

# Fan apathy, busy schedules hurt attendance at NU games

## ATTENDANCE from page 7

Eight Championship in 1994 and a national championship in the NIT in 1995, and we still couldn't sell out."

Still, while nobody has a definite answer about what is causing the attendance slump, there is speculation.

"Some of the people think 'Well, part of the reason (people don't attend) is because Danny Nee is the coach,'" Nee said. That might be. If it is, then I'm going to do everything possible - if I'm part of the problem, I'm going to be part of the solution."

The Lincoln demographic, in addition to the student makeup at NU, also lends to the falling opinions of attending Husker basketball games.

The Lincoln Stars hockey team competes for fans and has drawn well

from the NU student body. Time constraints and other leisure activities have also added to the decline.

"I don't know that it's just apathy," Byrne said. "There are just so many things going on and people, especially students, aren't following the Cornhuskers like they have in the past."

The ongoing problem has only been recently called to the forefront as a full-blown dilemma.

And up until the crisis became magnified three weeks ago, Nee said he has never had much of a role in trying to make his team a top draw, except that he has always known that winning translates into bigger figures at the ticket office.

"Winning is my responsibility," he said. "But we want the people to come.

We'd like every game to be a sellout, but I don't have much control over that. Winning is the formula."

There was also some concern over advertising and marketing, but Anderson said his office has had no decline in using the media.

He said that nothing has changed in how his office sells the tickets and NU basketball as a whole. If anything, he said, the push has been more forceful.

"We are doing everything we can to solicit people and students to come to the games," Anderson said. "We have been proactive in using all outlets to get people excited."

Among recent programs, NU has instituted a "Take a Kid to the Game" day, which was started Saturday against Colorado. For \$10, the first 500 adults and a child (high school and under) receive two tickets, two soft drinks, two hot dogs and a program - a \$34 value.

The same program will also be in effect for NU home games against Missouri on Feb. 6 and Iowa State on

Feb. 13.

In addition, Nee said that he thinks the program has put on a fresh face to the community through the "Read to Win" program. Through this program, players and coaches visited 31 Lincoln elementary schools last October.

"There's going to be a relationship developing there," Nee said. "We're recruiting those kids to become fans; we're recruiting them to come to the games. But we're also doing something right in helping them learn to read."

Improvements are planned inside the Devaney Center, where HuskerVision screens, a staple at Memorial Stadium, are expected to be installed.

"Those are going to be phenomenal," Anderson said.

Anderson said two screens would be placed at the east and west ends of the arena for maximum viewing capability.

Things are also looking up from the basketball end of the game. Following a crowd of 9,407 at Saturday's game against Colorado, tonight's game with perennial Big 12 Conference power Kansas is usually looked forward to as a healthy shot in

the arm for drooping attendance.

"Kansas is a big game," Husker forward Andy Markowski said. "Our crowd likes to watch the Kansas game. It should be a good atmosphere."

And once again, like other things, KU will be a building block for the rest of the Husker season.

"We have to do something to create a more exciting atmosphere at the Devaney Center," Nee said. "We're doing the little things, but we have to do more."

### Diminishing returns

Attendance at the Bob Devaney Sports Center experienced an upsurge in attendance in 1990's, and is now part of a downward curve. Here are the yearly attendance averages for the arena since Danny Nee took over at Nebraska. (Record of team next to year)

1986-87 (21-12)	11,611
1987-88 (13-18)	11,364
1988-89 (17-16)	10,753
1989-90 (10-18)	10,013
1990-91 (26-8)	13,307
1991-92 (19-10)	12,997
1992-93 (20-11)	13,357
1993-94 (20-10)	13,278
1994-95 (18-14)	11,823
1995-96 (21-14)	10,514
1996-97 (18-15)	10,882
1997-98 (20-12)	9,431

\*single-season record

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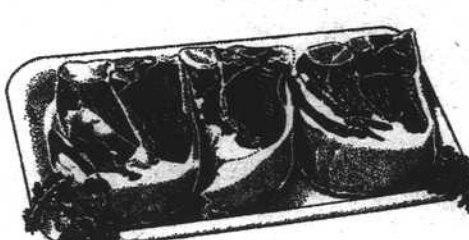
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