

## Eligibility rules for conferences changing

By **DARREN IVY**  
Senior staff writer

Since joining the Big 12 Conference and adopting new initial academic eligibility requirements in 1996, Nebraska has had just one partial qualifier in any sport.

It's a stark contrast to the Big Eight Conference days, when Nebraska athletic teams would take at least a half dozen nonqualifiers and partial qualifiers each year.

Former football standouts Eric Warfield, Toby Wright, Michael Booker, Jamel Williams and Jared Tomich were among these athletes.

The allowance of unlimited partial qualifiers all ended in 1995. The last unlimited class of partial qualifiers, athletes who have fulfilled one of two academic eligibility requirements, which enrolled at NU included current basketball players Troy Piatkowski, Larry Florence and Alvin Mitchell (now at Cincinnati), and football line-backer Eric Johnson.

That's four male partial qualifiers. Two other partial qualifiers opted to give up football after sitting out the first year, Johnson said.

NCAA rules don't restrict the number of partial qualifiers or nonqualifiers a school can have, but conferences can. The Big 12 does. The initial eligibility standards are among the toughest of the

major athletic conferences in the country.

Under the new Big 12 rules, only two male and two female partial qualifiers are allowed to enroll each year, with no more than one athlete in each sport. And nonqualifiers aren't accepted at all. They must go to junior college.

**"***I didn't think there was anything wrong with the old way. It wasn't being abused. It was successful for several athletes. It cuts down on giving kids opportunities."*

**DANNY NEE**  
Nebraska basketball coach

For NU and other former Big Eight schools, the Big 12 eligibility standards were a big change.

The Big Eight didn't limit the number of partial qualifiers a school could have and allowed nonqualifiers to enroll at institutions. Nonqualifiers had to sit out the first year — paying their own tuition — and then were eligible to play the second

year provided they passed 24 credit hours over two semesters.

Originally, Big 12 schools agreed to adopt the old Big Eight rules for initial eligibility, former NU Coach Tom Osborne said.

Then some Big 12 schools, led by the University of Texas, pushed for stricter rules. These standards are the one in place now.

The Big 12 now uses NCAA Clearinghouse standards to admit athletes. An athlete can establish eligibility with a GPA in 13 core classes as low as 2.0, provided the student also presents an SAT score (re-centered) of 1010 or an ACT sum score of 86. At the other end of the index, a minimum 820 SAT or 68 ACT sum score establishes the floor for students with GPAs of 2.500 or higher.

What upset Osborne at the time was the limits on partial and nonqualifiers. Some conferences like the Big Ten, don't have any.

"Where this rule can hurt you is if a player is considering Nebraska and Ohio State or some other school in the Big Ten," Osborne said. "The initial signing day is in February."

The Big Ten, which had always proclaimed

itself as an elite academic conference, does not limit the number of partial and nonqualifiers. Theoretically, an athlete could have scored a 60 sum score on the ACT (an average of 15) and had a 1.5 GPA and still enrolled in a school like Michigan. They wouldn't play, but they could eventually.

But the Big Ten does have stricter rules once students enroll in institutions, said Jennifer Heppel, director of legislative and eligibility services for the conference.

The NCAA rules states an athlete must complete 24 hours toward his or her major each year. The Big Ten rules require 51 completed credit hours after the second year and 78 after the third year.

"We put more emphasis on their college work than high school grades," Heppel said.

The Western Athletic Conference also has no limits on partial and nonqualifiers.

Rules didn't change either when a few of the former Southwestern Conference schools joined the WAC in 1996, said Dell Robinson, assistant commissioner for compliance services.

"(Outlawing nonqualifiers) was never an issue we seriously considered," Robinson said.

The Pacific 10 Conference and the Southeastern Conference do limit partial and non-

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## Shabala adjusts to NU baseball

■ The junior-college transfer is second on the team in batting average and a catalyst for Nebraska.

By **DAVID WILSON**  
Staff writer

Adam Shabala knows the equation that spells success for a prototypical top-of-the-order hitter. Contact plus speed equals runs.

And though he's spent the majority of his career studying this equation in the top two spots of the batting order, Shabala knows he must prove himself again — this time at the Division I level.

So far, so good.

A junior-college transfer from Kiswaukee (Ill.) College, Shabala has started all seven games for the Nebraska baseball team this season and leads the team with a .571 on-base percentage.

"He's focused. He's determined," Nebraska Assistant Coach Mike Anderson said. "He came into the season with a good frame of mind. I think you need that in a one- and two- hole hitter."

Despite facing generally harder-throwing pitching than he saw in the junior college ranks, Shabala currently owns a .500 batting average, which ranks second on the squad.

Anderson said Shabala can credit his early success to hard work. It also doesn't hurt that the centerfielder knows his duties.

"My job is just to get on base and let the rest of those guys drive me in," Shabala said. "I'm not a power hitter. I wouldn't mind hitting home runs, but that's not my job."

In 30 at bats, Shabala has knocked just one extra-base hit — but he has had little trouble getting into scoring position with five stolen bases.

"Speed was big," NU Coach Dave Van Horn said of recruiting Shabala. "He's a run scorer."

Despite outscoring its opponents this season, Nebraska (3-4) has found itself losing more often than not. NU opponents have scored 58 runs to the Huskers' 68 — six were scored by Shabala.

As a sophomore at Kiswaukee last spring, Shabala hit .401 primarily from the leadoff spot, while stealing 37 bases in 41 attempts.

He has yet to be caught this season.

"If I get a good jump," Shabala said, "I don't think there's too many catchers that can throw me out. I'm always watching the pitcher and getting reads no matter if I'm in the dugout, or on deck or whatever."

And as long as Shabala keeps his hard-working attitude, Anderson said, success will likely continue to follow.

"Our philosophy is if they come from a junior college, they need to step up and produce immediately," Anderson said. "There's a lot of expectations on junior college kids. Adam has exceeded those so far."



RICK TOWNLEY/DN

**NU CENTERFIELDER ADAM SHABALA, a transfer from Kiswaukee Junior College, has the second best batting average on the team, hitting .500, and he has the best on-base percentage with .571. The Huskers are 3-4 this so far and have scored 68 runs this season. Shabala has scored six of those runs.**

## Markowski plays as NU's coach on floor

By **DARREN IVY**  
Senior staff writer

Senior NU forward Andy Markowski always tries to stay mentally one step ahead of the action on the court.

In the final 20 seconds against Iowa State on Feb. 13, Markowski yelled defensive instructions to his teammates before a throw-in.

Then with nine seconds remaining, he got inside a Cyclone player on the free-throw line and tipped a missed free-throw attempt back to a teammate.

The play turned out to be the difference in the game.

"Markowski does a lot of the little things that don't show up in statistics," NU Coach Danny Nee said. "He's a warrior."

The Ord native could be considered a coach's dream. He's a student of the game, studying and breaking down opposing teams' tapes. With such attention to detail, it should come as no surprise that coaching is in Markowski's plans.

But coaching will have to wait. All his attention is focused on the last four Big 12 Conference games. The Cornhuskers (17-8 and 9-3 in the Big 12) are tied with Oklahoma and Missouri for second place, one-half game behind Texas. NU faces Oklahoma State (16-8 and 7-5) tonight at 7:05 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"My whole purpose right now is to win this title," said Markowski, who is taking six hours of graduate classes this semester. "Every day I get up and think about it. I read the paper and think about it. I come to practice and think about it. Since I've been here, we've never been in this position. All my energy, all my effort is going at this title."

"If we win out, we'll be in a good position, but Texas still has to get beat in front of us. Right now we have to win four games, and our focus is on Oklahoma State."

Markowski has the media-relations part of coaching down. But he's not ready to take over for Nee on the sidelines.

However, Markowski likes to think of himself as Nee's liaison on the court.

"Coach Nee can't communicate out on the floor," Markowski said. "I kind of know our system pretty well because I've been here for five years and I kind of know what he wants us to do. I try to communicate out on the floor."

"In end of the game situations I'm trying to

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