

Sports Opinion



Dave Wilson NBA-bound Lue living his dream

Tyrone Lue is no fool. When he was a sophomore at Raytown (Mo.) High School, Lue confidently told his basketball coach that he would someday play in the NBA.

After school Lue and his friends would watch "tons and tons of NBA games" and mimic the pro's moves the next day in practice. Raytown Coach Mark Scanlon said.

Since his days in Raytown, Lue has worked his butt off to get to where he is today.

"He is the best player I've ever coached," Scanlon said. "He has tremendous work ethic. Very seldom do you see a player with great talent and a great work ethic. He's got both."

He came to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the fall of 1995 to get an education and pursue a dream.

Mission accomplished. Lue announced his decision Tuesday to forgo his senior season at Nebraska and become eligible for the NBA Draft June 24.

This is something Lue has wanted his whole life. Basketball isn't his hobby, it's his career choice. There aren't many reasons for him to stay in Lincoln.

He's received good reports from NBA scouts and is projected as a first-round draft pick. Lue wouldn't up his stock much by staying at Nebraska.

Why risk injury? "Get out while you're hot," former Colorado guard and current Toronto Raptor Chauncey Billups told Lue last weekend.

Lue did his homework. He talked to scouts, coaches and players - not to mention spending a weekend hanging out with Billups.

And he still has a way out. Lue hasn't signed with an agent, so if he's not a first-round pick, he can come back.

"It's a no-lose situation," Scanlon said. "He either goes and makes a lot of money or he can come back next year. He'd be foolish to pass that up."

Lue said he planned to donate \$25,000 to the university during the course of his NBA career. And don't think his mother won't be receiving a good chunk of his salary.

When Lue signed with Nebraska in 1995, his mother didn't even have a phone. Lue moved to Raytown to live with his aunt and uncle beginning his sophomore year of high school.

"He was running pretty loose there in Mexico (Mo.)," Scanlon said. "They thought he needed a male influence. I think it did help as far as keeping him on task."

Lue stayed on task. He worked hard. And he succeeded.

Wilson is a junior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.

Two-sport athlete chooses baseball

By LISA VONNAHME
Staff Reporter

Chad Wiles was given the task of replacing quarterback Scott Frost at Wood River High School.

Frost left for Stanford and Wiles was faced with succeeding the best quarterback in school history.

"It was hard to fill his shoes," Wiles said. "People always expected me to do well and be exactly like Scott. I really didn't want to be like that at all. I wanted to be my own person."

The expectations Wiles faced that year have carried over into his collegiate career. He's had to deal with the expectations of both the NU football and baseball coaches, as well as the expectations of his father.

Last year Wiles, who earned 11 varsity letters in high school, joined the Nebraska football team and walked on the baseball team.

Playing football last year was hard on Wiles. He was on the scout team - something he said he didn't really enjoy because he wanted to be playing.

This year, Wiles has gotten his chance to play - as a starting pitcher on the baseball team.

Last summer Wiles made the decision not to play football this year, and he decided to focus primarily on baseball.

The decision was a difficult one for Wiles to make. He's played football and baseball since the age of 4, and his dad was his baseball coach for nine years. Wiles' dad also was a football coach and spent time watching his son and critiquing every game.

But Wiles knew he had more of a future in baseball.

"It was the hardest thing to tell my father I wasn't going to play football

this year," Wiles said. "My dad wanted me to play football ever since I was little. I guess if I have good success this season then he'll probably forgive me for quitting football."

Wiles has had success this season. He owns a 2.86 earned-run average, which ranks eighth in the Big 12 Conference. He also tossed the only shutout of the team.

But Wiles knows some of his success has come from his experience with the football team. Football helped his competitiveness and gave him a "hard head" to stay in the games and pitch in tough situations, Wiles said.

"The thing that makes Chad stand out is his competitive attitude," NU Pitching Coach Rob Childress said. "I think that came from being on the football team. His aggressiveness shows on the mound."

Wiles is 3-0 this year and will be looking to help the Cornhuskers get their first conference win this weekend at Manhattan, Kan., against Kansas State. Wiles will likely start Sunday.

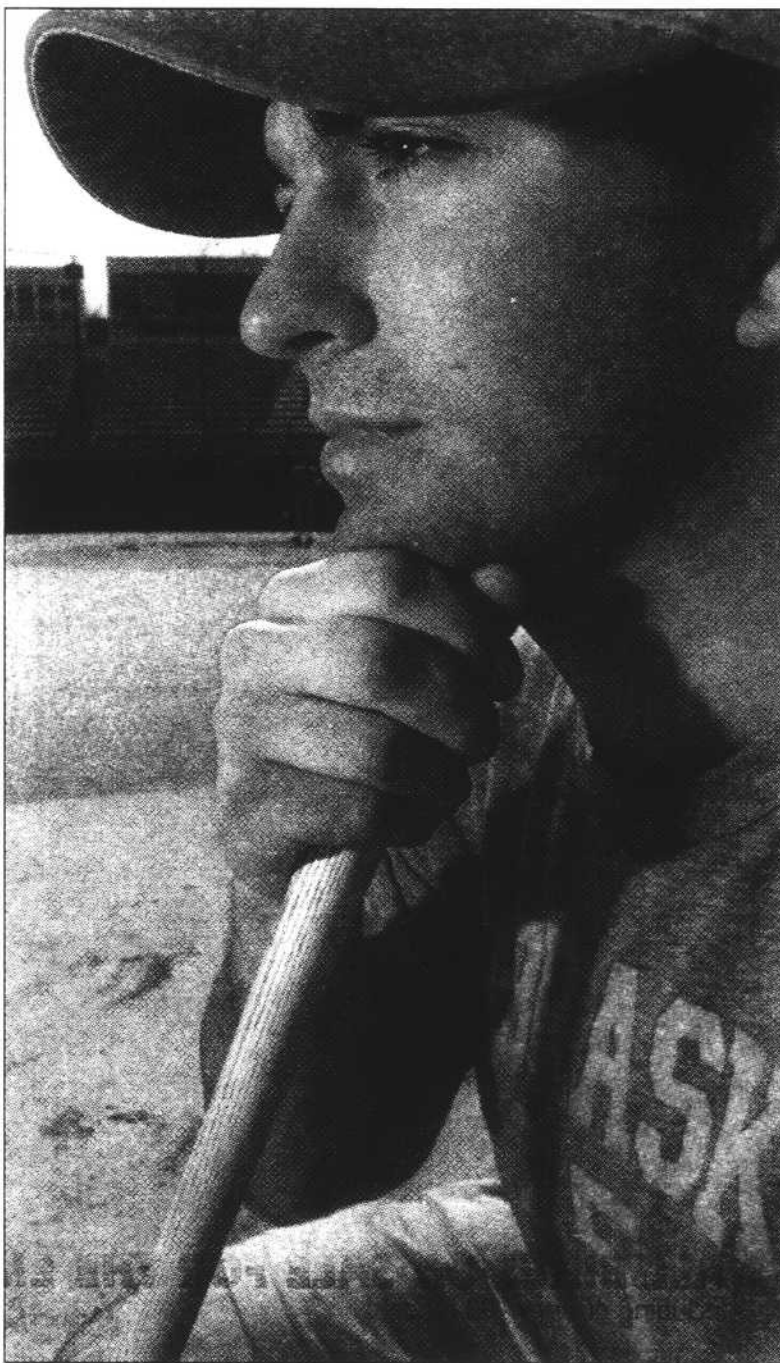
"This year is going to be Chad's biggest jump," Childress said. "This is his year of improvement. He's concentrating on baseball now."

Two new coaches, Dave Van Horn and Childress, also have helped Wiles focus on baseball.

"They know their stuff, and they're helping us on and off the field," Wiles said. "There's a lot more structure this year. They keep us in line. We kind of messed around a little bit last year."

This year has been satisfying for Wiles. He had a hard decision to make, but he knows it was the right one.

"I always knew that I would have to choose someday between the two," Wiles said. "Baseball was my top choice, and I'm glad I chose it."



DAN LUEDERT/DN
NU STARTING PITCHER Chad Wiles gave up his football career last summer to concentrate on baseball full time.

Men's gymnasts set for rematch

By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior Reporter

Six gymnastics teams will battle this weekend at the NCAA West Region championships in Norman, Okla., for a chance to compete at the nationals April 16 to 18.

But for Nebraska, the meet is a two-team competition. And the prize isn't a trip to nationals. It's about bragging rights. It's about redemption.

As the No. 2 team in the nation, the Cornhuskers (16-6) are one of only two teams in the region to score above 231 this season. The other is undefeated and first-ranked California.

The Bears beat NU at the

Mountain Pacific Sports Federation Championships in Stanford, Calif., March 27. The Huskers scored 227.85 after posting scores of about 230 in five consecutive meets.

NU Coach Francis Allen called it a sub-par performance. The Huskers know it, California knows it, and Allen expects both teams - which are already considered locks for the NCAA Championships - to be ready for a tough rematch.

"Berkeley is afraid of us. You could tell," Francis said. "You could see it. They knew Nebraska was a good team, and they haven't seen a good team all year."

"Berkeley has been wiping out the West. They're impressed with us, but I'm equally impressed with them."

The Bears rank first nationally on

the floor exercise (38.617), pommel horse (39.083) and horizontal bar (39.083). California won last year's West Regional with an incredible score of 233.125 and went on to capture the national championship.

But Cal's past success doesn't worry Allen.

"They're a good team, but it appears to me that if we get in a dog-fight with them, we're going to win," Allen said. "In the long run, with our team unity and a strong push, we're going to win."

"I thought we were in perfect shape to go out there and knock them off, but we missed three big routines that hurt us."

NU faltered on the vault, the high bar and the parallel bars in California, and all Huskers posted scores under

57. The missed routines not only surprised Allen, but also NU junior Marshall Nelson.

Nelson committed a technical error on the parallel bars, an event in which he holds the 1996 NCAA national title. Nelson said the slip-up "kicked the team into gear mentally," and he fully expects to refocus for this Saturday's competition.

Allen's confidence in Nelson remains strong. He placed Nelson, who is also the defending horizontal bar champion, in the final competitor slot in each of the six events.

"There is more pressure on me because I am last, but knowing that gives me confidence," Nelson said. "I know I have to score well. The judges

Please see GYM on 8

Linebackers ready to anchor Husker defense

By ANDREW STRNAD
Staff Reporter

In order to be considered great, an army needs great leaders and the right chemistry.

The same formula applies when talking about a great defense. And for Nebraska's defense, the nucleus starts with its linebacking corps.

With the loss of two All-Americans in Jason Peter and Grant Wistrom, opponents focus may shift to the Cornhuskers linebackers.

As NU Linebackers Coach Craig Bohl eyes up this year's crop of linebackers during spring practice, he can only look forward to the fall season.

"We have an awful lot of experience at linebacker,"

Bohl said. "I'd expect the group to be very productive." The Huskers return three starters at linebacker including second-team All-Big 12 Conference selection Jay Foreman.

Bohl also has the luxury of having a solid group of reserves. One player that made his presence felt in his freshman season is sophomore Carlos Polk.

Polk played in all 12 games last year and tallied 32 tackles while playing on special teams, in addition to backing up



Polk

Please see DEFENSE on 8

Returning Linebackers

Players listed according to spring depth chart (statistics from 1997)

Player	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Games	Tackles
Sam linebacker					
Tony Ortiz	6-0	215	Jr.	12	32
Brian Shaw	6-1	215	Jr.	12	28
Quint Hogrefe	5-11	210	Sr.	4	3
Mike linebacker					
Jay Foreman	6-1	240	Sr.	12	61
Carlos Polk	6-3	245	So.	12	32
Ben Buettgenback	5-11	210	Jr.	10	5
Will linebacker					
Eric Johnson	6-1	205	Sr.	12	49
Julius Jackson	6-0	235	Jr.	11	7
Josh Kohl	6-1	220	Jr.	7	3

Letterwinners lost: Octavius McFarlin (WLB)