

Kubik shines late in 75-72 victory

By JAY SAUNDERS
Staff writer

DES MOINES, Iowa - With the No. 23 Nebraska women's basketball team trailing 34-27 at halftime against Drake on Thursday, NU Coach Paul Sanderford criticized junior Nicole Kubik.

Sanderford told the point guard she wasn't showing the leadership needed for the Cornhuskers to win. Something Sanderford said must have clicked.

Kubik scored Nebraska's last 11 points in the 75-72 comeback win in front of 3,174 fans at the Knapp Center. "Nicole is a gamer," Sanderford

Nebraska 75
Drake 72

said. "She had a good performance in the last eight minutes. She sure makes me look like a better coach."

Kubik finished with 24 points, leading all scorers. She led NU with six assists and seven steals in 36 minutes.

The Huskers trailed 70-64 with two minutes and two seconds left in the game when Kubik took the game over.

A 3-pointer brought Nebraska within three. After another Kubik basket to tie the game at 70, Drake's Sara Stribe hit two free throws to put the Bulldogs back ahead by 72-70.

Kubik then drove to the basket and

hit a shot with 37 seconds left. Kubik was fouled and converted the three-point play to give NU a 73-72 lead.

"I was just feeling it," Kubik said. "I didn't play that well in the first half, and I felt I had to make it up a little bit."

Kubik gave the Huskers the lead, but the defense preserved it.

Drake (2-3) inbounded the ball and was forced to call timeout with five seconds on the shot clock. When play resumed, Drake guard Kristen Santa's shot was blocked by NU junior Cisco Gimore as the shot clock expired.

On the following NU possession, senior Cori McDill was called for traveling with 7.2 seconds left. As Drake inbounded the ball, Kubik stole it and

was fouled. She made two free throws for the final 75-72 score.

"Our defense won the game for us," Sanderford said. "We made stops when you have to make defensive stops."

NU (6-1) won the game despite 30 turnovers. But what junior guard Brooke Schwartz said helped to overcome that number was post play.

Junior Charlie Rogers had 14 points and 10 rebounds. Schwartz had 14 points and a team-high 12 rebounds. Rogers had to guard All-American candidate Tammi Blackstone of Drake. Blackstone was held in check, scoring only 10 points in 17 minutes. She fouled out with 4:22 left in the game.

NU wrestlers open season at Penn State, Lock Haven

By LISA VONNAHME
Staff writer

When the Nebraska wrestling team travels to the East Coast this weekend to take on Lock Haven (Pa.) and Penn State, most of the Cornhuskers will be in unfamiliar territory.

But for redshirt freshmen and Pennsylvania natives Bryan Snyder and Josh and Joe Henson, the Keystone State means home.

Snyder and the Henson twins will return to their "stomping ground," as NU Assistant Coach Jason Kelber said, to show their native state what Nebraska has done for them.

With the help of the Pennsylvania trio, the Huskers will face Lock Haven tonight in NU's first dual of the season. Third-ranked Penn State will be the Huskers' next obstacle when they take on the Nittany Lions on Saturday.

And Penn State is a wrestling powerhouse that NU Coach Tim Neumann and the No. 20 Huskers are eager to face.

"This is supposed to be Penn State's year," Neumann said. "They've put it all together, so this should be a good season for them. We scheduled this dual early to see where we are."

The Huskers will have their hands full when they wrestle Penn State at the Bryce Jordan Center. Six of the 10 Penn State grapplers are ranked in the top 10 of their respective weight classes.

Four matches - at 125, 141, 157 and 174 pounds - will be the keys to NU's success.

"These are matches that Penn State is looking at and saying, 'We'll win those for sure,'" Neumann said. "And they should. They're older, more experienced and ranked higher at each of those weights."

"But I don't think they'll win all four of them."

At 125, NU junior and seventh-ranked Paul Gomez will take on All-American Jeremy Hunter, who is ranked No. 3, while Husker Jose DeAnda will face Penn State's Biff Walizer at 141. Both are fifth-year seniors and "are good enough to be All Americans but haven't been," Neumann said.

It will be "new guy against old guy" at 174 pounds, Neumann said. Charles McTorry, who will return to the Husker lineup for the first time since 1997, will battle senior Glenn Pritzlaff of Penn State.

Of the four, Neumann expects the best match at 157 pounds. Snyder, a native of Easton, Pa., will vie for the win with No. 2 Clint Musser - someone Snyder knows well.

Snyder, whose father was a Penn State wrestler, visited Penn State on a recruiting trip, and Musser was one of the guys who showed him around.

"It's definitely going to be weird," Snyder said. "I'll be wrestling against guys from my home state, guys that I know."

"Musser's got good defense, and he's real solid. I'm not intimidated by his ranking. I know I can wrestle with him."

For the rest of the Huskers, State College, Pa., home of Penn State, is a city that they'll want to get used to.

And they'll want to go back - especially in March when the Nittany Lions play host to the NCAA Wrestling Tournament.

As for Lock Haven, NU expects less of a challenge but is not overlooking anyone.

"The guys are hungry," Kelber said. "The good thing about a young team is that they're hungry to make their mark. This weekend gives them an opportunity to see how they do against some of the best."

Slechta, Lohr have impact despite youth

True freshmen break mold and are stalwarts on the defensive line

By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior staff writer

An unexpected spotlight has fallen on Jeremy Slechta and Jason Lohr during the past three months. Unexpected because most true freshmen on the Nebraska football team's defensive line sit on the sidelines.

Most don't even crack the rotation, let alone contribute in the waning minutes of a close game.

But that's what Slechta and Lohr, two of only three true freshmen listed on NU's three-deep roster, have done in recent weeks. Both shined in the Cornhuskers' final game of the season, a 16-14 victory over Colorado on Nov. 29.

The freshmen combined for two of the Blackshirts' six sacks. Slechta, who also recovered a fumble, nailed CU quarterback Mike Moschetti for an 8-yard loss, while Lohr had a 6-yard sack.

"It felt great to get that sack," Slechta, who played against the Buffaloes in third-and-long situations, said. "It was really kind of a surprise. We



Lohr

were in a zone blitz, and I had dropped back a little for pass coverage. Sometimes, you get lucky enough to get in there.

"It's kind of weird. Some days you're just hot." Fellow defensive lineman Loran Kaiser said Slechta's and Lohr's impressive play resulted from more than just luck. The two freshmen have risen to the challenges presented to them, he added.

"It would have to be tough to come in here and play as a true freshman," said Kaiser, a third-year sophomore. "There is so much to pick up on so fast. And you have to come in and play with such a high level of intensity."

"They have really come a long way - a lot further than anyone could have expected."

But Slechta, a LaVista native, and Lohr, who hails from Tulsa, Okla., were thrown into the mix quicker than anyone could have expected. The Huskers lacked depth at both interior line positions coming into the 1998 season, and injuries to No. 1 nose tackle Jason Wiltz and No. 1 defensive tackle Steve Warren weakened the spots even more.

Both freshmen took advantage of the situation. Kaiser took over the No. 1 spot at defensive tackle, but Slechta worked his way up to the No. 2 spot. Lohr is listed as the No. 3 nose tackle behind Wiltz and Warren.

"We both knew coming in we'd have a chance to

play," Lohr said, "but I'm as surprised as anyone about what we've been able to do."

But both readily point out aspects of their games that need improvement. Slechta admits he has problems against run-block teams.

"I have trouble holding my ground against 300-pound linemen," said Slechta, who's main objective during the offseason will be to improve his strength.

The 6-foot-5 Slechta hopes to weigh in at about 290 pounds next spring, and the 6-3 Lohr also hopes to use the off season to add some muscle.

"I've talked to a lot of guys on the team about how things have been getting easier for me, and they've all said that this first year is when I'm going to see that improvement the most," Slechta said. "After that, they say you have to lift weights and get stronger to do the rest."

While he is focusing only on preparing for Nebraska's bowl game, Kaiser said the thought of playing with an experienced Slechta and Lohr next season excites him.

"Against Colorado, we had a true rotation going where everyone was playing with everyone else," Kaiser said. "It was nice to see the young bucks get in there and get some sacks. That definitely boosts our confidence. We see that we have a great future with them."

Coliseum big part of NU's home dominance

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Nebraska fans just enjoy good volleyball."

The atmosphere of winning

While Nebraska Coach Terry Pettit has his own opinion of the NU Coliseum in the volleyball media guide, he defers to a well-known historical figure, Sir Winston Churchill, to nail down just how important the coliseum is to the Huskers.

Churchill said: "In the beginning we build buildings. In the end, we are shaped by the buildings we live in."

Pettit said the atmosphere of the coliseum helps shape NU's winning streak inside.

"It's a significant advantage in playing at home," Pettit said. "The crowd can help you when you're fatigued."

Senior outside hitter Jaime Krondak agrees. Growing up in Lincoln, Krondak has been watching matches at the coliseum since the third grade, when she was "still afraid to go to the bathroom by herself." Even then, it was the electricity of the crowd that made Krondak want to attend NU.

"I'd come to the game, and I'd just see these games and this atmosphere - this atmosphere of winning. It's rockin'. It's a rockin' joint."

And Krondak says Nebraska's fan support is special, too. It ranked behind Hawaii in overall attendance last season, but few places can be louder.

"Wisconsin comes pretty close," Krondak said. "Because, you know, they're red, too. But they're nowhere close in terms of intensity and just a level of fun."

For many years, that level of fun and intensity played at an even higher pitch. From 1926 to 1976, the colise-

um was home to the Nebraska basketball team. And there were some moments in its history when the coliseum was louder than it is now.

The day they took down Wilt

The 1957-58 Nebraska men's basketball team was by no means spectacular. It was only 10-13. But the Huskers pulled off one of the biggest victories in their history. And the Coliseum experience for those in attendance won't be lost.

Don Bryant, NU Sports Information director emeritus, was one of those in attendance Feb. 22, 1958, as the sports editor for the Lincoln Star. Almost 40 years later, Bryant remembers the coliseum atmosphere when NU beat No. 1 Kansas and basketball legend Wilt Chamberlain 43-41.

"The seats at the coliseum were close to the court - so close that people's feet extended beyond the out-of-bounds line," Bryant said. "People would take their hat pins and stick 'em in guys' legs as they'd run by. The student section was right down there."

"The lights hung low and only over the court, so the rest of the arena was dark. Folks could yell and scream, and nobody could look at them. It was unforgettable."

The game was, too. Only 12 days before, Chamberlain matched NU with 46 points in a 102-46 rout. The Huskers used a stall offense to win - and an ending right out of the movie "Hoosiers."

"Jim Kubacki, the team's best guard, was sitting out the game because of a knee injury," Bryant said. "Now Jim convinced the coach, Jerry Bush, to put him in and kept haranguing him about it, and Bush finally put him in."

"Well, the game came right down

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JAIME KRONDAK
senior outside hitter

to Jim taking a shot right at the end of the game. He shot the ball at the top of the key, and the ball floated right over Wilt's hand. He just stood there and watched it. The gun went off, and the ball went in.

"The whole place just exploded. People were running all over the court and just going absolutely nuts. Best basketball game I ever saw."

Krondak said she wasn't aware of the basketball team's history when asked about it, but had no doubt the coliseum had a hand in winning the KU game.

"Hey, hey, I'm telling you," Krondak said. "You can beat a lot of teams in this place."

Penn State pandemonium

For the volleyball team, that same type of fan explosion occurred in 1996, when NU beat Penn State 15-12, 8-15, 15-13, 9-15 and 20-18 to advance to the Final Four. The fifth and final game twisted back and forth before NU finally prevailed.

"It was an amazing, amazing thing," Krondak said. "You couldn't hear others talk. They couldn't hear you. Oh, it was just insane."

The match even brought the NU Coliseum back to its old days, where fans were hugging the court, waiting

for the end of the match.

"I didn't even realize we had won," Korver said. "I was dumbfounded. And then, all the crowd is just right there, standing next to the court ready to give us all hugs."

That coziness is something Korver will miss when she leaves. The very last match NU could play at home is if the Huskers win the regional final next week and advance to the Final Four.

With her memories, Korver said she'll remember the big wins and many of the fans. In fact, she's memorized where many of them are now.

"Oh yeah, I know them," Korver said, pointing out into the arena. "There's where my parents sit."

She swings her body around to point above her.

"There's where my grandparents sit. The student section's down there, the band's over there. I know where the Coach Pettit's wife sits with his daughter, Anna."

"Then there's this lady - she does, like, candle parties sometimes - she and her two little daughters always sit in the front row."

"The fans are so loyal. They're there every game. You can't keep them away."

Even, if, occasionally, they have to take a ball or two in the head.