

Huskers sweep 14th-ranked Sooners

By ANDREW STRNAD
Staff Reporter

If the Nebraska baseball team didn't have a Big 12 rival before this weekend, it does now.

The Cornhuskers brought out the brooms at Buck Beltzer Field as junior Donny Starkins belted a two-out eighth inning fast ball to break a 12-12 tie Sunday and give the Huskers a three-game sweep of the 14th-ranked Sooners in front of 872 fans.

"They may have taken us a little lightly," NU Head Coach Dave Van Horn said. "(The series) is going to

leave a bitter taste in their mouth."

Entering the weekend, the Huskers (19-14 overall, 5-7 in the Big 12 Conference) were in last place in the Big 12 and their postseason hopes were almost nonexistent.

Meanwhile, the Sooners (29-12 and 9-7) came into the weekend with a chance to overtake Baylor atop the Big 12 standings.

The series resulted in the first Husker sweep over Oklahoma since 1987, as NU scored 35 runs during the series.

"This puts us right back into contention," Starkins said. "We were able to get timely hitting and put it together.

There was never a doubt in our minds."

Sunday's series finale included four lead changes, eight home runs and two ejections.

Nebraska got on the board first with a lead-off home run by shortstop Bryan Schmidt. It was the second consecutive game in which the senior led off with a dinger.

Schmidt was again in the middle of another heated play in the second inning after OU took a 2-1 lead.

With one out and a man on second, Sooner shortstop Derek Wathan hit a double-play ball to NU second baseman Kevin Harrington, but Schmidt's throw to first baseman Ken Harvey

was wide, and Wathan took off for second.

Catcher Brian Johnson was backing up Harvey and threw the ball to Schmidt, who tagged out Wathan.

Wathan barrel-rolled into Schmidt, and the two exchanged shoves as the benches cleared. Wathan and OU third baseman Jeremy Vidales were ejected.

Things remained quiet until the sixth, when Oklahoma knocked NU starter Chad Wiles out of the game, sending 10 batters to the plate and scoring six runs.

Pinch hitter Rick Park delivered the biggest blow in the frame with a grand slam off of NU reliever Brian

Downing, giving OU an 8-2 lead.

"I told the team after the sixth, that our big inning hadn't happened yet and that we would have our chance," Van Horn said.

Van Horn was right as the Huskers sent 16 batters to the plate in the bottom of the seventh, scoring 10 runs.

Starkins started the inning by reaching first base on a wild pitch after striking out.

That mistake by OU starter Kevin Olsen would be an omen for the Sooner pitching staff, as they would use five pitchers to stop the flood gates.

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MATT MILLER/DN

KU'S SARA HOLLAND charges into NU catcher Jenny Smith during the second game of a doubleheader Sunday at the Nebraska Softball Complex. Smith hung onto the ball and Holland was called out on the play.

Softball team wins four

By JAMES NICAS
Staff Reporter

As storm clouds formed overhead Sunday afternoon, the Nebraska softball team was not about to allow the Kansas Jayhawks to rain on Senior Day.

Trailing 2-0 in the bottom of the fourth inning of the second game of a doubleheader, the seventh-ranked Cornhuskers erupted for five runs in the inning and three more in the fifth to win 8-2.

In the first game, Jenny Voss tossed a shutout in a 5-0 Nebraska win.

With the victories over Kansas, the Huskers (36-8) are now a perfect 14-0 in the Big 12 Conference.

NU catcher Jenny Smith started the scoring in game two with a single to center field driving in Jamie Fuente and Ali Viola. After a Christie McCoy walk and a Kelly Pinkepank single, Alice Brewer singled to right field to drive in Smith. With two outs in the inning, Voss drove in two with a double to

left to end the scoring for the inning.

In the bottom of the fifth, Nebraska decided home runs were easier with solo shots by Fuente, Viola and McCoy.

Fuente went 2 for 3 with a home run and two runs scored. Fuente said hitting second in the batting order for the first time this weekend helped her regain her swing.

"I was trying to relax and make contact," Fuente said. "I just happened to have some power."

In the first game, Nebraska struck early, scoring three runs in the first inning to give Voss all the support she needed.

First baseman Fuente, started the scoring with a two-run homer bringing in Lizama. Three batters later, McCoy continued her torrid weekend with a solo shot.

Jenny Voss did not let the support go to waste as Kansas leadoff hitter Sarah McCann had the only hit in the game. Voss retired the last 18 batters she faced while limiting the Jayhawks to two base runners in the game.

McCoy, one of four graduating seniors, made sure the entire weekend was one she would not forget.

On Saturday, the San Mateo, Calif., native set a Nebraska record with three homers in a 9-2 victory over 15th-ranked Missouri. Nebraska also won the first game 8-7 in 12 innings behind the powerful bat of McCoy.

For the weekend, McCoy went 7 for 10 with five home runs and 10 RBIs.

"I can not say I've had a weekend like this before," McCoy said. "My family was here, so it made the entire weekend very special."

With the victories over Kansas and Missouri, Nebraska can now look ahead to winning its first conference title in 10 years next weekend.

Nebraska will travel to fifth-ranked Oklahoma and 10th-ranked Oklahoma State to settle the Big 12 race.

"We have a big challenge next weekend and a lot to look forward to," McCoy said. "We need to stay focused on what we should do and should do a great job."

Wistrom among 6 Huskers drafted

By SAM MCKEWON
Senior Reporter

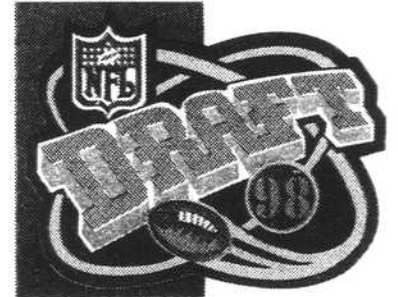
Two years after drinking dirty water with Lawrence Phillips in the first round of the NFL Draft, the St. Louis Rams went back to the same well.

With the same No. 6 pick they used to select the troubled Phillips in 1996, the Rams picked another Nebraska player with solid credentials — but no personal problems — in defensive end

Grant Wistrom. Wistrom was one of six Cornhuskers selected in the draft last weekend.

"Coach (Dick) Vermeil asked, 'How would (you) like to be a Ram?'" Wistrom said in a press conference Saturday. "I said, 'Coach, I couldn't be happier.'"

Vermeil said Wistrom was a great choice for the Rams, who finished 5-11



and in last place in the NFC West.

"I am really pleased to bring this caliber of player," Vermeil said, "because he will make an immediate impact."

St. Louis had a horrific experience with Phillips two years ago, getting criticized for selecting him and then letting him go last season for failing to show up to practice.

Wistrom, who joins former Huskers Toby Wright and Zach Wiegert in St. Louis, said he does not feel any pressure to correct Nebraska's image.

"I don't feel the Nebraska name is all that bad in St. Louis," Wistrom said. "You've got two players who are start-

Please see DRAFT on 11

Crouch tightens close NU quarterback race

By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior Reporter

Spring Football '98



After starting the spring in the shadows of Frankie London and Bobby Newcombe, redshirt freshman quarterback Eric Crouch finally grabbed some of the spotlight for himself.

Crouch, aided by an injury-plagued defense and a strong performance by the Cornhuskers offense, shared playing time with the No. 1 offensive unit — along with London and Newcombe — in NU's second full scrimmage of the spring.

A product of Millard North High School in Omaha, Crouch responded with 63 yards passing and several key option plays, including a perfectly timed pitch to I-back DeAngelo Evans that led to a 39-yard run against the No. 1 defense.

"Going with the ones makes a big difference," said Crouch, who began seeing work with the top offense in practice last week. "It was a good confidence-builder for me. This past week I've just told myself to stay as calm as I could be."

Crouch, who started the spring as the No. 5 quarterback after redshirt-

ing last fall, said he has made "a lot of progress," but still has a ways to go.

"I did all right (Saturday), but there are things I could have done better," Crouch said. "I know I have a lot to work on, but this is definitely a good stepping stone."

London also performed well, breaking loose for a 59-yard run and throwing a 49-yard touchdown pass to Shawn Applegate.

"We were overwhelmed by how we played last Saturday," London said. "This was a lot more enjoyable. Everybody let down the walls on offense this time."

The defense was far from full strength. Kyle Vanden Bosch, Erwin Swiney, Chad Kelsay, Carlos Polk and Mike Rucker were held out because of injuries, and Dion Booker and Steve Warren suffered minor injuries during the scrimmage.

But the big story was the quarterback race that has suddenly become a little crowded with one week of practice remaining.

"This upcoming week we are going to have to do whatever it takes and play our best," Crouch said.