

Dillman's career ends at NU after sixth injury in 2 years

Senior tears achilles tendon in practice after 18-month recovery from dislocating knees

BY JOHN GASKINS
Staff writer

The Nebraska women's gymnastics team lost one of its most dynamic performers this past week.

Senior floor exercise and vault specialist Amie Dillman, who has been plagued with injuries the last two seasons, tore the achilles tendon in her left ankle in practice Monday, Jan. 25. The injury put an end to a roller-coaster career.

"I think it was a sign - it's over," Dillman said. "It's going to be tough not competing anymore, but in a way

I'm relieved."

The injury came just as Dillman was mounting an incredible return to the floor after having missed the entire 1998 season because of dislocated knees. She competed in the first two meets of this season after being out of action for nearly two years.

But in practice on that Monday, Dillman was performing a floor routine, getting ready to flip, when she felt a sharp pain in her legs. She landed on her head and knew not long after of her fate.

"An old coach of mine once told me what it feels like to blow out your achilles," Dillman said, "and it felt

exactly the way he told me."

"The second it happened, I was ready to accept it. I was just laughing. It was unbelievable, after all the stuff that's happened to me."

After tests showed that the tendon was indeed torn, she was taken into surgery last Friday. The surgery, her sixth in two years, was successful.

Dillman took a medical redshirt and missed the entire 1998 season after she tore both posterior cruciate ligaments and dislocated both of her knees in warm-ups before the 1997 Midwest Regional meet in Salt Lake City.

She spent countless hours in reha-

bilitation over the next year and a half, never knowing if she would heal. Doctors and trainers told her it would be virtually impossible for her to make it back on the floor.

She didn't care. Dillman was determined to return, and she did. Her mere presence in the gym inspired her teammates to work harder.

"Last year, whenever I had a minor injury, I just looked at Amie," fellow senior and roommate Jessica Swift, who's had her own injury problems, said.

"She's been an inspiration to us all. Everyone looks up to her. Especially us seniors who have seen

her through it all. It will be in the back of our minds to win it for Amie this year."

Dillman's coach, Dan Kendig, was not at a loss for words about her unfortunate ordeal and the courage she showed throughout.

"The most horrible thing in coaching is seeing one of your athletes like Amie get injured and go through so much pain," Kendig said.

"What makes it so much easier for us to handle this is her incredible attitude about the whole thing. She makes it easier for all of us because of her positive attitude and her strength in handling this."

Hardabura leaves skiing to star for NU

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sure of the crowds and the judges (last weekend). It was nothing to him."

While others have plenty to praise about Hardabura, it seems as though all he wants to talk about is, well, anything but himself.

"When you write this article, I want you to stress the team," Hardabura said.

"Mention people like (freshman walk-on) Dusty (Jakub) and the freshmen that play a huge role on this team."

When asked if he's a leader on the squad to such gymnasts, all he wanted to talk about was senior co-captains Jim Kozio and Marshall Nelson, who might have to sit out the season due to a knee injury.

"This guy deserves a lot of praise," Hardabura said.

"To be able to come into the gym and sit through four hours a day without doing gymnastics just because you know the guys need you there is incredible."

Hardabura said that the main reason he is so insistent on speaking about his team is because in his two years of collegiate gymnastics, he has realized how valuable being in a team atmosphere is to his individual performances, not to mention his life.

Before he came to Nebraska, Hardabura had been a veteran on the Canadian National Team, where he said the word "team" was just that - a word. The Canadian Gymnastics Federation

provided little monetary support, which hurt his chances of international success.

"If you want to be one of the best gymnasts in the world, you have to travel to all the international competitions," Hardabura said.

"Judges give you the benefit of the doubt if they know who you are, and there's no money for that in Canada," Hardabura said.

It was a tough pill to swallow for Hardabura knowing he had the potential to be a world competitor. Such frustration, and his 1996 heartbreak, was what sent him out to the ski slopes for two months.

"We were only going to be out there for a couple of days, but each day we kept saying, 'Eh, let's stay another day,'" Hardabura said.

"That went on for a while. We had fun."

When he decided to reluctantly leave his best friends and get back into gymnastics, Hardabura knew he could not survive without a college education and a scholarship and, therefore, he needed to move to the United States.

He found his savior in Allen, who had never before signed a foreign athlete.

"We've had a lot of athletes from all over the world call and say, 'I want to come to Nebraska,'" Allen said.

"Sometimes a foreign athlete will ruin your team because he doesn't fit in, but Jason fits in."

Hardabura fit in so well and liked

being on an actual team so much that he said competing for the national championship individually as a freshman, although it was a tremendous feat, "sucked" because the Huskers failed to qualify as a team.

"I wanted to be part of seven guys who went to Penn State (where the meet was held) and stand up there with them in first place, but we didn't make it," Hardabura said.

"All of a sudden my focus changed. That is a perfect example of how tight this team is. We go out together all the time. We're all best friends. It's a good feeling."

Of course, the Huskers will have their crack at the national title this year. Even more exciting will be the fact that the championships will be held in Lincoln.

So what is Hardabura's No. 1 goal for himself in the future? His own NCAA title? The 2000 Olympics? Don't even try to ask. He's not in it for himself.

"It's always been a goal of mine to go to the Olympics, but the biggest part of that goal was to be a part of a team in that Olympics, and I have that atmosphere here," Hardabura said.

"I don't think that (Canadian) team that goes to the Olympics will be tighter than this team here. It's not the same at all."

And Nebraska gymnastics wouldn't be the same if Hardabura were still skiing right now.

Husker women drop another road game

■ Nicole Kubik scores 34 points, but it's not enough in a 74-66 loss to Missouri.

From staff reports

Nicole Kubik faced the world Tuesday night in Nebraska's game against Missouri. And the world won.

The Cornhusker women's basketball team lost its sixth straight game on the road in Columbia, Mo., with a 74-66 setback to the Tigers.

Kubik had 34 points, but it wasn't enough against MU, which trailed 29-25 at halftime. The Tigers scored 49 points in the second half, doubling their production from the first half.

Ironically, Kubik had 34 points

Missouri	74
Nebraska	66

last year at Missouri, but it came along with a win. And while Kubik had 34, she only had four assists and was 14-33 shooting from the floor, including 1-10 from beyond the 3-point line.

"We played terrible," NU Coach Paul Sanderford said. "That's not any other word for it."

Next in line was Brooke Schwartz with 14 points. Center Lisa Reitsma added 6. But what injured the Huskers was getting no points from either Cori McDill or Cisco Gilmore.

Missouri, which had lost 19 games in a row to NU, dating back to

1991, trailed most of the first half, taking only its second lead of the game at 18-16. NU (15-7 overall and 4-5 in the Big 12 Conference) answered with a 13-6 run to end the half.

The Tigers (9-10 and 3-6) took over in the second half and made their free throws down the stretch.

The game marks the second time this season that Nebraska has virtually blasted an opponent at home and then been beaten on the road. It happened with Colorado earlier in the season, as well.

MU was led by forward Julie Helm, who had 27 points.

The Huskers now move on back home, where they will play Iowa State Sunday. The Cyclones defeated NU 79-58 last Thursday in Ames, Iowa.

Nee candidate for Pitt coaching job

From staff reports

Nebraska Men's Basketball Coach Danny Nee has been named as a candidate for the head men's basketball coach's job at Pittsburgh, according to The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

The Post-Gazette reported Tuesday that Nee was an "instant candidate" for the position left vacant by current Coach Ralph Willard, who announced Feb. 1 he will resign at the end of the season.

Other candidates reported by the

Post-Gazette include former St. John's Coach Fran Fraschilla, Marquette Coach Mike Deane, Siena Coach Paul Hewitt and Bobby Jones, a former Pitt assistant coach.

Thus far into the season, the Panthers are 11-9, including a 2-7 mark in the Big East Conference. Despite the low numbers, Pitt started off the year 6-0 and posted back to back victories over then No. 10 Xavier and then No. 4 Kentucky.

On Jan. 30, one day before Willard announced his resignation, Pitt beat No. 23 Miami, 60-54.

Willard said he made the announcement early, so as to give Pitt Athletic Director Steve Pederson more time to start a search and conduct interviews for a replacement.

Pederson, a North Platte native, was Nebraska's associate athletic director and director of football operations from 1994-96. The Post-Gazette cited Pederson's relationship with Nee as a qualifier for Nee's candidacy.

Nee was unavailable for comment Tuesday, as the team was traveling to Colorado for tonight's game against the Buffaloes.

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