

Top NU cross country runner off squad

BY LISA VONNAHME
Staff writer

Top men's cross country runner Jeroen Broekzitter was released from the Nebraska men's cross country and track teams Tuesday evening.

Track Coach Gary Pepin confirmed the release Wednesday and said Broekzitter was released from the teams for "disciplinary reasons."

University police responded to a verbal disturbance complaint from Pepin, who was at the track office at the Bob Devaney Sports Center at 5:58 p.m. Tuesday, UNL Police Sgt. Mylo Bushing said. By the time university police arrived at the office, both Pepin and Broekzitter said the situation was under control.

Broekzitter later told police he was upset with Pepin because his athletic scholarship was being taken away, Bushing said.

Broekzitter said Wednesday that the entire incident Tuesday was an unfortunate one, and while he did not expect to be released, he did take blame for the entire situation.

"I did not respond properly," Broekzitter said. "I take the blame for that. I do want to apologize."

Tuesday was an end to a very difficult part of his career, Broekzitter said. Much of it had to do with a hamstring pull that never fully healed, he said.

"I've been under a lot of physical and emotional stress for the last year, especially the last semester," Broekzitter said. "The whole situation escalated Tuesday, and I did not respond in the right way."

NU Cross Country Coach Jay Dirksen was not at the office when university police were called.

Dirksen said Wednesday that both he and Broekzitter agreed last week that Broekzitter would not compete for the remainder of the cross country season. Broekzitter confirmed this meeting occurred.

A sophomore from Utrecht, Netherlands, Broekzitter had completed only the first of five NU cross country meets this season because of repeated cramping in his hamstring.

"Prior to this, Jeroen and I agreed he wouldn't compete anymore," Dirksen said. "Physically, he hadn't recovered from the crampings, and he wasn't in race condition."

"It was crazy for him to keep dropping out of races."

Broekzitter earned Big 12 Conference newcomer-of-the-year honors last season after he became the ninth Cornhusker to become an All-

American. His 20th-place finish at last year's NCAA Championships was the highest among all freshmen in the field.

As for his future, Broekzitter was unsure what direction it would take.

"I don't know at this point," he said.

Senior staff writer Josh Funk contributed to this report.

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