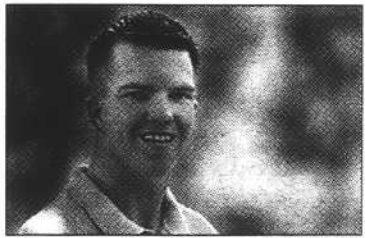


# SPORTS

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## Sports Opinion



### John Gaskins Kicker's life not a walk in the park

Ah, yes, the life of a kicker. Seems like such a ho-hum life to have in football.

Seems as though all he has to do is sip Gatorade and enjoy the view of the cheerleaders on the sideline, not having to withstand the complexity of memorizing NASA rocket science-style plays or the brutality of being some 300-lb. lineman named Bubba's tackling dummy in the trenches for three grueling hours.

But sometimes what we arm-chair quarterbacks tend to forget is that what is by far the most physically painless position in football is by far the most mentally painstaking, behind the water boy, that is.

What's so tough about being a kicker? Oh, nothing, except having the weight of your life, 43 teammates' lives and 65,000 fans' lives on your foot as the whole world watches, that's all. Such a pressure compares valiantly with having to decide at gunpoint on having sex with Pamela Anderson Lee or saving the ozone.

Just ask Gary Anderson, who's got to be the sickest man alive right now. Poor Gary.

Instead of being the NFL's all-time best kicker and the only kicker in history to go through an entire season perfect (he made all 35 field goal attempts and all 59 extra point attempts), his legacy may very well be the choker who missed a normally automatic 38-yarder. It would have given the Vikings a 10-point lead over the Falcons with two minutes remaining in the NFC Championship and virtually seal the Vikings' first trip to the Super Bowl in 22 years.

With one kick, he shattered the dreams of millions.

Of course, bleeding hearts like my Aunt Judy, whom I watched the game with, will scream, "Don't blame the kicker. Blame any player on that team who made one mistake on one play the entire game!"

Maybe she's right. Maybe there were dozens of plays and players that could have made the difference. Maybe by some coincidence, her son was a place kicker for his high school team.

But just ask any kicker. Ask Scott Norwood, whose wide right in Super Bowl XXV would have given the Bills their elusive NFL title. Ask Byron Bennett, whose wide left in the 1994 Orange Bowl would have given Tom Osborne his first national championship.

Ask NU redshirt Josh Brown, who is the leading candidate to fill Kris Brown's shoes next fall.

"What it comes down to is the kicker must split the uprights, and the pressure is all on him," Brown said.

"If you make it, you're the hero. If you miss, you're the biggest loser alive, and you have to live with that."

Gaskins is a sophomore broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

## Sooner shocker: NU thumps OU

BY ADAM KLINKER  
Senior staff writer

Nebraska	96
Oklahoma	81

NORMAN, Okla. — There were 11,607 fans at Lloyd Noble Center at the beginning of the Nebraska men's basketball team's game with No. 25 Oklahoma.

But by the end, with the scoreboard reading 96-81 in favor of the Cornhuskers, there were fewer than 2,500 fans left. And they were quiet.

"The best feeling in the world is leaving a silent gym," NU senior forward Andy Markowski said.

Throughout the game, the Huskers (11-7 overall and 3-2 in Big 12 Conference) never trailed and maintained a 20-point lead in the first and early second half.

NU Coach Danny Nee credited his bench with keeping up the pressure on the Sooners and keeping up the high level of intensity on both offensive and defensive ends.

"The key in the first half was the bench," Nee said. "They made major contributions."

Among the reserves, guard Cary Cochran hit double figures for the second straight game, leading the bench with 12 points, while guard Chad Johnson had 11 and forwards Louis Truscott and Troy Piatkowski both contributed 8.

In addition to hot hands on the offensive end, the Huskers also

harangued OU (13-5, 4-1) with a man-to-man defense, hoping to cut down on the long balls, which the Sooners kept up all night.

OU guard Eric Martin played evidence to that as he led all scorers with eight 3-pointers and 27 points.

Yet for the rest of OU lineup, things were relatively tranquil, as both Tim Heskett and forward Ryan Humphrey fouled out in the second half, having only scored 6 points between them.

"We played heads-up defense," Piatkowski said. "It was just something different and it worked for us."

But on either side of the ball, as is fast becoming the norm, the big factors were coming from down low. Senior center Venson Hamilton got his eighth double-double of the season

with 19 points and 11 rebounds.

"It doesn't happen without the big fella," Nee said. "It starts with Venson, the domineering presence he has inside."

Against OU, Hamilton moved from 20<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> on the all-time Husker scoring charts, and is now just 75 rebounds short of the 1,000-point, 1,000-rebound club.

However, Hamilton's numbers were overshadowed by those of senior forward Larry Florence, who scored 21 points, including a last-second, 3-point heave from the corner at the end of the first half to give NU a 48-28 lead at halftime. Florence also scored the first 6 points to start the game — not that he was counting.

Please see **UPSET** on 11



MATT MILLER/DN

SENIOR COURTNEY BROWN may not be the flashiest gymnast on the squad, but she is one of the most reliable. She can also put up the high-score — Brown earned a school-record tying-9.925 on the balance beam in the opening meet.

## Gymnast brings solidarity to team

BY JOHN GASKINS  
Staff writer

With Head Coach Dan Kendig watching intensely, senior gymnast Courtney Brown bounced on the trampoline nervously, apprehensive to try out a new, risky vault routine.

Minutes before, Kendig was raving about Brown's confident presence on the gym floor and how such strength makes her one of his best gymnasts.

"She's overconfident, but she doesn't take it to a level where she's cocky, but kind of to a funny level," Kendig said.

"When you know you can do something and you have that kind of confidence in your ability to do it, that's a huge feather in your cap."

But there she was moments later, acting like she had cold feet.

"When-when this confidence thing I was just talking about?" Kendig jokingly shouts to the whole gymnasium.

Such mockery comes along with being the Old Reliable on one of the top gymnastic teams in the country. It is simply not expected by anyone — teammates, coaches, even judges — for Brown to show any signs of fear or failure.

The words Brown's teammates and coaches

most frequently use to describe her are consistency and confidence. She is respected for her clean, powerful, mistake-free routines.

Assistant Coach Rhonda Faehn-Tetreault, who coaches Brown on the balance beam, said that when Brown is on the beam, she just can't miss.

"She very rarely has a bad day," Faehn-Tetreault said. "When she goes to compete, I know she'll hit. That's a good feeling to have as a coach."

Brown hit everything last Friday, as she tied the school record on the beam with a career-best 9.925, capturing the event's title at the Huskers' quadrangular at Iowa State.

Faehn-Tetreault said it isn't just Brown's scores that separate her from most gymnasts. It's her willingness and desire to compete, even when it means competing as the anchor of the beam team, which carries with it the pressure of performing last.

"Everyone else says, 'Put me at the beginning, I don't want time to think, I don't want time to get nervous,' and she doesn't care. She said, 'You can

put me wherever you want,'" Faehn-Tetreault said.

To understand Brown's ability to pull through when it matters most and the attitude that allows her to do so, one must understand her background and the traits that make her who she is.

"I think I have a lot of qualities that makes me a leader, and I think that runs in my family," Brown said.

*Working with  
future generations  
is what makes  
me happiest."*

COURTNEY BROWN  
NU gymnast

How deep is leadership and success rooted in Brown's ancestry? It goes back to the Fishers, Ind., native's first ancestor to ever come to America, Miles Standish, who just happened to be the captain of the Mayflower.

While Brown admits she hasn't done extensive research on Standish, she said her mother had, and even led an organization

that honored him and all the pioneering pilgrims.

And indeed, Brown said her mother possesses the qualities to lead and succeed as a school teacher, the same occupation her grandmother took and the same occupation she wants to go into after

Please see **BROWN** on 11