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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1998

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Sports Opinion



James Nicas

Fan support at MU game was pathetic

As a lifelong Nebraska fan, and after almost five years of watching Cornhusker football games in the student section, I never thought I would ever have to say this.

But after witnessing the debacle Saturday afternoon against Missouri, I have never been more disappointed as a Husker fan.

It is not the team I am upset about, it's the fans - in particular the student fans. In a nutshell, we are pathetic.

I have been holding my judgment all season, hoping a close game would bring out the best in the student section. However the Missouri game only furthered my belief that students have forgotten what it means to cheer at a game.

At the beginning of the game, everyone gets excited when the team comes out of the tunnel walk. However that is the loudest students get before a game. The loudest point in the game is not supposed to be before kickoff.

After the Huskers entered the field, everyone sat on their hands. Where are the long chants of GOOO BIIIIG REDDD? Besides a few crazy students' attempts, they no longer exist.

Students never give a good chant of DEFENSE anymore. There was only one short stint of DEFENSE that echoed through the concrete on Memorial Stadium, and it took until the final drive to have that. Why? Are students afraid of losing their voices?

Speaking of the last drive, that might have been the lowest point in student section history. With four seconds left and the Blackshirts needing one final stop, students in section 11 did the unthinkable. They sat down!

Even if it was a time out, that was a time when we should have been at our most raucous. A "Go Big Red!" chant would have been nice. Anything would have been better than sitting down.

Maybe it is not our fault. There may be too many things that distract us from the game. HuskerVision breaks up any cheering that might occur, and students are now preoccupied with catching hot dogs from Der Wiener Schlinger.

On Saturday, students were so preoccupied with getting a hot dog on the final possession that many were more concerned about that than the game.

Saturday night, 4,288 crazed volleyball fans were much louder than anything in Memorial Stadium. The 12th man at Texas A&M put to shame anything we Huskers have done.

Students, we have the potential to be the great fans we once were. It is time to reclaim our stature as the best fans in America.

When Texas comes, be loud the entire game. The team needs and deserves our support. Please, if you don't want to cheer, stay home.

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MATT MILLER/DN
MELINDA MOHR (left), Melissa Wilson, Amie Finkner, Jeannette Zimmer, Jaime Pauli, Stephanie Stewart (standing) and the rest of the women's cross-country team hope to improve on their second-place performance last year at the Big 12 Championships. This year the Huskers play host to the championship Saturday at Pioneers Park.

Huskers face tough odds at Championships

BY ADAM KLINKER
Staff writer

The Nebraska men's and women's cross country teams will be running on familiar ground this weekend as they play host to the Big 12 Conference Championship meet Saturday at Pioneers Park.



However, the men's squad will have their hands full battling for position with two-time Big 12 champion Colorado. "Colorado's probably just going to

run away with it," said sophomore Cornhusker runner Marcus Witter. "But we think we can still be running well with the rest of the pack and come out on top there."

Since lead runner Jeroen Broekzitter was dismissed from the team last week for disciplinary reasons, Witter said, he's seen an improvement in team morale and attitude going into the

conference meet.

Coach Jay Dirksen said he too has noticed a closeness among the remaining runners.

"All the guys have looked good in practice, there hasn't been any letdown since Jeroen left," Dirksen said.

Please see INJURY on 10

Christo, NU ready for Longhorns

Revenge no factor in preparation

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior staff writer

Few Nebraska football players have answered with more than a couple of words when asked about the revenge factor for Saturday's game with Texas.

The sting of swaggering quarterback James Brown leading Texas to 503 yards of total offense on just 57 plays in the 1996 Big 12 Championship game has lessened with time.

The memory of the Cornhuskers' letdown that allowed the Longhorns to score two touchdowns in the final nine minutes and to steal the inaugural league title with a 37-27 win has faded.

And NU Coach Frank Solich is certain the feelings that consumed the Huskers for months after that defeat

will not resurface for Saturday's 2:35 p.m. contest at Memorial Stadium. The game pits Nebraska (7-1 overall and 4-1 in the Big 12 Conference) and Texas (5-2 and 3-1) against each other for the first time since 1996.

"I've not heard a player mention it and I've not thought about it," Solich said. "It has not been a factor in any way in how we've prepared for this game. You try not to dwell in the past and two years ago is a long way back."

Said Husker fullback Joel Makovicka: "There are a lot of new faces we'll be seeing. We can't go in with a revenge factor. These are two totally different teams."

Both programs have experienced a considerable amount of change. Solich

Please see REVENGE on 10

Senior walk-on gets nod at QB

BY DAVID WILSON
Senior staff writer

For the first time in his five-year career at Nebraska, walk-on quarterback Monte Christo will get a chance to start Saturday when the Cornhuskers play host to Texas.

NU Coach Frank Solich announced the decision Thursday as former No. 1 quarterback Bobby Newcombe missed his fourth consecutive practice this week.

Christo played the entire second half last Saturday against Missouri, replacing Newcombe, who was slowed by a posterior cruciate ligament strain he suffered in NU's season opener.

"It just probably makes sense to start Monte," Solich said.

Redshirt freshman Eric Crouch, who has missed the last three games with a hip pointer, is also at 100 percent, Solich said, and will see action in the first half against Texas.

"They both performed well this week," Solich said. "There was not a real separation from one to the next - Monte has just had an opportunity to take game snaps here lately."

Christo scored the first two touchdowns of his career last Saturday, as he helped the Huskers to a 20-13 victory over the Tigers. Under Christo's direction, NU rebounded from a 13-6 halftime deficit.

Please see CHRISTO on 10

NU's Koziol finds role as defensive specialist

BY JAMES NICAS
Staff writer

One of the first rules of accounting is that for every debit, there is a credit.

To put that in volleyball terms, the amount of time and energy spent in preparation should equal the amount of time and attention received on the court.

At first glance, it would appear the rule wouldn't apply to NU defensive specialist

Denise Koziol. However, the junior has quietly become one of the most reliable and consistent players on the Nebraska volleyball team. Although Koziol doesn't



get the attention many other players receive, her serving and back row play has been key to the Cornhuskers' success.

"I usually come in at times when we are not doing well, and I can come and bring some life into the team," said Koziol. "I can put us back into the game because we can sometimes get two or three points off my serve."

Koziol's on-the-court presence was most evident in the Texas A&M match. Koziol entered in game one with NU leading 7-5. Six Koziol serves later, the Huskers led 13-5, which help set the tone for the rest of the match.

Although Koziol's play isn't often seen on the stat sheet, Husker setter

Fiona Nepo said the team recognizes her contribution.

"Denise is one of our great defensive players and one of our great servers," Nepo said. "When we're down and we need a good serve or just something different, she comes in and provides that."

There was a time when Koziol would wonder if she would ever play volleyball. After redshirting in 1995, Koziol tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee in the annual Red-White game. After a year of rehabilitation, Koziol was finally able to make her Husker debut.

Playing both as a defensive specialist and as an outside hitter last year, Koziol had a career high 10 kills against Pacific. However, this year Koziol has been used primarily as a defensive specialist.

Koziol said although she enjoys playing at the net, she knows her role on the team.

"I'm not the type who's going to get real excited. I come in quietly and do what I'm supposed to do," Koziol said. "The team knows they can trust me to serve, pass, and play good defense."

This weekend Koziol will try to help serve up a couple of victories for No. 3 Nebraska, which is 19-0 overall and 10-0 in the Big 12 Conference. The Huskers will travel to Missouri on Friday night before playing at Iowa State on Saturday.

Although the attention she receives may not equal the time she puts in, Koziol knows there is another rule that more adequately applies to her effort: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

"Now that I am in the back row, I know that is where I am to contribute," Koziol said. "In practice I am usually simulating the opponent, but I feel if we don't play hard then the team won't be able to prepare well for the opponent."



Koziol