

Inside the Program



Becky Hogan



Sandy Smith

Soccer camp a grueling, serious affair

The following is one in a series of stories that will document the Nebraska women's soccer team from inside the program. Captains Sandy Smith and Becky Hogan will take you beyond the locker room door, all season, into one of the nation's best soccer programs.

This week, Smith talks about losing top players and preseason camp.

I was at home for the summer in California when I received a message from my friends at school.

Jenny Benson, one of my best friends and the MVP of the '97 team, had been diagnosed with a torn anterior cruciate ligament, which would cause her to miss our entire season. Tears welled up in my eyes as I waited for them to say they were kidding.

Not only was it true, but Lindsay Eddleman, another one of my close friends, had broken her foot and was having surgery the very next day. That is something you have a nightmare about and then wake up and thank God it was only a bad dream.

I cried for them that night, and the next day I worked out harder and longer than I ever had before. I kept telling myself if they could take their injuries back, they would give anything to be able to do what I was doing. I quickly realized how much we all take for granted.

Lindsay will be back by the middle of the season, but both injuries will change the dynamics of our team. We're going to have to rely a lot more on the incoming freshmen, and we'll need them to step into some big roles and handle the pressure that comes with Division I soccer.

Our season began this Sunday when Coach John Walker sat the team down and gave the speech the upper-classmen have come to know so well. To freshmen, this speech is unlike anything they have probably ever heard.

College soccer is so much more competitive than almost anything they are used to, especially here at Nebraska. Being accountable for ourselves and our teammates both on and off the field is always something Coach Walker puts a huge emphasis on.

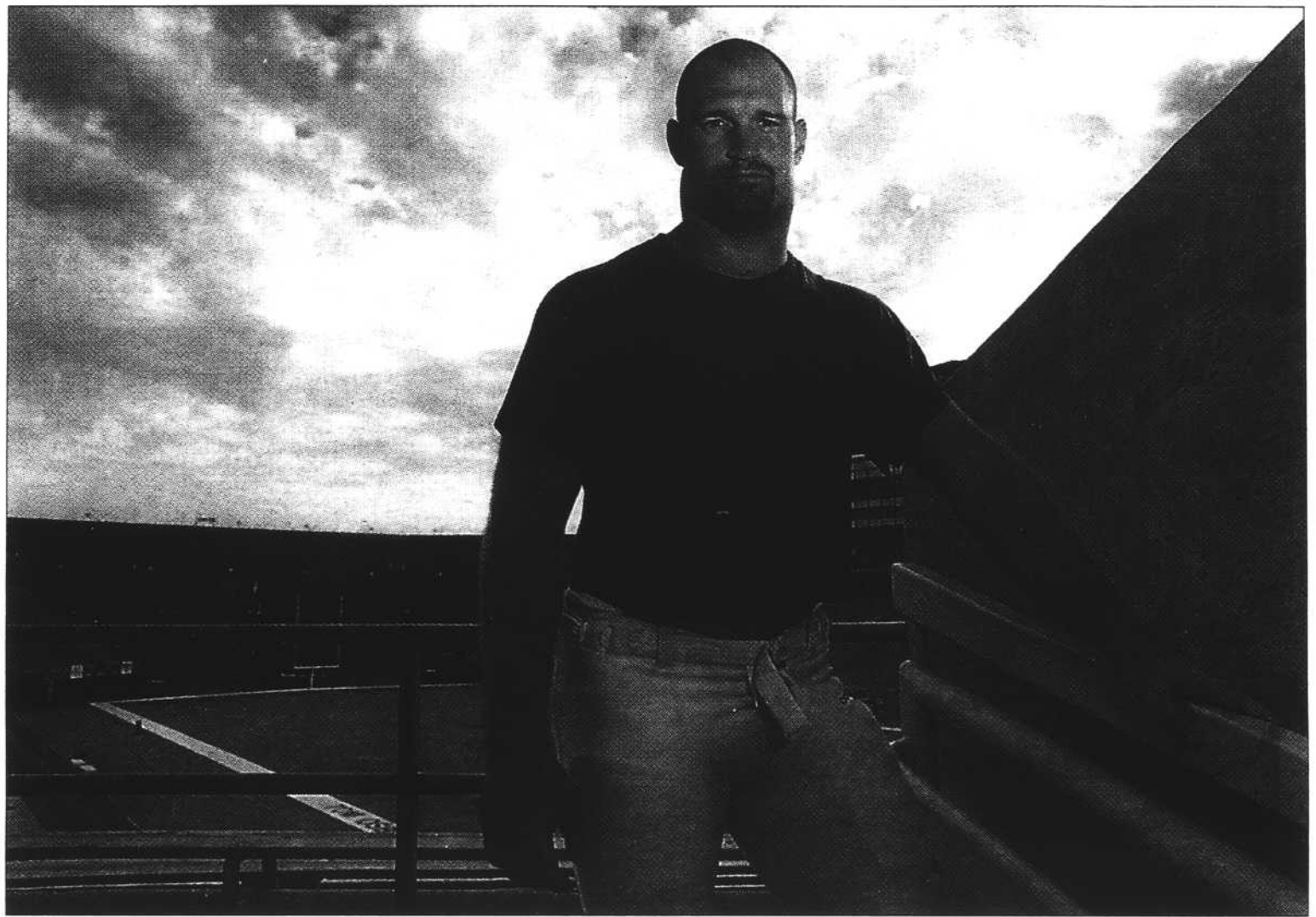
He gets the point across to us that soccer is serious, nothing like we have ever experienced before and far beyond any high school soccer experience. This was it. For the next five months, it would be our lives.

For any person who thinks it is easy, our first day of activities quickly remedied this point of view.

After rising early for breakfast, we met for performance testing. I was careful to eat just what I thought would give me the most energy to help me perform at my very best. I think everyone else was thinking the same thing, which made for a very quiet and nerve-racking breakfast.

The first part of testing consisted of

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MATT MILLER/DN

NEBRASKA SENIOR RUSH END Chad Kelsay seeks his third national title in four seasons. Kelsay is one of only three scholarship recruits from Auburn to play for the Cornhuskers.

Kelsay lives football dream at NU

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior staff writer

He never imagined he'd end up here, starring in the fantasy of every small-town Nebraska boy who grew up watching Cornhusker football.

Of course, he allowed himself to dream of running through the tunnel in the southwest corner of Memorial Stadium to meet the thousands of roaring, red-clad fans. But that was long before people grew accustomed to watching Chad Kelsay disrupt opposing offenses as the starting left rush end for the Nebraska football team.

Those dreams existed long before he earned the Huskers' Lifter of the Year award or finished the

1997 season as NU's 10th-leading tackler.

"Every year, I'd watch the Oklahoma-Nebraska game," said Kelsay, a native of Auburn. "My grandparents would come over for the big games, and they'd throw me the ball or whatever at half time or during the commercials. That was when I was really little. I'd try to see myself out there, playing football."

When Nebraska opens its season Saturday at Memorial Stadium against Louisiana Tech, Kelsay will walk onto the field as a team captain.

And even after three years with the Huskers, Kelsay, a 1998 All-American candidate, still wonders how nearly every kid's dream became his reality.

Surprise Husker

Auburn, a town of 3,400 people, had produced only one Division I scholarship player (Dick Hutton, who played for NU from 1946-48) before Kelsay caught the attention of the Nebraska coaching staff. A 6-foot-3 tailback and linebacker for Auburn High School, Kelsay accompanied his friend Clint Hargrove — who is now an NU walk-on — to a Nebraska football camp the summer before his junior year at Auburn. Kelsay tested poorly at the camp.

"After that camp, we definitely didn't plan on Chad going to Nebraska to play football," said Chad's mom, Jackie Kelsay. "We didn't ever push him into anything. We just wanted him to do well academically and really to be a well-rounded

person."

But Kelsay surprised even himself the following year at the same camp when he improved his marks enough to impress NU's coaches. Former Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne called Kelsay right before the third game of his senior season and offered him a scholarship.

"If that doesn't get you up for a game, I don't know what does," Kelsay said. "It was just a dream. To even have that goal, coming from a small town, was considered dreaming."

The town of Auburn rallied around Kelsay. Many would approach him or his parents on the street or in the grocery store with questions and encouragement for the local hero.

Please see **KELSAY** on 11

Edwards: Nebraska can't defend pass

BY DAVID WILSON
Senior staff writer

Troy Edwards has been thinking about Nebraska all summer.

He's watched film, studied the secondary and heard about what it's like to play in Memorial Stadium.

But the Louisiana Tech receiver is not worried about his first trip to Lincoln this Saturday.

Not at all.

"Nebraska just doesn't defend the pass well," said Edwards, who caught for 100 yards in all but one of the Bulldogs' 11 games last season. "I've studied their players, and I think they're good players, but I think I'm just a better player than they are."

Edwards, the favorite target of Heisman Trophy candidate quarterback Tim Rattay, is one of six returning Louisiana Tech wideouts.

Rattay, who led the nation in total offense last season with 359.78 yards per game, shared Edwards'

confidence.

"Personally, I don't think there's a corner in the nation that can cover him," Rattay said. "And he's gotten better from last year."

"He's strong and fast, and just a physical player. We look for the one-on-ones with him to take advantage."

Louisiana Tech Coach Gary Crowton said he expects Rattay and Edwards to provide the punch for the best team he's coached in three seasons.

"I don't care who Nebraska plays this year," Crowton said. "They won't face a better combination. They're both intelligent, skilled and competitive."

And they've been doing some homework.

"Nebraska is a high-intensity defense," Edwards said. "They just want to put pressure on the quarterback. That's the strong point of their defense."

Rattay said he was ready for whatever pressure the Huskers send

his way.

The loss of Grant Wistrom and Jason Peter to the NFL last spring, Rattay said, will hurt NU's pass rush.

At the same time, an experienced passing game will give the Bulldogs an advantage, Rattay said.

"We don't have to go over the basics with these guys," Rattay said. "We can work on more complex stuff."

The Bulldogs occasionally run what NU players call a "cluster" offense, using one or no running backs and many receivers who line up close to each other.

"I wouldn't call it a cluster offense," Rattay said. "We get a lot of receivers out there so you can see the linebackers coming."

Both Rattay and Edwards said they were expecting a high-intensity, physical game Saturday.

"When you play a team like Nebraska," Edwards said, "they're going to be physical every play."

And that's the kind of game both players said they looked forward to.



LOUISIANA TECH SPORTS INFORMATION
Louisiana Tech wide receiver Troy Edwards (16) said the Bulldogs can pass the ball against Nebraska.

"The media is overlooking us," Edwards said. "They're already saying we're going to lose. All we have to do is go up and win and prove everybody wrong. I wouldn't get on that plane if I thought we were going to lose."