

Belcher returns in 86-76 victory

By **DARREN IVY**
Staff writer

The return of Cookie Belcher to the Nebraska lineup provided a big boost for the Cornhuskers on Tuesday night as they defeated Next Level Sports 86-76 before 5,046 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Belcher, who sat out the last game with a bruised thigh, scored 15 points,

dished out seven assists, grabbed six rebounds and made four steals in 31 minutes of action. With Belcher back in the starting lineup, NU looked more in sync than they did vs. Pella Windows.

"(Our starters) have good chemistry," Belcher said. "This is the best chemistry we've had since I've been here. We know there is not a star player. We each try to play our own role."

One key role player is senior center Venson Hamilton. He scored 27 points,

Basketball
Nebraska 86
Next Level Sports 76

grabbed nine rebounds and made five steals. However, he committed five turnovers for the second-straight game.

"We need to cut down our turnovers," Hamilton said. "I need to cut down my turnovers. I don't want to have any, but that's not always possible. I want not more than two."

Snyder keeps KSU quiet before game

By **DAVID WILSON**
Senior staff writer

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Bill Snyder's fair-skinned face turned bright red in fewer than five seconds



Snyder

Tuesday when asked a question regarding how he limits players from talking to the press.

Suddenly, he smiled.

The straight-faced Kansas State football coach has kept his Heisman Trophy candidate, quarterback Michael Bishop, away from the media for more than a month.

"I don't know how to answer that," he said.

"We do have players that can be emotional — and I appreciate that. The game is played with a huge degree of emotion. Obviously, it has to be tempered."

Snyder put the same media restrictions on Bishop after he called his teammates "quitters" following last season's matchup with Nebraska.

But that's typical of the way Snyder runs his program — high on focus, low on distractions.

Currently ranked No. 1 in the USA Today/ESPN Coaches Poll and No. 2 in The Associated Press Poll, the Wildcats hold closed practices within barbed-wire fences that surround the stadium — despite the increased media attention. And Snyder still generally limits his interviews to news-conference settings.

Only ESPN was granted an interview with Bishop this week as KSU (9-0 overall and 6-0 in the Big 12 Conference) prepares to face Nebraska (8-2 and 4-2) in Manhattan on Saturday.



Surrounded by hype, Snyder has yet to publicly get psyched about playing the 11th-ranked Cornhuskers.

"I'm not comfortable or uncomfortable," Snyder said. "If we didn't have this press conference, I could stay in my office and work. That would be just fine with me. Anything else that could become a distraction, we'd just assume that they weren't there."

On more than one occasion Tuesday, Snyder insisted he was not trying to downplay the importance of Saturday's game.

The Wildcats, who won one game in 1989 — Snyder's first season — have slowly improved to the point where they now are considered national championship contenders. However, KSU has not defeated Nebraska since 1968. Its only loss last season came from NU at Memorial Stadium.

"Is it important?" Snyder said. "Why, shoot, yes. (Nebraska) is always important to me. It's a very significant ballgame. But there's not a ballgame that is going to make or break this program."

The game-by-game approach is nothing new to KSU fifth-year senior guard Jeremy Martin.

"We were here when it was a struggle to win," Martin said. "You truly didn't look ahead. For the guys that have only been here a few years, it might be a little harder."

Snyder's mild-mannered persona just days before one of the biggest games of his career doesn't surprise Martin either.

"I've seen him get angry, and I've seen him upset," Martin said, "but I don't think I've ever seen him excited."

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