

Big 12 Notebook

Missouri shortstop Griffin Moore was named the Big 12 Conference's player of the week. Moore hit six home runs in five games last week. Moore, from San Luis Obispo, Calif., posted a .533 batting average for the Tigers, who went 4-2 last week. In addition to his five long balls, Moore had 13 RBIs, three doubles and three triples.

The Big 12 pitcher of the week was Iowa State's Nathan Hilton. Hilton, a sophomore from Boone, Iowa, recorded the first complete game by a Cyclone pitcher since 1996 in a 10-1 upset of No. 11 Texas A&M last week.

Texas A&M filled their basketball coaching vacancy with Melvin Watkins, who spent two years as the head coach at North Carolina-Charlotte. Watkins replaces Tony Barone, who was reassigned to the Aggie athletic department in March.

While Texas A&M has found a coach for next season, Texas is starting its search for a replacement for Tom Penders, who resigned last week.

With Nebraska junior Tyronn Lue and Kansas junior Paul Pierce both opting to forgo their senior seasons to enter the NBA Draft, no members of the Big 12 All-Conference team will return next season.

But several of the league's statistical leaders will be returning to try and earn a spot on next year's team. Several seniors-to-be are ranked among the top 10 in points and rebounds per game. Texas A&M senior Shanne Jones is the leading returning scorer with 18.1 points per game. Texas senior Kris Clack is next with 17.6 points per game, followed by Oklahoma State's Adrian Peterson with 17.3 points per game.

Freshmen Chris Ridens and Walter Moore, both from Iowa State, have transferred from ISU to junior colleges. Ridens is transferring to Southwest Missouri State Community College, and Moore is transferring to a junior college in Texas. Neither saw action this year for the Cyclones, which means they are eligible to play as soon as they get to their respective schools.

Big 12 Notebook compiled by Assignment Reporter Jay Saunders



NEBRASKA PITCHER Jenny Voss has compiled a 1.33 ERA and has struck out 126 batters while throwing 74 percent of the Huskers' innings this season.

MATT MILLER/DN

Voss' drive matches talent

By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior Reporter

Toward the end of the Nebraska softball team's winter conditioning, a slicing pain struck Jenny Voss.

She tried to ignore it. The pain lingered in the pitcher's back for days, but Voss kept throwing. She kept hurling riseballs and screwballs because, as she said, they weren't perfect.

Even in injury, it's difficult for Voss to accept anything short of near perfection.

"I just didn't know what to do," Voss said of her nagging injury. "I've never had something like that."

"But I'm actually kind of glad it happened because it made me stronger. I was so worried that it was going to be downhill from there, but it wasn't. The pain is gone."

So goes the career of Voss, a career that NU Coach Rhonda Revelle has said ranks among the best in Cornhusker history. Voss has compiled a 22-6 record and has reached her goal of perfection in six shutouts this season.

And tonight when Nebraska (28-8 overall and 6-0 in the Big 12 Conference) travels to Omaha for a doubleheader against Creighton beginning at 6 p.m., Voss could tie the school record she set last year for single-season wins (24).

Twenty games remain on the Huskers' regular season schedule.

"I'm not going out there and saying the next two games are going to be two wins," Voss said. "It's early in the season, and I don't know what my record is. I don't know how

many wins I have and I like it that way. I don't want to get into the numbers."

But the numbers are impressive for a sophomore pitcher who never seems to tire. Voss has struck out 126 batters and has compiled a 1.33 ERA, carrying NU's pitching load 74 percent of the time this season.

Last year as a freshman, Voss hurled 80 percent of the Huskers' innings, shattering single-season records for complete games (36) and innings pitched (295.1).

Her stamina goes unquestioned by Revelle and NU Assistant Coach Lori Sippel. But the coaches have made changes in Voss' practice routine, hoping to prevent a late-season burnout.

"I don't ever want to stop," Voss said. "I realize that sometimes I need a rest, but when I'm in there, I'm working hard. I want to work the extra minute or 10 minutes to get to the point where I feel satisfied. I guess I'm just a go-get-'em-and-never-stop' kind of person."

But after reluctantly cutting her repetitions in practice, Voss realizes the benefits of the change. Sippel said Voss' awareness of her body's capabilities has increased, and the pitcher agrees.

"There will be days in practice when I'm on and I know I'm on, so why drill a pitch?" Voss said. "Why throw inside drop balls when I'm nailing them all? There's no point in beating something that's already there. So I'm cutting down the repetitions on my arm, and I'm throwing as little as I have to."

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Golfer has skill beyond statistics

By SAM MCKEON
Senior Reporter

Numbers don't lie, the old proverb says. But sometimes they don't tell the whole truth, either.

Take the case of Nebraska senior golfer Rachele Tacha. As a sophomore in 1995, Tacha was the champion of the Big Eight Conference. She then finished 27th at the NCAA Championships in La Quinta, Calif.

Two years later, Tacha is scoring better on the course, but placing lower in tournaments.

Such is life with better competition. "It's been frustrating at times,

because I'd like to win tournaments," Tacha said. "I've just had to learn to let myself play."

Much of the tougher opposition came with the addition of Texas, Texas A & M, Baylor and Texas Tech in the formation of the Big 12 Conference. Currently three teams in the league (Oklahoma State, Texas and Texas A&M) are ranked in the Mastercard Collegiate Golf Rankings' top 15.

The Huskers also entered bigger, tougher tournaments to gain national recognition in the spring of 1997. Tacha lowered her stroke average from 79.74 to 78.71, but found herself back in the field, rather than at the front.

"She put a lot of extra pressure on herself to play at the top level of tournaments," NU Coach Robin Krapfl said. "She was trying to make the perfect shot, rather than trusting her swing."

That led Tacha to get "too mechanical" on the course, Krapfl said. Tacha would let one shot or one hole worry her too much.

"If there was something wrong with my swing, it just seemed like it would really bother me," Tacha said. "It would bother me if a shot went left or right of where I wanted it to go."

This spring, Tacha is trying to improve on her fall stroke average of 77.80 and lead Nebraska to its first NCAA Championships.

She has played well early, finishing 37th at the Bruin Classic Feb. 23-25 and 19th at the Betsy Rawls Invite March 13-15.

Krapfl said Tacha has done a good job of dealing with bad shots this season.

"There's always going to be a couple of bad shots, and Rachele understands that now," Tacha said. "She's not the perfectionist she used to be."

Tacha said she has tried to take advice from her father on how to make golf easier.

"He's always said golf can be a pretty simple game. Just hit it in the fairway, hit it on the green, and putt it in," Tacha said. "I guess that's all I'm trying to do."

"I just have fun to end out my career. I'm not going to be a professional golfer or anything, so this is it for me. I just want to enjoy doing it."

"If there was something wrong with my swing, it just seemed like it would really bother me."

RACHELLE TACHA
NU golfer

Nee prepares team for life after Tyronn Lue

By SAM MCKEON
Senior Reporter

The search is on. After Tyronn Lue declared himself eligible for the NBA Draft March 31, Nebraska Men's Basketball Coach Danny Nee immediately began looking for a replacement at point guard.

And Nee said the Cornhuskers have shifted into overdrive trying to find one.

"We're looking through the junior colleges to find somebody," Nee said. "We know we can't replace Tyronn

Lue, but we'd like to find somebody who's a true point guard."

Nee said NU, which welcomes back every player but Lue from a team that was 20-12 and went to the N C A A Tournament, doesn't need a player to score a lot of points next season, but an experienced floor leader.



Nee

"We want a set-up guy, somebody who can come in and run the offense," Nee said. "We don't need points."

If Nee isn't able to find a point guard in the junior college ranks, it is likely he'll turn to a couple of underclassmen for the job. Freshman Todd Smith, who gained a medical redshirt after playing sparingly in 1997-98, or sophomore Rodney Williams, who averaged 0.9 points per game last season, could be heir apparent to the position.

But even if Nebraska can't recruit a point guard, Nee said, the Huskers will survive.

"We'll have to," Nee said. "We did-

n't expect that Todd Smith would get rods in his legs or that (guard) Cary Cochran would get hurt, but that's what happened."

Another option might be junior-college recruit Rodney Fields, who averaged more than 14 points at Tyler (Texas) Junior College last year.

Tyler Coach Kyle Keller said the 6-foot-3 Fields could adjust to the job but is better off at shooting guard or even small forward.

"He could play the position in a pinch, if he had to," Keller said. "I think

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