

Confidence returns for NU's Rogers at tourney

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior staff writer

Jamie Rogers, Nebraska's best men's golfer in 1997, lost some confidence somewhere between the Cornhuskers' first two fall tournaments this season.

He shot way over his 71-stroke average. He didn't putt well. He struggled to compete with the top players at Falcon-Cross Creek and the Kansas Invitational.

But don't call it a slump. Rogers doesn't.

"I don't want to use that word. I think I just put too much pressure on myself," said Rogers, who returned to his old form last week at the Colorado State Ram Collegiate. "I had been playing well in the summer, and there was no reason to think that I wouldn't have a good season this year.

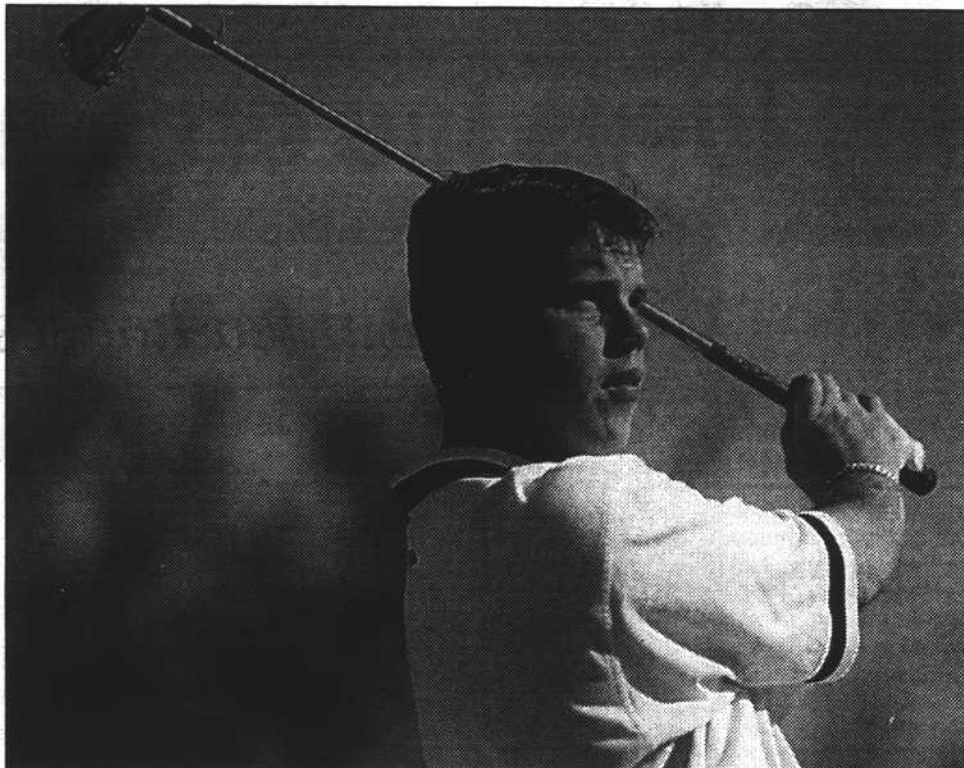
"But I started out kind of slow, and things kind of went down from there. I was being real negative with myself. I was telling myself I couldn't play the game."

Rogers smiles at the thought, because nothing could be further from the truth. NU Golf Coach Larry Romjue has labeled the Maroochydore, Australia, native "the best player who has ever played here," and Rogers lived up to the billing last weekend at Colorado State.

Rogers tied for first with a three-day total of 204, firing rounds of 67, 72 and a school record-tying 65 on the final day of competition.

"Jamie shot 5-under on a tough 70-par course," Romjue said.

"A lot of golfers will get a little uncomfortable when they're under par quickly. They'll try sit on their lead or protect it. But Jamie kept playing aggressively. That 65 carried us through



DAWN DIETRICH/DN

NEBRASKA SENIOR GOLFER Jamie Rogers practices at Firethorn Golf Course on Thursday afternoon. Rogers is one of three golfers on the Nebraska team from Australia.

the tournament."

For Rogers, the tournament win came just in time. Rogers admitted he had grown frustrated after NU's first two tournaments.

"I hope the confidence thing is past," Rogers said. "I get nervous, but that's a good thing. It shows how much you care and how much you

want it."

Rogers has taken a long road to reach his collegiate goals. He arrived at Nebraska in 1994 after following the advice of fellow Australian recruit Trent Morrison. Rogers ranked among NU's top golfers but returned to Australia shortly after his freshman season when his parents

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JAMIE ROGERS
NU golfer

divorced.

In his 2½ years away from the United States, Rogers worked at a night club and two different driving ranges.

"I had to go home and see what was going on with them," Rogers said. "So I went back and thought about settling down. But I realized I couldn't do anything about what was going on, and I knew the opportunities were back here, so I left."

Rogers counted one of his absent years as a redshirt and lost the other year and a half of eligibility. He competes for the Huskers this season as a senior.

With his confidence regained after last weekend, Rogers is excited for his final year. He wants to win at least three tournaments and compete at the NCAA National Championships.

But his greatest ambition, Rogers said, is to play professionally in the United States.

"If I do well this season, I might finish my classes through correspondence, move to Arizona and try to get on the pro tour," Rogers said. "There isn't a better way to make a living than doing something you love."

No. 7 Portland a tough test for NU

BY JAY SAUNDERS
Staff writer

One week ago, the Nebraska soccer team was preparing for what NU Coach John Walker called the team's toughest weekend of the year.

This week there is no drop off, with No. 7 Portland coming into town today for a 7 p.m. game at the Abbott Sports Complex.

"These are the types of games you look forward to," Walker said. "This will be the strongest team that we play this season."

The No. 12 Cornhuskers (8-2 overall, 3-0 in the Big 12 Conference) carry a five-game winning streak into the game against the Pilots. Last weekend, NU beat Texas and then-No. 12 Texas A&M to take over the lead in the Big 12.

Nebraska now goes back out of conference against Portland. The Pilots are No. 5 in the NSCAA/Umbro Top 25. This will be the second time this year the Huskers will play a top-10 team.

"We always get excited for the big ones," senior Kristen Gay said. "This is definitely the best team we have played."

The Pilots have outscored opponents 30-4 this season. Portland goalkeeper Cheryl Loveless

has six shutouts and a 0.46 goals against average.

"This is the biggest game I have ever played in," freshman Kelly Rheem said. "We are on a roll right now, and it is a good time to play them."

One NU player has a special interest in tonight's game. Senior Kim Engesser, who leads the team with 14 goals, transferred to Nebraska from Portland at the end of the 1996 season.

Gay said the team hasn't talked about rallying behind Engesser, but it is probably on the Huskers' minds.

"We are going to give 110 percent for Kim," Gay said. "It will be in the back of our minds. Kim will be in our thoughts."

Rheem also will see some familiar faces Sunday when the Huskers close out their six-game homestand against Colorado at 1 p.m.

The Buffaloes (3-5-2 and 1-0-1) have two players who played for Arapahoe High School in Littleton, Colo., which Rheem attended.

CU also has played a solid non-conference schedule. The Buffaloes have gone up against three ranked teams, including No. 1 North Carolina.

"(Colorado) had gone out and played a tough schedule," Walker said. "Colorado is one of the most improved teams in the conference this year."

Cross country teams face critical meet at NCAAs

BY LISA VONNAHME
Staff writer

The Nebraska men's and women's cross country teams will face their biggest challenges of the season so far this weekend.

Based on NU's performance Saturday at the NCAA Pre-National Meet in Lawrence, Kan., the outcome of the Huskers' seasons could be determined, NU Coach Jay Dirksen said.

"We need to run well," Dirksen said. "Our performance in this meet will be looked at when it comes down to deciding what teams get to run at the NCAA meet."

The top men's and women's teams in the country will be competing in Saturday's meet to prepare for the Nov. 23 NCAA Championships, which will be held in Lawrence at Rim Rock Farm.

All 35 teams at the meet are possible NCAA Championships qualifiers and will be using this weekend's meet as a way to get to know the Rim Rock course for nationals.

"This is a tough course," junior Melissa Wilson said. "It's very hilly, and on top of that we will be running against the top teams in the nation plus some."

Change good for NU's Henk

HENK from page 7

winning streak. And Baylor boasts one of the best outside hitters in the league in Elisha Polk, who ranked third in the Big 12 with 4.6 kills per game.

Henk played one of her best games of her sophomore season against Tech in 1997, posting her season-high 11 digs. For the season, Henk totaled 156 digs, sixth best on the team.

NU Coach Terry Pettit praised Henk's play this season and last.

"Nikki is a tough competitor," Pettit said. "She understands the game, she is a primary passer, and she plays hard. She has been invaluable to us. And her teammates understand what she gave up to come here."

Transferring to NU proved emotionally taxing for Henk. She was the second player in school history to whom Charleston did not grant a scholarship release. Henk appealed, but the situation remained unresolved until late that summer.

"It was icky. That's the only word I can think of for it," Henk said. "It got real frustrating. My career was on hold."


When Henk finally joined the Huskers, she faced a major adjustment on the court. Pettit asked her to contribute as a defensive specialist at the middle back spot — the only position she had never played at before.

And Pettit always keeps her guessing. Henk is never sure when Pettit will call on her to provide a spark off the bench.


"Sometimes I'll run up there to go in, and he'll point at someone else," Henk said. "Maybe we need Denise (Koziol, another back row specialist) at that time to go in and serve or something. So I run back down the bench. I just wait my turn."

But despite the personal sacrifices, Henk does not regret shifting gears from a lesser-known volleyball school to a national power.

"Anywhere else, I'd be disappointed with not playing a lot," Henk said. "But here, you're with the top 15 players in the country. If you're not playing, you're helping the team in some way."



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