

Crouch learns from first season at QB

Freshman 'sorry' for senior players

BY DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

SAN DIEGO — The 1998 season wasn't supposed to end this way for Eric Crouch. Not in any way, shape or form.

He wasn't supposed to be the starting quarterback. That was Bobby Newcombe's job. He wasn't supposed to have to start the second game of the season, lose a critical fumble in a loss to Texas or play the best game of his young career in a 40-30 loss to Kansas State.

Crouch wasn't supposed to watch the Huskers lose four games for the first time in 30 years. He wasn't supposed to be here, in the tunnel under Qualcomm Stadium after the Holiday Bowl, making apologies.

But there he was, living out another unexpected twist in an unexpected season. Another lesson in the learning curve for the graduate of Millard North.

"I just want to say I'm sorry to the seniors," Crouch said. "This is not the way I had planned it for them."

Crouch's play mirrored his performance this season, along with the team's play. It was solid one moment, shaky the next. Crouch threw for 193 yards and two touchdowns, but threw two interceptions and 16 incomple-

But Crouch warmed up just before halftime, hitting senior wingback Shevin Wiggins on a 45-yard touchdown pass with 1:53 remaining to give Nebraska a 10-9 lead.

Going into the halftime break, Crouch said, he felt the Huskers had the momentum and were ready for the second half.

"We felt we had a good plan," Crouch said. "We came out in the second half with the attitude we were going to win."

But the offense managed just one first down and 23 yards on offense in the third quarter. Coach Frank Solich didn't blame the low productivity of the offense on Crouch, though. He credited the Wildcat defense.

"There are moments where you will look flat," Solich said, "because great defenses are going to make you look flat."

After falling behind 16-13 in the fourth quarter, Crouch was intercepted by Chris McAlister on the first play of the ensuing drive. Luckily for NU, Kenny Cheatham ran McAlister down from behind and caused a fumble to give NU the ball back.

Crouch took advantage of his second chance, driving the Huskers down the field on an eight-play, 88-yard drive which resulted in a 4-yard touchdown reception by tight end Tracey Wistrom.

"When things looked the worst is when he responded and made big plays," Solich said. "That's the type of quarterback he is."

Arizona responded with a touchdown of its own. Then Crouch was intercepted with 3:10 remaining. That appeared to seal the game, but NU got the ball back with 34 seconds and one last chance.

On the first play, Crouch lofted a perfectly thrown 40-yard pass to a wide-open Cheatham at the Arizona 26-yard line, but the ball went off his fingertips.

That's the life of a freshman quarterback. As Crouch has done all year, though, he looked for positives from the Holiday Bowl loss so he can make sure they don't happen next year.

"(The game's) definitely a disappointment," Crouch said. "But there are a lot of things I've learned. I've got three years left. A game like this definitely is going to help me."

Nee: Second-half letdown costs NU in loss to Texas

BY DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

Trailing 76-72 with four minutes and 32 seconds remaining, the Nebraska men's basketball team had all the momentum on its side.



Nee
Cornhuskers as

Texas blew open the game in the last five minutes en route to a 89-76 victory in front of 8,143 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on Sunday.

The Huskers were on a 6-0 run and had just made a steal. Then an NU player threw a long outlet pass that was intercepted by Kris Clack. Texas came down, and DeJuan Vazquez was fouled. The Huskers got another break as Vazquez missed the front end of a one-and-one free throw attempt.

But on the rebound the ball went off Chad Johnson's and Louis Truscott's hands before going out of bounds. The Longhorns' Gabe Muoneke went on to make a layup on that possession.

The Huskers (8-7 and 0-2 in the Big 12 Conference) never got any closer as Texas (7-8 and 3-0) won its third straight game.

"Three or four decisions late in the game turned it," said senior forward

Texas	89
Nebraska	76

Andy Markowski, who scored eight points and grabbed five rebounds. "We had a couple of turnovers. We have to recognize time and score. We have to execute and get stops."

The Huskers had little trouble executing offensively in the first half as they jumped to a 45-41 lead.

Larry Florence scored 11 of his team-high 19 points in the first half, and Cookie Belcher added 12.

"We shoot 59 percent from the floor and 78 percent from the line in the first half," Coach Danny Nee said. "We can't play much better offensively."

Texas, meanwhile, shot 60 percent, but UT Coach Rick Barnes was not happy with the 15 turnovers, Vazquez said.

"We settled down and decided to play our game," Vazquez said. "It was a pretty heated locker room at the half. Coach lit a fire under us."

The Longhorns got back in the game before both teams settled in. Texas led 55-54 with 13:06 remaining. Then a series of plays gave Texas a cushion it would never relinquish.

The Longhorns took advantage of a questionable out-of-bounds call by hitting a 3-pointer. Nee was still irate as NU came back down the floor and the Husker bench got a technical to give the ball back to the Longhorns. After that turn of events, the score was 61-54.

The rest of the game, the Huskers played catch up. But the 11-31 shooting from the floor and 7-15 from the

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DANNY NEE
NU coach

line in the second half kept NU from getting over the hump.

"If we could have played two halves, we would have been all right," Nee said. "We had blocks of time where we didn't play well. We opened chances for Texas."

"You need to play 40 minutes to win in the Big 12," Nee said. "We probably played 25 to 30 minutes of good basketball, if that much. Down the stretch, there was nothing there to get us back in the game."

Texas also made it difficult to come back as it made 19-23 free throws.

"They did what they had to late in the game, and we didn't," Markowski said. "That sums it up."

Nebraska has now lost four of its last six games. Pressure to win has been mounting. But Markowski said it's unfair.

"We're close," Markowski said. "People are riding us that we're terrible. I don't think we're terrible. We're just not doing the little things. We have to find ways late in the game to win."

Husker women fall to Longhorns

Nebraska goes 5-2 over the holidays, 2-1 in Big 12

BY CHRISTOPHER HEINE
Staff writer

The Nebraska women's basketball team didn't take much of a holiday break.

Coach Paul Sanderford's team went 5-2 over the course of the last month with two big conference wins at home against Missouri (83-67) on Jan. 3 and Colorado (90-49) on Wednesday.

However, the Cornhuskers lost their most recent contest 80-75 on the road against Texas on Saturday.

NU was scorched by a 25-point performance by Longhorn forward Edwina Brown.

Brown, a preseason All-Big 12 pick, sank six of eight crucial free throws in the final two minutes and 26 seconds.

The game was a free-throw shooting, see-saw affair with the lead changing hands 11 times throughout the contest.

Texas sank 23 of 32 from the charity stripe while NU shot an even more impressive 20 of 27 free throws.

However, the most telling statistic may have been the Huskers' lack of steals.

Nebraska, led by the nation's leading steal-maker in guard Nicole Kubik, has averaged 14.2 takeaways a game. The Longhorns held NU to only four

steals. NU is currently 2-1 in Big 12 conference play.

In other games, the Huskers also defeated Montana on Dec. 12 and North Texas on Dec. 20 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

NU also beat Kent 78-72 on Dec. 29 in the first round of the Seelbach Tournament in Louisville, Ky. The Huskers lost the championship contest to Louisville 77-66, snapping Nebraska's seven-game winning streak.

Other noteworthy news from the break includes Sanderford gaining career win No. 400 in a victory over Missouri at home.

Snyder wins at 157 in Great Plains

■ Five Huskers make the tourney finals one week before the National Duals.

BY LISA VONNAHME
Staff writer

In preparation for National Duals, the biggest regular-season wrestling tournament of the year, the Nebraska wrestling team played host to its own Great Plains Open on Saturday.

While NU Coach Tim Neumann and the Cornhusker grapplers are primarily focused on the National Duals this weekend in Iowa City, Iowa, the Nebraska wrestling team still managed to send five of its wrestlers to the finals of the meet held on the Bob Devaney Sports Center track.

Redshirt freshman Bryan Snyder came away as the only NU champion, earning the title at 157 pounds with a 14-10 decision over fellow NU wrestler Billy Gabel. The teammates were able to meet in the finals because

of the open tournament format, in which any wrestler can compete and no team scores were kept.

"It felt different wrestling Billy in the finals," Snyder said. "I don't really like to wrestle guys on my team in competition. We know each other's styles pretty well."

Huskers Jose DeAnda (141 pounds), Charles McTorry (174 pounds) and Brad Vering (184 pounds) also advanced to the finals. All three came up short of titles, and the defeat at 141 handed DeAnda his first loss of the season.

DeAnda fell to James Torres of Indiana 13-10. At the end of the second period, DeAnda trailed 8-2 but was able to bounce back, tying the score at 10 after Torres received a stalling call with 28 seconds remaining in the match. Torres scored an escape and earned a takedown as time ran out, giving Torres the 3-point victory.

"Jose did a great job," Neumann said. "He came back from a big deficit. A loss was probably going to

come his way sometime this season, so maybe it's good to just get it out of the way now."

At 174, McTorry suffered an 18-2 technical fall against eventual Outstanding Wrestler of the meet, Oklahoma's Byron Tucker.

Vering fell to Brandon Eggum of Minnesota 3-2 at 184.

The No. 12 Huskers faced strong competition at the meet with wrestlers from No. 2 Minnesota and No. 6 Oklahoma. Wrestlers from Indiana, Marquette, Missouri, St. Cloud State and Wyoming also competed.

"The competition turned out to be pretty good," Neumann said. "We've been training through this meet and focusing on National Duals, so I think we did all right today."

Former NU grappler, three-time All-American Ryan Tobin, wrestled unattached in the tournament, his first competition since the NCAA meet in March. Tobin made his way to the semifinals in the heavyweight division but fell to eventual heavyweight champion Trent Hynek 8-4.

NU Campus Recreation
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