

## Big 12 Notebook

Oklahoma State's Adrian Peterson and Desmond Mason look to be the early front-runners for the Big 12 player of the year award. Peterson, a 6-foot-4-inch guard, leads the conference in scoring with 18.9 points a game.

Mason is second in the league with 18.1 points per contest. The 6-foot-6-inch junior forward was named Big 12 player of the week, averaging 28 points, 10 rebounds and nearly five steals in two road victories for the Cowboys.

Texas A&M's Clifton Cook was named rookie of the week for the second time this year. Cook averaged 20.5 points, 7.5 assists, 5.5 rebounds and 4.5 steals in two conference losses for the Aggies last week.

Oklahoma's Eduardo Najera might be the hottest player in the league at the moment.

Najera has scored more than 20 points in four out of the Sooners' last five contests. OU is 5-0 in those wins.

Texas forward Gabe Muoneke and Missouri forward Albert White are both having break-out seasons for two teams that seem to be on the rise.

Muoneke, a junior, is averaging 16.6 points a game for the Longhorns. Texas is 5-0 since starting the season winning only two of its first 10 games.

White, also a junior, is averaging 17.6 points a game — good for fourth in the conference. He also is grabbing an impressive 8.6 rebounds per contest, a feat that also rates fourth in the Big 12. White transferred from Michigan after his freshman season.

MU, like Texas, is on a five-game winning streak.

The Big 12 might have five teams off to strong conference starts, but that doesn't seem to be creating any national respect.

The conference only has two teams rated in either of the major Top 25 polls. Kansas is rated No. 14 in the USA Today/Coaches Poll with an 11-3 record. Oklahoma State, also 11-3, is rated No. 21 in the coaches poll.

Only two Big 12 teams, Kansas and Missouri, are averaging more than 10,000 in home attendance. Three schools are averaging fewer than 4,000 people per game.

Other schools, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, have good attendance, but small arenas.

NU's average attendance so far this season (7,500) is a little less than half the capacity of the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Kansas forward Lester Earl is expected to be back in the Jayhawk lineup this month after undergoing knee surgery Dec. 7. Earl is counted upon to carry much of the load of departed forward Raef LaFrenz.

Colorado's leading scorer, Kenny Price, a senior guard averaging 11.6 points a game, is sidelined with a separated shoulder.

Price's condition is listed as day-to-day.

Big 12 notebook compiled by staff writer Christopher Heine.

## NU wants offense out of neutral

### Basketball team hopes UT game good omen in '99

BY DARREN IVY  
Senior staff writer

Nebrasketball, it's a whole new game. It's the slogan for the men's basketball team.

For 11 of the first 15 games this season it certainly has been a new game.

In those 11 games the Cornhuskers (8-7 and 0-2 in the Big 12 Conference) have failed to break the 70-point barrier, and they've posted a 5-6 record. In those games in which NU scored more than 70 points its record was 3-1.

For the year, the Huskers are averaging 64.2 points per game, the lowest total in Coach Danny Nee's tenure at Nebraska. Last year's 20-12 team averaged 71.6 points per game, the second lowest.

Sunday against Texas, the Huskers scored 76 points and showed flashes of excellence. But the offense failed in the half-court situations, as it has many times this year.

A closer look shows this year's Husker squad has played better when pressed and forced into an up-tempo game.

When Texas pressed full court the entire first half, the Huskers shot 59.3 percent from the floor and scored 45 points.

"We can't play much better offensively than in the first half," NU Coach Danny Nee said.

The next 20 minutes, Longhorn Coach Rick Barnes switched to a zone defense and pressed less often, making the game more of a half-court affair. NU's offensive production dropped to 31 points and 35 percent shooting as Texas ran away with the game 89-76.

"If we don't get our running game going, we're in a lot of trouble in terms of offense," said senior Larry Florence, who scored a team-high 19 points against Texas. "We need easy baskets to get in the flow of the game. We haven't proven to be a good half-court team yet."

Another team that used pressure against NU was Creighton on Dec. 9 — except the Bluejays continued to press throughout the game allowing NU running opportunities. The Huskers won that game 76-60 and shot 50 percent from the floor.

"In games we have won and scored a lot of points, we've had transition baskets," Florence said.

This Nebraska team has athletes who like to run up and down the court, rather than focusing on half-court play.

"Half-court is not as much fun," sophomore Chad Johnson said. "When I get a dunk, or someone else does, it motivates us and gets the crowd in it."

But for most of this season, it seems NU has been content to play the less-preferred half court and score in the 50s and 60s.

Half-court, lower-scoring play wasn't what Nee planned, Florence said.

"Since day one, Coach has wanted us running," Florence said. "This (Texas game) is nothing new. We just haven't done it in a lot of games."

The problem with playing a half-court offense is that there isn't a Tyronn Lue to break down half-court defenses when the motion offense fails.



SENIOR FORWARD LARRY FLORENCE shines as one of the stars of the NU offense, scoring in double figures in the five games. Florence and Nebraska next play against Kansas State on Wednesday.

"With Tyronn, we knew we had 18-20 points," Florence said. "There weren't too many guys who could stop him. They had to play his drive and his jump shot. This year teams sag off."

"I don't think we truly have come back from the loss of Tyronn. Hopefully before it's too late, we will get it together, get team chemistry."

Against Texas, Nebraska pressed nearly the entire game to get that up-tempo pace. It was the most pressing the Huskers have done this year.

Unfortunately, when NU pressed, its defense suffered.

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## Rocky '98 season doesn't faze football recruits

BY DAVID WILSON  
Staff writer

The Nebraska football team's first four-loss season since 1968 doesn't concern John Garrison.

"That's a bad season in Lincoln, but you go to another part of the country, and that's a good season," said Garrison, a 6-foot-5-inch, 260-pound rush end from Blue Springs, Mo., who committed to the Cornhuskers late last month. "The expectations are high there. That's what I like about it."

Garrison isn't alone.

In all, 18 athletes have given verbal commitments to play for Nebraska next fall. High school athletes can sign letters of intent Feb. 3.

The most recent addition to the list is quarterback Jammal Lord, from Bayonne, N.J. The 6-foot-3-inch, 195-pounder committed Jan. 5 after a visit from NU Coach Frank Solich.

Lord carried the ball 146 times for 1,306 yards and passed for 472 yards last fall, helping Bayonne to a 5-5 finish.

"I liked everything about Nebraska," said Lord, who plans to move to Lincoln this summer to work

with the team. "The whole state is just football."

Nebraska's atmosphere was also what impressed Garrison.

"Lincoln is my kind of town," Garrison said, "nice and classy."

"Everything's red. Everybody up there is a Cornhusker fan. Even though my visit wasn't in season, I could tell they have the backing."

Garrison watched Nebraska preserve a one-touchdown victory over Oklahoma State in Kansas City, Mo., and was also in the stands when NU fell to Texas on Halloween.

But Garrison wasn't discouraged

by what he saw.

"They can't be great every year," Garrison said. "You're going to have your up and down years. I'm expecting them to do better next fall."

Lord agreed.

"It's a one-year thing," Lord said.

Lord, who chose the Huskers over Syracuse and Temple, said he was not planning to redshirt next fall and was expecting to stay at quarterback.

Garrison, who also made visits to Missouri and Kansas State, said he

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