

# Van Horn leads coaches to new era

■ The first-year coach will be instrumental in changes to the tourney format and TV contract.

BY ADAM KLINKER  
Staff writer

In just 10 months as Nebraska's head baseball coach, Dave Van Horn is already a part of something big in the Big 12 Conference.

Van Horn, who replaced John Sanders in January, is now the chairman of the Big 12 baseball coaches' committee.

Van Horn took over as chairman because of a rotating schedule among the coaches. Each year brings new leadership to the committee. This year was NU's turn in the rotation.

"I thought it was kind of neat, it being my first year," Van Horn said. "It keeps the flow in the conference and allows me to present some things and gives me a chance to get involved."

In opening legislative matters for

the conference, two major changes will be transpiring for the Big 12: television coverage and the expansion of the conference tournament.

Before the Big Eight and Southwestern Conferences merged in 1994 to form the Big 12, both conferences had TV coverage for baseball games.

Athletic directors have given their approval to televise eight to 10 conference games on Fox Sports Net for the 1999 season. The plan was approved by the Big 12 Conference Board of Directors.

"The TV coverage is really something we needed to get going," Van Horn said. "It gives our kids a chance to see our caliber baseball in the Big 12."

As a top baseball conference, Van Horn said, the Big 12 was in need of television coverage comparable to that of other top baseball conferences like the Southeastern Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference and the Pac-10 Conference, who have had many regular-season conference games telecast on Fox and other networks.

Previously, Fox Sports Southwest televised six Big 12 conference tour-

namment games in the 1997 and 1998 seasons. As yet, conference tournament coverage is yet to be decided.

The conference tournament itself is undergoing changes to its structure.

In conjunction with the NCAA's expansion of the regional tournaments from 48 to 64 teams, the Big 12 followed suit by widening the field in its conference tournament from six teams to eight.

The measure was passed by the coaches, the Ads and the Board of Directors.

"We felt this was a good move," Van Horn said. "It will motivate some teams to step it up knowing they've got a shot."

Van Horn said he was pleased with the way things have been shaping up for baseball in the conference and was happy that he could be a part of it so early in his career.

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