



SHAROLTA NONEN may not be as vocal as some of her NU teammates, but her peers, coaches and even opposing coaches notice her anyway. The junior defender is leading the team in assists and will most likely repeat as an All-American. MATT MILLER/DN

Nonen's quiet stability propels NU soccer

“It was hard to be here at first. I was ready to leave. I was homesick, but I needed to do this for myself.”

SHAROLTA NONEN
NU defender

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior staff writer

A soccer field stretches anywhere between 100 to 130 yards in length, but when Nebraska soccer player Sharolta Nonen takes the field, she feels as if she were playing on an island.

Nonen and her fellow defenders represent the last line of defense during each game for the Cornhuskers. Their job is to repel attacks on goal by opponents. Every mistake is magnified, and a slight error could mean a goal for the other team.

Defenders have to be resilient; they have to have a thick skin.

And, NU Coach John Walker said, no one is

better for the job than Nonen.

“Sharolta has done a tremendous job with organization defensively,” Walker said. “She has great leadership on the field. She really does a good job getting things across to people.”

“She’s very solid all around. She’s very consistent.”

Nonen’s all-around ability and consistency have been a key to the 13th-ranked Huskers’ success this season, Walker said. And as NU prepares for battle against No. 4 Notre Dame in third-round NCAA Tournament play, both qualities make the Canadian-born Nonen an asset off the field as well.

Two thousand miles from home, Nonen values the relationships she has made with her teammates more than anything else.

“I have made very good friends on the team,” said Nonen, who leads the Huskers with 14 assists. “I don’t want to see anyone hurt or upset. I think each teammate should make an effort to take care of the others. I try to do that, but I think anyone else would do it for me.”

Nonen’s caring attitude and steadiness on the field have earned her the respect of everyone on the team, sophomore Karina LeBlanc said.

“Her composure is an asset for us,” LeBlanc said. “I know that with her playing in front of me that there isn’t much that will get by her. And if something does, it’s not her fault. It’s so

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NU seniors want win over ND

■ No one can have an off day if the Huskers are to beat the Irish, Coach Walker says.

BY DARREN IVY
Staff writer

When the No. 13 Nebraska soccer team faces No. 4 Notre Dame tonight in South Bend, Ind., for a third-round NCAA tournament game, the Cornhuskers won’t play for revenge from last year’s 6-0 romp.

The Huskers (17-3-1) will be playing for a different reason—especially for the five seniors. Heather Brown, Kim Engesser, Becky Hogan, Sandy Smith and Kristen Gay.

“Every game we are playing, we are playing for the right to play together again,” freshman Kelly Rheem said. “Everything is for them.”

The seniors have been leaders, motivators, friends and role models, Rheem said.

Freshman Meghan Anderson said Coach John Walker has mentioned the seniors in his pre-game speech since the Oct. 25 Oklahoma State game—the last regular-season home game.

“Walker tells the seniors, ‘This could be your last game; don’t leave anything out there,’” said Anderson, who considered going to Notre Dame before signing with NU.

“We have to have the same attitude. We will have to walk off the field with them, knowing we won’t ever play with them again. I don’t want the last game with the seniors to be a loss. We have a responsibility.”

The seniors also know the importance of this game. Midfielder Becky Hogan said she is going to line up and try to play harder than the Fighting Irish player across from her.

“I am going to do everything I can to make sure we win,” Hogan said.

She expects the same from her teammates.

Walker said the Huskers will face one of the top two or three teams in the country in Notre Dame (19-2-1). Of the Irish’s 11 starters, nine of them have national team experience.

Notre Dame also is the nation’s top scoring team and has a 44-game home winning streak.

“It’s going to be tough,” Walker said. “We can’t have anyone having an off day.”

Last year, the Huskers had an off day and the result was a 6-0 manhandling by the Irish.

“We are prepared to take on anyone,” said senior Sandy Smith. “It’s nice we have another shot at them.”

Walker said the familiarity with the surroundings and Notre Dame players should help.

But if the Huskers are to avoid a fate similar to last year’s, they will have to finish shot opportunities, Walker said.

“You don’t get as many shots in the NCAA tournament,” Walker said. “It’s important to finish chances and get off to a good start.”

Sanderford doesn't expect setback after Arizona win

BY JAY SAUNDERS
Staff writer

A 24-point win against then No. 21 Arizona and entering the Associated Press Top 25 might cause a letdown this weekend for the Nebraska women’s basketball team.

After all, the No. 23 Cornhuskers are playing the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, an unranked team.

The game will be at 7:05 p.m. Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, where the Huskers (2-0) have never lost under Coach Paul Sanderford.

But it was that same UWM team that beat the Huskers by 12 points last year, so Sanderford said not to expect a letdown.

“If there is going to be a letdown in November,” Sanderford said, “we are not going to be too good in March.”

Wisconsin-Milwaukee started its season in a hostile environment. The Panthers dropped the season opener 71-65 at Wisconsin.

UWM returns three starters from last season, who combined to average almost 30 points per game last season.

Guard Daryl Schaffield started all but one game last year and averaged 15.6 points per game for the Panthers.

“Defensively we have to build on what we did last week,” Sanderford said. “If we can do that, it will make us hungry.”

Sanderford worked the Huskers into a hunger with three-hour practices Wednesday and Thursday.

Junior forward Cisco Gilmore said the team has realized what happened last year will not happen again this season—especially at the Devaney Center.

“No one comes in here and intimidates us,” Gilmore said. “It’s going to be a dogfight if you think you are going to win.”