

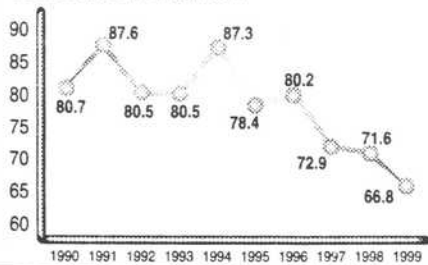
# SPORTS

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## The downward spiral

An analysis of NU's scoring trend in the 1990s under Danny Nee.



JON FRANK/DN

■ NU's offense has picked itself up from a slow start offensively to win four straight games.

## NU defense key to 4th straight win in Big 12

By ADAM KLINKER  
Senior staff writer

By his own estimation, Nebraska men's basketball Coach Danny Nee knew that Saturday's 72-55 win over Colorado at the Devaney Center wasn't pretty.

But it was enough. It was enough for the Cornhuskers to sustain life for the next three days as they prepare for Wednesday's showdown with No. 19 Kansas, which lost 71-63 at home to Missouri Sunday.

It was also enough for NU (12-7 overall, 4-1 in the Big 12) to extend its winning streak for yet another game, upping the string to four in a row.

"It was an ugly win," Nee said. "But we found a way to win."

Most disconcerting to Nee was the season-high 26 turnovers the Huskers committed against CU (10-9, 1-5). Still, NU continues to discover ways to win, and perhaps most importantly, the means to win in the Big 12.

"Winning a couple in a row in the conference is a real positive," Nee said. "But we can't be a good basketball team and turn the ball over 26 times."

Turnovers aside, the Huskers maintained their ritual of total game dominance as they suppressed yet another Big 12 foe by controlling the lead for all but 30 seconds of the game.

In the first half, the largest margin the NU lead reached was 12. But 30 seconds into the second half, the Huskers turned up the heat on CU with an 11-0 run highlighted by two Andy Markowski dunks and a Cookie Belcher slam.

At the 10:34 mark of the second half, NU began its longest and largest run of the game, outscoring the Buffs 15-3 and building the lead to 28 at 68-40.

Once again, a Belcher dunk put the finishing touches on the 6 1/2-minute streak.

Eight of Belcher's 10 points and five of his game-high seven assists came in the second half.

## Huskers juice up scoring, fun

Editor's note: This is the first in a three-part in-depth look at the status of the Nebraska men's basketball team, both where it has improved and current problems surrounding the team. Today, the focus is on NU's recent scoring explosion.

By ADAM KLINKER  
Senior staff writer

The little sign on the way out of the Nebraska men's basketball team locker room reads "Unfinished Business."

But early in the season, it seemed as if maybe the sign ought to have read "Unfulfilled Promise."

That's because up until a Jan. 13 win over Kansas State and the onset of a four game winning streak, NU had struggled to develop a consistent style of play.

The Huskers were struggling inordinately with all styles of teams, from near misses like the one against Tulsa, when NU lost 52-49, to near deflations such as the 63-54 win over Southwest Texas State.

But the Huskers are having a little more fun these days on the court.

Smiles are coming easier, the locker room sounds less like a morgue and more like a carnival, and even NU Coach Danny Nee is getting a



good laugh every now and then.

"Listen to it in there," Andy Mar-

kowski said, coming out of the locker room following NU's 72-55 win over Colorado on Saturday. "It feels good to win."

"Now we're rolling. Instead of shooting and thinking, 'Gosh, I gotta make it,' it's no big deal. Everybody's just relaxed and playing. We have that 'I don't really care' attitude and we're just going out and having fun."

Credit it all to a four game win-streak. Or

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As Markowski said, everything got better in the second half.

"We played pretty sluggish in the first half," said

Markowski, who, as one of four Huskers in double digits,

had 10 points. "I said, 'Geez, we played bad and we're still up 9.' So we came in at halftime and said, 'Hey, let's go out and have fun.'"

For the second-straight game, senior forward Larry Florence led NU in scoring, posting 17 points while going seven of 12 from the floor (58.3 percent).

In addition to his point total, Florence also dished out three assists and pulled down seven rebounds while also keying the Husker runs throughout the game.

"We're playing real well," Florence said. "We have to cut down on the turnovers and execute our offense, but our confidence is there."

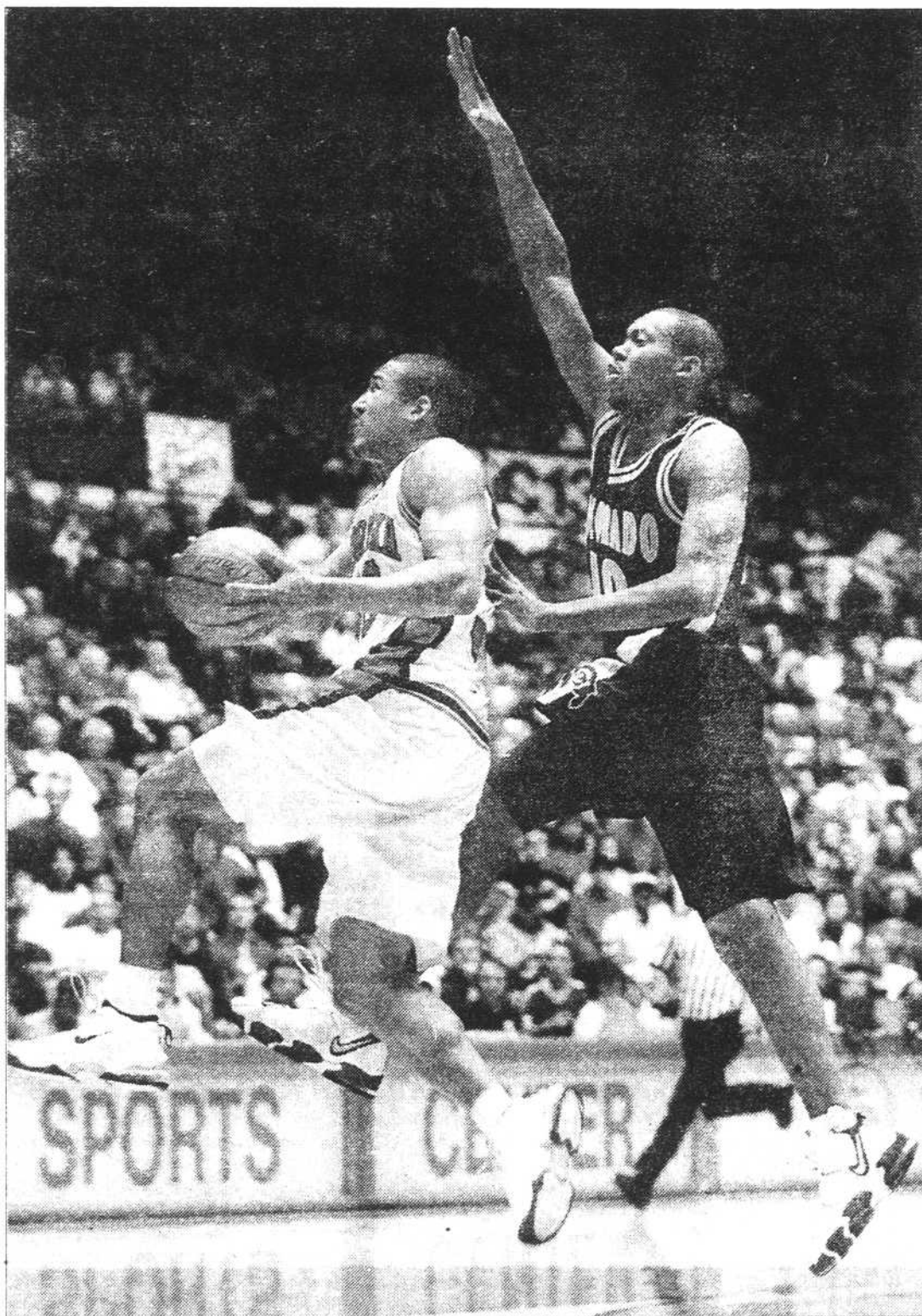
And a great deal of that confidence is rooted in NU senior center Venson Hamilton.

"Hamilton is the factor," Nee said. "Venson's a key to this whole thing. He consistently gets his rebounds and he's putting up numbers. We'll keep trying to get to him and everything else falls into place."

Against the Buffs, Hamilton racked up yet another double-double, his ninth on the season with 15 points and 16 rebounds, 11 of his boards coming in the first half. Hamilton also added three blocked shots.

"It's all hard work, preparation and consistency," Hamilton said as to what have been the benchmarks for the Huskers in the last four games. "We had consistency today with shot selection and defense, but still, we had a lot of turnovers. We can't do that with Kansas."

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NEBRASKA'S COOKIE BELCHER goes to the basket for a layup against Colorado forward Will Smith on Saturday in the first half at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

MIKE WARREN/DN

## Road woes continue for Husker women in loss to Buffs

■ Sanderford says NU was 'sleepwalking' in 70-53 setback.

By JOHN GASKINS  
Staff writer

BOULDER, Colo. - The No. 23 Nebraska women's basketball team once again grew homesick Saturday, and Coach Paul Sanderford grew tired.

Tired of losing on the road. Tired of having to answer questions about it.

"It would be nice to get a couple of road wins just to get some people off

my back," Sanderford calmly chuckled before NU's game against Colorado.

But just like a bulldog who won't give up its bone, the Buffs refused to yield to the Huskers, beating NU 70-53.

Longing for the same dominating performance that willed them to a 41-point thrashing of the Buffs just 17 days earlier in Lincoln, the Huskers (14-5, 3-3 in the Big 12 Conference) were rudely awakened by a raucous Coors Events Center crowd of 4,731 and a fired up CU team (10-7, 3-4) fueled for revenge.

The result was a beating that left Sanderford fatigued and searching for

reasons NU's 0-3 Big 12 road record.

"The home-road thing, I'll let you guys figure out," Sanderford said to reporters outside the locker room after the game.

"You saw the difference in Colorado at home and on the road against us."

But the answer to the 58-point turnaround between games one and two may have been a sign in the tunnel that leads to the court, hanging 20 feet from where Sanderford was standing.

The sign read, "Defense Wins," and the Buffs obviously took heed.

Behind a 20-steal, 10-block, 26-takeaway performance, Colorado held

the Big 12's highest-scoring offense, the same offense that racked up 90 points on them two weeks ago, to just 53 points on 34 percent shooting. NU was an icy 9-for-38 (24 percent) from the field in the second half.

"We were sleepwalking out there," Sanderford said. "I think we panicked a bit. That's the mark of a team that struggles on the road."

CU was sparked by 18 points from forward Chaquita Dilworth. The sophomore ran off eight points in a two-minute span early in the second half that gave CU a comfortable lead for good.

"Their press was really giving us

trouble," Sanderford said. "Colorado out-hustled us, played harder, got every loose ball and battled for every rebound."

With Kubik battling foul and turnover trouble - she fouled out with six minutes left and committed seven turnovers - and Schwartz struggling to find her shot, no other Huskers stepped up to the menacing Colorado defense.

"We just didn't come out and play with the fire and emotion we needed to," Kubik said. "We didn't do a good job of feeding the post players."

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