

Sports Opinion



James Nicas

Weekend at Notre Dame shows spirit

SOUTH BEND, Ind. - Every once in awhile, everybody usually gets to experience something mystical.

Last weekend, I got to witness the experience and thrill of a Notre Dame football weekend.

Every major football school has its own pageantry, rituals and tradition, and at Nebraska it is no different. However, I suspect that no school can duplicate the atmosphere through an entire weekend like the Fighting Irish.

On Friday afternoon, the Irish had their weekly luncheon for their boosters that congratulated the seniors. The first player to speak was a walk-on who said, "Despite getting other scholarship offers, walking on and not playing for the Irish was the greatest decision in my life."

Although this same attitude goes on at Nebraska, it made me feel right away like I was sitting through an enacted version of the movie "Rudy."

That night the students and alumni all joined together for a pep rally to cheer on their Irish for the big game.

Texas A&M has Midnight Yell practice, and the Irish have their pep rally, but I wonder why the closest Nebraska comes to a Friday rally is ordering the prime rib at Misty's.

Game day officially begins after the team has Mass at the basilica and then walks through campus with thousands of Irish fans applauding their heroes.

The game itself is played to please fans, and in particular the students. Although there are only 10,300 students at Notre Dame, they get 11,000 tickets, and every seat is taken.

Notre Dame is probably the worst university when it comes to commercialization because of its contract with NBC.

But that contract makes Irish games appear to be the simplest and purest form of college football.

There are no IrishVision screens, no advertisements, besides one NBC sign, and Oscar Mayer isn't hurling hot dogs into the stands.

The fans, band and cheerleaders created every cheer, and nothing was enhanced by the Rolling Stones.

After the game, the players acknowledge their fellow students with a raising of the helmet directed to their classmates.

The camaraderie between the players, students and alumni is something that can't be duplicated.

A football weekend at Notre Dame makes you feel like you are watching a game in the 1890s.

In today's world of "amateur" college football, there couldn't be a better thing.

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SENIOR KRISTEN GAY, center, and freshman Kelly Rheem, right, sit on the bench after NU lost to Notre Dame 2-1 on Friday night in South Bend, Ind. The Sweet 16 loss ended the Huskers' season with a 17-4-1 overall record. It is the second season that the Fighting Irish have ended Nebraska's season in the NCAA Tournament. Last season, the Irish defeated NU 6-0.

MATT MILLER/DN

Irish oust NU from tourney again

By JAMES NICAS
Staff writer

SOUTH BEND, Ind. - After losing 6-0 in last year's NCAA Tournament to Notre Dame, Nebraska Coach John Walker could have had a reason to play a defensive style of soccer heading into Friday night's game against the Fighting Irish.

However, Walker kept the No. 13 Cornhuskers' traditional aggressive

approach. This year's score turned out to be much different than last year's.

Unfortunately for the Huskers, the final outcome was still the same.

**Notre Dame 2
Nebraska 1**

Despite a great performance from NU goalkeeper Karina LeBlanc, Irish forward Monica Gerardo scored the deciding goal in the 71st minute to break up a 1-1 score, leading the No. 4 Irish to a hard-fought

2-1 victory over Nebraska in front of a crowd of 332 at Alumni Field in the third round of the NCAA Championships.

Gerardo's goal was set up by a run by fullback Kelly Lindsey down the left side of the field. After pressure from a NU defender sent Lindsey toward the endline, she sent a crossing pass in front of the goal box to Gerardo that was deposited to the back of the net.

"I was making a dummy run to get the defense out of position," said

Lindsey, an Omaha native. "(Jenny) Streiffer passed me the ball, and two girls came to me, so I saw Monica in the hole, and I tried to touch it in there."

The game-winning goal ended the scoring to an exciting game that was tied for 68 of the previous 70 minutes.

Nebraska and Notre Dame's physical and up-tempo style led to a back-and-forth game that led to many scoring opportunities for both teams.

Please see **SOCCER** on 8

NU coaches, teammates sing praises of LeBlanc

By ADAM KLINKER
Staff writer

SOUTH BEND, Ind. - The first time Nebraska goalkeeper Karina LeBlanc walked into the locker room after the Cornhuskers' third-round loss in the NCAA Tournament, she left as quickly as she came.

NU Coach John Walker was giving his post-game interview, and LeBlanc, set to be interviewed next, walked in just as Walker was praising her for her solid play in a 2-1 loss to No. 4 Notre Dame.

LeBlanc lingered there just for a second. Her eyes welled with tears, and she walked out.

Maybe it was because LeBlanc had just finished playing one of the best games of her young career and it didn't matter. NU lost, and its season was over.

"I'm very pleased; Karina had a good year," Walker said. "She really did an outstanding job for us tonight."

LeBlanc had 10 saves - seven in the first half - all coming at crucial moments in the game. Several times she held off the Irish with skilled acrobatics.

NU midfielder Meghan Anderson, who had been LeBlanc's back-up after Jackie Erdkamp went down with an injury, said the sophomore's play was a rallying point for the team throughout the game.

"It was amazing," Anderson said. "She kept us in the game and kept us going."

"It was amazing. She kept us in the game and kept us going."

MEGHAN ANDERSON
NU midfielder

In the first half, the Irish put together several good runs at the goal and got off seven shots, but LeBlanc stopped them all to preserve the 0-0 tie.

But the Irish broke through twice in the second half, good enough for a one-goal win.

"Those were key points in the game," LeBlanc said of the two goals. "After that second goal, it was either we turn it around or we don't."

Notre Dame thrashed the Huskers last season 6-0, but the same couldn't be said Friday night. Much of the difference, Irish Coach Chris Petrucelli said, was LeBlanc.

"LeBlanc was outstanding," Petrucelli said. "I don't know of anybody that's played better against us in the goal."

"She kept them in the game."

LeBlanc eventually came back in and took a seat next to Anderson in the locker room as their coach spoke about the team's play. When it was her turn to be interviewed, LeBlanc said she considered it another day at the office.

"I just do what's expected of me," LeBlanc said. "I didn't put any extra pressure on myself."



LeBlanc

NU rebounds from first loss by routing UT

By ANDREW STRNAD
Staff writer

While it's no longer undefeated, the Nebraska volleyball team still controls its own destiny for the Big 12 Conference championship.

The Cornhuskers (25-1 overall, 16-1 in the Big 12) dropped a lengthy five-game match to No. 22 Texas A&M on Friday night, but rebounded the next evening to defeat No. 12

Nebraska 15 15 15
Texas 4 7 2

Texas 15-4, 15-7, 15-2 in Austin, Texas.

Nebraska's loss was the first in the regular season since Oct. 29, 1997, breaking a streak of 35 straight wins.

NU's win Saturday dropped the Longhorns (22-4, 16-2) a game behind the Huskers for first-place in the Big 12.

"After losing on Friday, we really took it upon ourselves to show everyone why we're the No. 3 team in the nation." NU junior outside hitter Mandy Monson said.

Monson, who had started only a handful of matches this season, started Saturday and was one of three Huskers with at least 10 kills, as she smashed a season-high 11 kills to go along with 18 digs.

Sophomore outside hitter Nancy Meendering led

Please see **VOLLEY** on 8