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NU unveils new infield

BY DAVID WILSON
 Staff writer

When Nebraska Assistant Baseball Coach Rob Childress starts yelling, "Ham and eggs. Ham and eggs," in the dugout, he's not talking about breakfast.



Vlieger

More than likely, he's referring to a grounder he considers to be an easy double play - a hearty combination of timing, footwork and good throws. The saying might not make perfect sense, but when second baseman Will Bolt looked at shortstop Brandt Vlieger before practice Wednesday and said, "Ham and eggs," Vlieger knew exactly

what the freshman was talking about. "It's the most exciting defensive play in baseball," said Vlieger, a junior-college transfer. "It's all about communication."

Both middle infielders will make their Cornhusker debuts when NU opens its season today at 3:30 p.m. against New Mexico State in the Phoenix Showdown in the Desert.

The duo replaces departed seniors Kevin Harrington and Bryan Schmidt, but the lack of Division I experience up the middle doesn't worry NU Coach Dave Van Horn.

"I don't think we're going to miss a beat out there losing our two seniors," Van Horn said.

Since last fall, Vlieger and Bolt said they had worked to learn each other's tendencies, playing catch together everyday and just talking baseball.

"We feel comfortable with each other," Vlieger said before Bolt cut him

off. "It took a while," Bolt said, "just getting to know how hard he throws and where he likes the ball - and communication ..."

Bolt paused. "I guess I've experienced college baseball," said Vlieger, who hit .365 with 11 homers at Grayson County (Texas) Community College last spring. "I kind of have a better idea than Will does. Hopefully, I can help him out."

"I take his advice," Bolt said with a smile. "He's a little older and wiser than I am."

"He gives me advice, too," Vlieger said.

After another break in conversation, Bolt added, "Hey, maybe it should be our goal to set the team record for double plays in a season."

He looked up at Vlieger, who was starting to crack up. "Uh, yeah, that's a good idea."

Women's tennis team seeks upset in Iowa

BY DARREN IVY
 Senior staff writer

When the Nebraska women's tennis team travels to Iowa City on Saturday to take on the Hawkeyes, it will go armed with several things it didn't have last year.

In the top six will be two freshmen, Katarina Balan and Amy Frisch. But perhaps the biggest difference is that the Cornhuskers already have a match under their belts. Last year NU opened with Iowa and lost 6-3.

"It was our first match, so it was kind of a warm-up," said Gina Pelazini. "I think it was good that we played (Southwest Missouri State) first. It gave the freshmen a chance to play, and they

are a little more confident because they all won their matches."

Coach Scott Jacobson expects a tough battle from the No. 61 Hawkeyes.

"Iowa is a very strong school," Jacobson said. "I think realistically they are probably a little better than that."

To pull an upset, he said, NU must have underclassmen step up and play at high levels.

Last week, Pelazini was the one who provided a lift. She won her singles match 6-0, 6-0 and teamed with Frisch to win at No. 3 doubles. Jacobson said he hoped Pelazini's winning continues.

"She's stepped up," Jacobson said. "(The SWS dual was) the best dual she's ever played. We're hoping she can stay at that and have a really good day Saturday."

Pettit recruits to fill the gap left by Nepo

BY JOHN GASKINS
 Staff writer

What do you do when your three-time All-American setter, one of the best players in school history, graduates?

For Nebraska volleyball Head Coach Terry Pettit, the answer to replacing Fiona Nepo was simple: Recruit more setters.

Pettit did exactly that, and on Thursday unveiled his 1999 recruiting class of four prep athletes. Two of them, 5-9 Lindsay Weishmeier of Lewiston, and 6-2 Greichaly Cepero of Dorado, Puerto Rico, are setters.

"I think we have a very strong class," Pettit said. "Athletically, they are exceptional and will help fill some immediate needs."

"We recruited very specifically to what our needs are. That's why we recruited two setters."

Joining them are U.S. Junior National Team member Amber Holmquist, a 6-4 middle blocker from Houston, and Laura Pilakowski, a 6-1 middle blocker/outside hitter from Columbus.

Holmquist was the big catch for Pettit. She led the U.S. Junior National Team to qualifying for this summer's World Championships in Canada and was the 1998 All-Greater Houston Player of the Year.

Holmquist was "impressed with the tradition of success of Nebraska volleyball and the exceptional fan support." She'll now get to spend her college years in front of more than 4,000 at the Nebraska Coliseum.

"(Last season's seniors) Fiona Nepo, Megan Korver, Jaime Krondak and Denise Koziol were outstanding players," Pettit said, "and I think this group has the potential to be good as well."

Men's tennis starts season with strong singles players

BY DARREN IVY
 Senior staff writer

Looking up and down the No. 70 Nebraska men's tennis roster, Coach Kerry McDermott doesn't see much difference in talent.

There are some new faces though. Players who played in the top six last year now are No. 7 or No. 8. Others who weren't in the top six last year now are. Then throw in a couple transfers, and McDermott is excited to open the season Saturday and Sunday against Rice and Lamar.

"I've never had this closeness throughout a unit," McDermott said. "I feel we've improved since last year and have something to prove."

Senior captain and No. 1 player

Dinko Verzi agreed with McDermott. Verzi said the 1999 team was the strongest one he'd been on in his time at NU. On a given day almost anyone on the team can beat another, Verzi said.

For McDermott, parity is a good thing. When he's had his top Cornhusker teams, McDermott has had deep talent pools.

"My best teams were in 1989 and 1991," McDermott said. "Generally, I could count on winning two out of three (matches) at the four, five and six (spots)."

Last year the Huskers didn't get many wins from their No. 4, No. 5 and No. 6 singles players. But this year, McDermott is confident that NU can win at least two out of three matches in those spots.

Lavy highlights Husker Invitational meet

TRACK from page 7

way." Lavy's performance in the high jump looks to be one of the highlights of the Husker Invitational, which runs Friday and Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. More than 865 athletes will participate in this weekend's meet, which is one of the biggest indoor collegiate meets in the country.

And to ask Head Coach Gary Pepin, he's not all that concerned whether Lavy clears a certain height or not. Only one thing matters.

"Well, he keeps winning and that's enough," Pepin said. "You keep on winning, and that's going to get you everything you want - the NCAA Championship, too."

Lavy said that the most important part of the short indoor season was being mechanically sound. That means

sometimes sacrificing big jumps to be technically correct, which pays off biggest at the NCAA Championship in Indianapolis on March 5-6.

"When you get in these competitions, it's important to keep doing the right things," Lavy said. "As long as I'm there technically, I'm fine."

The biggest competition for Lavy this weekend will be Kansas State's Charles Burney, who has jumped 7 feet, 3/4 inches this year. Lavy has already faced off against Burney twice this season.

Other Huskers will be in the running for an individual crown at the Sevine, but none figures to face a larger task than NU women's triple jumper Dahlia Ingram.

Ingram, who has already provisionally qualified for the NAAs with a jump of 42 feet, 7 inches faces off

against defending national champion Treccia Smith of Pittsburgh. Smith is also one of the nation's best long-jumpers.

"This is a big measuring stick for Dahlia," Pepin said. "She has the potential to beat Treccia. We don't usually talk about jumps where people scratched, but she had a scratch of about a quarter of an inch last week that would have been a jump of well over 44 feet."

Kostek said Nebraska would field one of the best teams, and although the meet was not team-scored, Brigham Young and Washington State were two other powerhouses in the meet.

Lavy said the meet gave fans the best chance to see great athletes, although if he had to watch just one event it'd be, well, his.

"I guess I just like watching people high jump," Lavy said.