

Benson battles through injury

By **DARREN IVY**
Staff writer

Each time Nebraska women's soccer player Kim Engesser steps onto the field, she instinctively looks around for Jenny Benson.

It's natural for her.

The two of them have played together on club teams coached by Jan Engesser, Kim's mother, since they were little.

Benson was one of the main reasons Engesser transferred to Nebraska from Portland in 1997.

This year, the duo had planned to finish out Engesser's last season at Nebraska playing together.

That was before Benson tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee during a Denver Diamonds club soccer game July 19.

Now all Benson can do is cheer on Engesser and the rest of her Cornhusker teammates.

"Every game I go out and wish she was there," Engesser said. "It makes me sad seeing her sitting on the bench."

This past weekend's games against UCLA and Southern California were supposed to be a homecoming for Benson, Engesser and Sandy Smith—all Huntington Beach, Calif., natives.

Since Benson's first season at NU, she couldn't wait for the California trip, said her mother, Sharon.

"She was really looking forward to having all of her family, friends and coaches see her for the first time," Sharon Benson said.

But Jenny Benson has to wait two



NU SOCCER PLAYER JENNY BENSON warms her knee in a tub Tuesday morning in the NU Coliseum training room. She spends at least 90 minutes a day trying to regain strength in her leg after undergoing knee surgery eight weeks ago.

MATT MILLER/DN

more years for that opportunity. The length of that wait helped make it harder to go through last weekend.

"It was hard, because I would look over and see my family sitting in the stands," she said.

Although Benson wasn't able to play, her mother said she enjoyed having her at home. It was the first time Benson's father, Mike, and twin brother, Jeff, had seen her since her surgery.

Before Jenny's visit, the Benson family received updates over the phone every other day, Sharon Benson said.

Jenny Benson said she was glad the California games didn't open the season, because it took

some time adjusting to her injury.

But, after a few games, Benson said, she had begun to understand her role and accept it.

The 2-1 loss to Wisconsin-Milwaukee in the opener was the hardest game for her.

"It was one of those games you die to be on the field," Benson said. "You just want to help, but I was helpless. I knew I couldn't do anything."

Benson is eight weeks into her rehabilitation and determined to be back with the team by spring. On the recent trip to California, she used the hotel exercise room to do her drills.

Benson knows the importance of rehabilitation because she tore the ACL in her left knee in 1994, while she was a sophomore at Marina High School. She said that experience helped her deal with the most recent one.

"Waking up from surgery, I knew how it was going to feel," Benson said. "I understand (the recovery) is going to be a slow process."

But Benson said the injury has been harder on her this time.

She wasn't involved with soccer

each day in high school—like she is in college. She also wasn't busy training with the under-20 national team.

"It couldn't have happened at a worse time," said Kari Uppinghouse, Benson's best friend and former NU teammate. "Things were finally starting to happen for her."

Uppinghouse remembers the day the trainers told Benson her ACL was torn.

"It was devastating news," Uppinghouse said. "We were speechless, and she was crying. Knowing I was done, I wish I could have taken the injury for her."

Benson has not asked for sympathy from anyone. Her mother said that's part of her personality.

"She puts other people before herself," Sharon Benson said. "She told me, 'I'm fine, don't worry about me.'"

Jenny Benson may not let on to many people how she's really feeling, but she responds quickly when asked how much she misses soccer.

"It just kills me not being out there every day," she said. "I can't wait for the day I can step back on the field."



MATT MILLER/DN

BENSON NOW ACCEPTS the fact that she will not play any more this season. The injury made her realize how much playing soccer meant to her, she said.

Beer run tests stomach's strength

By **TODD MUNSON**
Staff writer

Five miles. Five beers.

What the hell was I thinking?

Last Sunday, I competed in the 20th—or possibly the 21st depending on whom you ask—running of The Beer Run.

Started in 1978 by the Lincoln Track Club as a way to wind down the season, The Beer Run eventually branched out and evolved into its own entity.

At the dawn of the age of gender equity, women began slamming full 12-ounce beers with the men. And for the lightweights, or minors, a non-alcoholic and soda division had been added.

Although it has always been a low-profile event, The Beer Run is rich in history. A high school track coach set the record of 29 minutes, 23 seconds back in 1984. Wow.

If the course record didn't serve notice about the seriousness of the race, the starting area certainly did. Cars up and down the street were adorned with a variety of running paraphernalia. The folks who owned these vehicles cer-

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tainly looked the part, either decked out in actual running attire or wearing T-shirts from past races and marathons.

Suddenly, I was a bit nervous. I'd never run more than two miles at a time, and by the looks of things, the only person I could beat was a dead ringer for Al from "Home Improvement."

After a couple feeble attempts at touching my toes, I joined the 30 or so runners at the starting line for the pre-race directions. Adding to my fears was the official's warning: "If you throw up more than twice, you're disqualified, 'cause you're doing it on purpose."

Mile 1—After the first few hundred yards, I found myself in a group at the front. Very strange. Soon, the first beer stop was in sight. I watched in awe as the leader grabbed his on the fly and downed it within two steps. When we hit the stop I checked my Timex Ironman, which for the first time was being used as intended. Under six minutes by a good margin. No wonder my heart was about to explode.

Mile 2—Either the others were getting faster, or I was getting slower. On this mile, I watched the leaders run off, and I was passed by others. As I ran along with a fellow in a Beer Run shirt from 1994, I asked him what his strategy was.

"Drink the beer fast," he said.

I thanked him for that tidbit and told him this was the longest I'd ever run, as well as my first running race.

"Whoa dude, baptism by fire," he muttered as he ran ahead.

Mile 3—I shouldn't have had that Mountain Dew before the start. Man, did I have to pee. Thankfully, there was a tree nearby, and my kidneys were soon tapped. On this leg, I was passed by a kid who looked like his parents didn't feed him. When asked how one goes about running 5 miles, his reply was, "I dunno, you just do it."

Poor kid is a victim of advertising, but at least he wasn't wearing a pair of Nikes. At the third beer stop, I was handed a freshly poured cup of foam. This would come back to haunt me.

Mile 4—Belch... barf... beer... bad. Not only was I getting a little sick, but I noticed my motor control was getting a little slow, and the fellow behind me was gaining. My head began to

swell with doubts about even finishing, or living for that matter. But hey, the fourth beer went down extra smooth thanks to my freshly purged stomach.

Mile 5—Delirium had set in, as well as "Gonna Fly Now" from "Rocky." The only problem was the runner behind me was getting closer every second. He finally caught me, and we hit the final beer stop at the same moment.

The time had come to put five years of college life and countless Ultimate Frisbee parties to good use. Between exhausted breaths, I muscled that final beer down in two gulps and promptly collapsed. But not before I saw the other fellow still trying to finish his. My time of 40:53 was good enough for 10th, not too bad considering the pee break and stopping to puke in a bush.

After a few minutes, a steady stream of runners poured into the finish, and the post-race picnic/sobering up session began. While The Beer Run was an odd gathering of local runners, the proceeds were donated to a program for children. When the fuzziness cleared, I went home with my prize in hand—a bottle of Fat Tire Ale.

I think it will probably be in the fridge for quite a while.



Newcombe ready to test Washington

By **DAVID WILSON**
Senior staff writer

Four tests and a couple of papers due the same week could spell pressure for any UNL sophomore.

Add trying to completely recover from a knee injury and preparing for the toughest defense you've faced in your quarterback career, and you've got one hectic week.

That's exactly what Nebraska signal caller Bobby Newcombe is up against.

"You study the offense like you would study for two classes," Newcombe said Tuesday afternoon.

"But it's not the game that's getting to me. It's a tough week academically."

The second-ranked Cornhuskers (3-0) will play host to No. 9 Washington (2-0) at 2:35 p.m. in Memorial Stadium on Saturday.

The matchup will mark the return of Newcombe at quarterback after he suffered a slight tear in his posterior cruciate ligament behind his left knee in NU's season opener against Louisiana Tech. It also will mark his first start at quarterback against a ranked opponent.

Newcombe, who said he expects to be at 100 percent by Saturday, sat out against Alabama-Birmingham and California.

"That was very hard," Newcombe said. "It was eating at me a little bit. I think it strengthened me a lot more mentally. I never really dealt with that kind of situation before."

Newcombe completed nine of 10 passes for 168 yards and scored twice on the ground against Louisiana Tech. Though he has missed two games since then, he said he doesn't plan to come back with a coat of rust.

Redshirt freshman quarterback Eric Crouch, who started both games in Newcombe's absence, agreed with Newcombe's assessment of his return.

"I think he's moving real well in practice," Crouch said. "It looks like he's getting back to normal. That's always good to see."

"You never want to see a quarterback out like that. Especially someone with his athletic ability and big-play potential. You always want someone on the field who can make big plays like that."

Newcombe said his injury helped him grow closer to many of his teammates, who supported him through his injury.

Despite the support, he said, a certain amount of pressure still lingers.

"Quarterback at Nebraska is a position that is very hard to win, and also to keep—not only physically, but also mentally," Newcombe said. "It's a tough position just walking around in daily life."

"There are times when I'm sitting in class where the pressure gets so big, you can't finish what you need to finish."

But in the end, Newcombe said, he will be ready Saturday.

"As far as playing in big games, it's nothing really new to me," said Newcombe, who finished last season at wingback after playing three games as NU's third-string quarterback. "But as far as playing quarterback in a big game, it's new to me."

"At the same time, I predict myself going into the game very relaxed."