

# After rough start, McWilliams settles into match

■ The sophomore's first career start broke a 90-game consecutive string for Cornhusker setter Fiona Nepo.

BY JAMES NICAS  
Staff writer

Nebraska sophomore setter Jill McWilliams knew that at some point in her career she would lead the Cornhuskers to battle in a match.

However, McWilliams didn't know until five minutes before playing No. 21 Kansas State Friday night that her first start in college would come against the Wildcats.

Because of a left ankle injury senior setter Fiona Nepo suffered in practice prior to Wednesday's match against Colorado, NU Coach Terry Pettit called on McWilliams to make her first career start. McWilliams responded with 44 set assists to help the No. 3 Cornhuskers in the victory.

"I've been preparing, and every

game I'm ready to go in," McWilliams said. "The last five weeks I've been putting a lot of time in practice, and this was the most prepared I've been going into a match."

McWilliams' preparation early in the season had been hampered by a back injury that limited her practice. Five weeks ago, McWilliams' injury had subsided, and she began to work more with Husker Assistant Coach Cathy Noth.

Noth said McWilliams' character and organization helped the team have confidence in her ability.

"Her character supplies a lot of composure on the court," Noth said. "That is what you need to do when you make your first leap into starting and finishing out the game."

The start of the match had an ominous beginning for McWilliams when she double-hit her first set. Nebraska then went down 6-3 in game one before settling down.

"I wasn't feeling too hot after (the double hit), but I knew things could only get better," McWilliams said. "It took me awhile to get used to playing with a crowd like that, and to get settled down."

Some of the problems early in the match could be attributed to the differences in McWilliams' setting compared to Nepo's. After early difficulties connecting with the hitters, McWilliams said the Huskers clicked well.

"Our sets obviously are not the same," McWilliams said. "But we've worked enough in practice where they know the slight differences, and we were able to adjust right away."

Ironically, the last time McWilliams came in for Nepo was last year against Kansas State. Although Noth said Nepo's injury does not appear to be serious, McWilliams' start did end a string of 90 straight matches in which Nepo had started.

McWilliams' 44 set assists more than doubled the 39 set assists she had in her career before the match. She also had her first career kill and added four block assists.

The match was a great learning experience, McWilliams said, and she will be prepared whenever called upon.

"I know that now any time I have to step up in a match I will be more confident and ready to go."

## NU pulls off three-game sweep over Kansas State

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mance, especially since she wasn't told she was going to start until almost game time.

"She showed a lot of courage in that situation," Pettit said. "It would've been nice if she had a week to know."

McWilliams' play sparked the enthusiasm of the coaching staff.

Assistant Coach Cathy Noth and Pettit both showed emotion throughout the match, especially in the third game as NU fought off a Wildcat game point to win the match.

"Our excitement came from the pleasure of seeing Jill run the team and the players taking charge," Noth said.

Hitting .302 for the match, the Huskers limited the Wildcats to .183 hitting percentage as NU also piled up

15 blocks to KSU's seven.

While statistically the Huskers outmatched the Wildcats, Noth was most impressed with the players' focus throughout the match.

"Even when Jill under-set, the players were just finding ways to get the ball over the net," Noth said. "They were conscious of 'let's make this happen.'"

"It was character building for everybody. This team is going to grow from this because we're on our way to get a Big 12 Championship."

Meanwhile, Pettit said Nepo suffered the ankle sprain during a practice last Wednesday. Nepo did play Wednesday night against Colorado, but because of continued pain, she sat out Friday night's match.

Nepo was unavailable for comment on Friday, but Pettit said her injury was not serious.

## McDill's 'blue-collar' game keys 71-42 win

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Senior staff writer

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A glance at the final statistics of both of the Nebraska women's basketball team's exhibition games reveals a few surprises next to Cori McDill's name.

The senior forward, who averaged 3.3 points per game in her first three years with the Cornhuskers, led NU in scoring trips to the foul line in both contests.

McDill paced the Huskers Tuesday with 11 points against Myjava (Slovakia) and followed the performance with 17 points in the Cornhuskers' 71-42 win over Shelton (Russia) Sunday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. A 45-percent shooter last year during her junior season, McDill finished Sunday's game at 60 percent (6 of 10) from the field. She also made all five of her attempts at the free throw line.

But McDill maintains that she has not grown into a scoring threat.

"It's not like they're unbelievable shots that I am making," McDill said. "I just go out and play hard and once in awhile, the ball goes in."

NU Coach Paul Sanderford said McDill's increased production has little to do with luck. He labels McDill the hardest-working Husker and said she returned after summer conditioning noticeably improved.

"Cori plays so hard that she gets a lot of shots," Sanderford said. "She has worked really hard to become a great player. I'm more pleased that she

is not fouling and rebounding more. Cori is the blue-collar kind of player that you want to have on the floor. She makes everyone else better."

McDill relishes her rebounding and defensive role. She led NU on the boards Sunday as well, grabbing seven offensive rebounds and eight total. McDill expects to put up those rebounding numbers consistently, which is something she couldn't do last season.

"I am extremely different, both mentally and physically," McDill said. "Because I never really played before last season, I felt like I was having my freshman, sophomore and junior seasons all at the same time."

"I was going 100 miles per hour with my head cut off. I feel a lot more comfortable on the court now. I am able to relax and have fun. And it's no fun to lose, so I am going to do what I can to help us win."

On a team with only two seniors who contributed significantly last season, McDill recognizes the need for leadership, which she prefers to do by example.

"My goal is to be the hardest-working player on the team," McDill said. "I don't have the most talent, but I want to work harder than anyone else."

"I do it by winning all the sprints in practice. I want to go as hard as I possibly can every moment of practice."

## Women finish strong at Mustang Invite

From staff reports

The Nebraska men's and women's swimming and diving teams had a productive weekend around the Dallas-Ft. Worth area.

At Texas Christian University in Ft. Worth Friday, the men's team started its dual meet season with a 137-82 win over the Horned Frogs.

With a score of 384.15 over six dives in the 3-meter springboard competition, junior diver Eric Cook broke an NU school record held by Danny Bergman. Bergman won the 1-meter competition, scoring 357.83 points.

Junior swimmer Michael Windisch won twice, with first place finishes in the 400-yard individual medley (time of 3 minutes, 56.35 sec-

onds) and the 100-yard butterfly (51.80).

Also bringing home individual victories for the Huskers were Adam Pine in the 100-yard freestyle (46.96), Anthony Rogis in the 50-yard freestyle (21.36), Eric Rasser in the 500-yard freestyle (4:40.03) and Josh Mathias in the 200-yard freestyle (1:44.21).

Saturday in Dallas, the women squared off against formidable competition in the Southern Methodist University Lady Mustang Invite.

The No. 11 Huskers finished second with 312 points, pulling out well ahead of No. 9 Texas (261 points), No. 15 Florida (256), No. 10 Northwestern and No. 10 Wisconsin (232).

Fourth-ranked SMU took the meet with 368 points.

Among individual honors, freshman Emma Johnson won two second-place medals, one in the 200-yard IM (2:03.08) and another in the 200-yard backstroke (1:59.97).

Another freshman, Janna Brock, finished second in the 200-yard breaststroke in a time of 2:14.03.

A Husker relay team, made up of Therese Alshammar, Shandra Johnson, Beth Karaica and Terrie Miller, was runner-up in both the 400-yard freestyle relay (3:24.66) and the 200-yard freestyle relay (1:33.91).

In other dual action, the men took 10 of 13 events from SMU to beat the 10th-ranked Mustangs for the third straight year.

Rasser, Windisch and diver Bergman again led the scoring as NU outpaced SMU by a mark of 138-102.

## Huskers rebound from loss with 35-point victory in Ames

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slant, I thought I'd be able to tackle him," said Finley, who grabbed another interception in the second half. "But Erwin (Swiney, NU defensive back) did a real good job on him, and the ball was just floating, so I ran under it."

"It was like slow motion. It had crossed my mind how terrible it would be to go through my whole career playing safety for Nebraska and never getting an interception."

Nebraska moved the ball to the Iowa State 36-yard line but failed to convert on third-and-1 when Alexander ran for a 1-yard loss. With a 7-point lead, Solich decided to go for the first down on fourth-and-2, and Alexander picked up a 6-yard gain.

"I was trying to get some points on the board early," Solich said of the call. "We talked about getting up early in practice all week since that is something we haven't been able to do all of the time. I would do it over again if I had to."

Alexander eventually capped the 79-yard drive with a 2-yard touchdown run. Nebraska scored again six minutes later on a 2-yard Correll Buckhalter run, ending the half with a 21-0 lead.

"Dan has the speed to get around on the option, but his strength is breaking tackles and getting the yards after contact," Solich said. "He's learning as he goes along. He's running lower and getting better game by game. He has a great combi-

## Bandhauer's, ISU's mistakes costly in 42-7 loss to Nebraska

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Bandhauer's first interception was at the Nebraska goal line. His third turnover was returned by NU's Joe Walker 65 yards for a touchdown.

"On the first one," Bandhauer said, "he made a good play. The second one I forced. I have had problems forcing the football."

McCarney said turnovers weren't the only problems plaguing Iowa

State. Nine penalties and a lackluster rushing game forced the Cyclones to pass through the snow.

Senior tailback Darren Davis, who was averaging 106 yards rushing, had only 48 yards in 16 carries against Nebraska.

"That is a very fine Nebraska defense they have like they do every year," McCarney said. "Their front seven is big and strong."

"They look like they are going to bust out of their jerseys."

nation of size and speed."

Alexander credited the offensive line for his success.

"Sometimes when I would get the ball in other games, I would run into a defensive guy in the backfield. But I never saw that once today," Alexander said. "The offensive line had a good surge. They were just kicking people off the ball."

Nebraska also controlled the line of scrimmage defensively. The line accounted for two sacks, one each by Chad Kelsay and Jason Wiltz. Prior to Saturday, Iowa State had given up two sacks all season.

The Blackshirts forced four turnovers, including Finley's two interceptions, an ISU fumble on a punt return in the first quarter, and an interception by Joe Walker, who returned it 65 yards for a touchdown with 11 minutes remaining in the

fourth quarter. Nebraska converted three of ISU's four turnovers into scores.

The defense held ISU - which ranks fifth in the Big 12 with 365 yards per game - to 227 yards of total offense.

"We came in here looking for a shutout, but we were also looking for turnovers," Kelsay said. "The defensive backs just did a great job today."

But Kelsay, as well as NU linebacker Jay Foreman, know their greatest defensive challenge of the season lies ahead.

"Had we not played so well today after the loss last week, I would have felt a little wary going into the Kansas State game," Foreman said. "I'm very proud of these guys. Iowa State is not a bad team. They had guys flying around on offense and on defense."

"We are just happy with the win and ready to move on to the big test next week."

## Nebraska soccer squad earns 1st-round bye in NCAA Tourney

BY JAY SAUNDERS  
Staff writer

Hours after winning its second Big 12 Conference tournament championship, the Nebraska soccer team had its fate decided in the NCAA tournament.

The 48-team tournament, which starts Wednesday, includes the No. 17 Cornhuskers.

NU received a first-round bye, and will host the winner of the first-round match between Alabama and Texas A&M. The Aggies will play host to the Crimson Tide on Wednesday.

The Huskers have only played Alabama once, a 1-0 win in Lincoln in 1996.

But NU is no stranger to the Aggies. The two teams have squared

off twice already this season. The Huskers have won both games, including a triple-overtime game in the semifinals of the conference tournament.

"Any time Nebraska and Texas A&M play it's a good game," NU Coach John Walker said. "But you are also thinking 'oh no, here we go again.'"

After last year's pairings were announced, several players were disappointed NU was not given one of the top eight seeds.

Junior Lindsay Eddleman said the release of this year's tournament bracket garnered similar emotions.

"We are overlooked then the NCAA seedings come out," Eddleman said. "We will have to win a national championship no matter what to even get seeded in the top eight."