Strickland, Tyronn Lue. He's brought NU to a certain level.

However, Coach Nee has not been able to take the Huskers to that higher level. He hasn't been able to build a team strong enough across the board to be a viable national contender. He hasn't been able to recruit the big man the Huskers so desperately need.

So I ask Mr. Byrne to consider the real future of Husker basketball. Do we continue to accept the consistent mediocrity that has become Neebasketball? Or do we find a coach, like the women's basketball team did, who will make an immediate impact and will take the Huskers to that next level?

That is the question.



MATT HANEY/DN

What motivates Martha?

Perfectionist lifestyle infringes on normalcy



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"You just put on your resume that you worked for Martha Stewart, that's more valuable than any overtime I could pay you."

-Martha Stewart to her hard working caterer.

I worry about Martha Stewart. What could possibly drive this woman to such desperate degrees of perfectionism? Why does she push herself so hard? Why must she obsessively fill every waking second of her life with activity? It seems there

must be something she is running from; something she is trying desperately to avoid pondering. What skeletons would haunt Martha if she were to just lie down and stare at the ceiling for awhile?

Martha Stewart reigns over a vast corporation in her own name. Her multimillion-dollar, multimedia empire includes a self-titled magazine with a circulation of 1.8 million; a mail order catalog; a half-hour syndicated weekly TV show, available in 97 percent of the country; and a syndicated newspaper column in 160 newspapers. Martha Stewart seems at times omnipresent.

And omnipotent. The woman knows everything. Martha is the pinnacle of lifestyle; the Uberfrau of domesticity. She should be declared the patron saint of shelter. She's the consummate chef, baker, decorator, housekeeper, gardener and entrepreneur. Her homemaking abilities are superhuman. Martha's days reportedly begin at 5 a.m. She looks after her 200 rare Aruacana chickens, tends to 125

varieties of roses, gardens by flashlight, walks her dogs, works out and bakes a mean batch of blueberry muffins — all before dawn.

To the public, Martha is a taste-maker for the masses. Much like Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein, Martha has built an empire based on the packaging of a distinctive take on American style. Martha has made an industry from the commodification of obscure housekeeping lore. What was once "women's work," or left to servants, Martha has made into a hobby for disaffected and nostalgic Americans. She has turned ordinary housekeeping into an inspirational and fulfilling way of enriching one's life.

Part of Martha's appeal is her ability to create a picture of perfect, effortless domestic bliss. In our rapidly changing and diversifying modern world, many people enjoy escaping into a fantasy world where time is spent making homemade Christmas ornaments, combing flea markets for antiques or filling the house with artfully arranged, home-

grown flowers.

Her image is that of the perfect homemaker, one who restores a battered antique as easily as she hosts a dinner party, and she appeals to a wide and surprisingly demographic-defying audience.

The spirit of Martha Stewart is "you can do this at home." With the help of a few good recipes and decorating tips, anyone can hope to accomplish a lifestyle as polished as the glossy photo spreads in the pages of Martha Stewart Living magazine. Perfectionism is not merely a personality trait but is also integral to the image. Audiences get easily hooked to Martha, trying to achieve the impossible ideal.

However, the reality is that the average person would never be able to do it as well as in the coveted pages of Living. Hidden from view is the amount of staffing involved for layouts in her magazine, or the production hours that go into each segment of her TV specials.

Martha is the epitome of who we wish we could be. She is

classy, clever, wealthy and fabulously poised. Martha entertains. She maintains four impeccably furnished homes and has never paid full price for anything she owns because she picks it all up at tag sales.

Martha grows beautiful plants and never forgets to water. She cooks more exquisitely than Julia Child, everything is tasty, and nothing ever burns. Martha does not waste time — every waking moment is devoted to creative and life-enriching projects. There are no problems in Martha's world — only projects. Energetic and super-competent, Martha is — a good thing.

But does she ever relax?

The irony of Martha is that her busy life, crammed with TV appearances, speaking engagements and media ventures, leaves little if any time for a personal life. Let alone one filled with gracious dining and entertaining.

What would happen to Martha if she just sat still for a moment, with her feet up and her guard down?