

'Husker blood' brings Cook back to Nebraska

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with questions about the possibility of Pettit's retirement.

"I think he's going to leave it that he wants to focus on this season for this team that is coming up and he doesn't want the focus to be on him," Cook said.

Pettit, who finished his 22nd season as NU's head coach last December, briefly mentioned his eventual retirement a number of times last fall. The Huskers finished the season with a loss to Penn State in the national semi-finals of the NCAA Tournament

"I'm not at the stage in my life where I want to go fishing and play golf all the time," Pettit said. "I believe I have the best job in the country."

"I might leave coaching at some point, but certainly, I'm not going to retire."

Forty minutes after sitting down at Tuesday's press conference, Pettit answered the final question regarding retirement with a smile.

"That's a question like asking your daughter when she's going to get married," Pettit said. "I'm going to answer it the same way she would: 'None of your damn business.'"

NU hits the weight room

Earlier workouts help Husker linemen gel as a unit

BY DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

The goals of making Nebraska football players stronger and faster are still the same, NU Assistant Athletic Director Boyd Epley said. But this year, a hidden benefit may come out of the winter program.

In the past, a football player usually lifted weights on his own in the afternoon after the team running drills. This year, however, players were broken into lifting groups based on their position.

The leaders of those groups asked individual members when their classes were and then set up a time for the whole group to work out, said Epley, who is also the director of athletic performance.

The offensive linemen chose 7 a.m. for their time to work out.

NU offensive lineman Russ Hochstein said getting up early was tough at first. But the 6-foot-3, 280-pound junior is adjusting and said the sacrifices will pay off. So will the camaraderie that is being built from lifting together.

"In a game, we each have our individual jobs and responsibilities, but the offensive line is a unit," Hochstein said.

"(Lifting together) relates back to that. Each one of us lifts hard and tries

to get bigger. It goes hand-in-hand with what you do on the field. The more you are around someone, the better you get to get to know them."

Epley said more than 100 players opted for the earlier workout times.

Junior rush end Brandon Mooberry said his group opted for the earlier workouts, because they felt workouts would have better quality without running drills before lifting weights.

Results of the new setup are already evident, Epley said.

"Now it's kind of a peer-pressure thing," Epley said.

"What we are finding is that they are doing a little bit better job with the warm-up and exercises. Even some of the supplementary things that players might have said - 'I don't have time to do it' - they are getting it done."

Getting the sets done is critical, because the strength staff grades each workout.

Through evaluations, Epley and the strength staff have identified top lifters.

"Tracey Wistrom is doing a great

job," Epley said. "He's gained seven pounds already."

Other top lifters include Mike Brown, Kyle Vanden Bosch, Matt Davison, Russ Hochstein, Jason Lohr, Chris Kelsay, Jeremy Slechta, Ralph Brown, Tony Tata, Jeff Perino, Aaron

Wills, Dominic Raiola, Matt Baldwin, Tyler Rauenzahn and Jason Schwab.

Mooberry, who had shoulder surgery a few weeks ago and just started working out this week, wants to be part of that group. He knows he will have to work hard, not only for himself but also to keep his teammates happy.

"If they see you slacking off, they will jump down your back and harass you," Mooberry said.

Epley said the players were disappointed with last season, and he can see that in their lifting.

"I'm sure there is motivation to improve on that (record)," Epley said. "We've always had hard workers in the winter at Nebraska. This year is no different."

"Overall, the work is as good as it's ever been. The results are going to be just what we want."

BOYD EPLEY
NU assistant athletic director



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Huskers hit a season in women's gym; Oxford wins the all-around

BY JOHN GASKINS
Staff writer

By 11:30 p.m. Monday night, the die-hards at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, who had traversed through snow and ice to see the No. 10 Nebraska women's gymnastics team's triangular meet with No. 14 Oregon State and No. 22 Brigham Young, looked ready to hit the pillow.

But despite having to burn a little midnight oil, the Huskers weren't putting anyone to rest except the Beavers and the Cougars.

Without junior All-American Heather Brink, out for the third straight meet due to an Achilles injury, NU (10-2) used heavy artillery to score a season-high 196.075 to shoot down OSU (194.575) and BYU (193.4).

The score was Nebraska's fifth highest in school history. NU recorded scores of 49 or better in three of the four events and set a season high with a 48.85 on the vault, which left Coach Dan Kendig pleased with his team.

"This team showed a lot this evening," said Kendig, who earned his 200th career victory in 16 years of coaching.

"We came out and performed well on all four events. To score a 196 this early in the season is a great accomplishment."

Nebraska individuals scored victories in three of the four events. Senior Misty Oxford captured the all-around title with a season-high 39.2, edging teammate and junior Nicole Wilkinson by .1 points.

"I'm happy to win, don't get me wrong," Oxford said, "but it was kind of weird when you look back. I just didn't feel like I was with it tonight."

A deadpan attitude about a solid performance is typical for a team that has depth; no one is safe in the lineup.

"I think it's definitely a great horrible situation to be in," Kendig said. "These girls feel so bad when they miss in practice, because they know every routine is crucial."

"But because of that, we're a stronger team and we're already starting

to work on the little things much sooner than we usually do."

Senior Courtney Brown continued her assault on the beam and floor exercise with victories in both events, and scored her career high (9.875) on the vault, where she finished runner-up to OSU's Lara Degenhardt (9.9).

Freshman Bree Dority captured her first career-event title by scoring a career-high 9.9 on the uneven bars, while sophomore Amy Ringo (floor - 9.825) and junior Laura Ohlendorf (uneven bars - 9.825) also scored career bests, displaying the team's depth.

The meet's length was doubled compared to normal due to the absence of two of the four scheduled judges. Because there were only two judges, the meet was competed in Olympic order, with one event after the other, a situation that caused some long faces and a long night.

"They were complaining a little at the beginning about the length," Kendig said, "but after that they made the best of it. After all, (the other two teams) had to wait too."

Oxford said that the never-ending night was actually beneficial to the team, a perfect preparation for the NCAA Championships in April, where several teams and gymnasts will compete and the wait between events will be just as long or longer.

"We stayed together as a team, kept everybody up," Oxford said.

"I'm happy with the win, don't get me wrong, but it was weird when you look back."

MISTY OXFORD
NU gymnast

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But Kansas State has been on a slide since beating the Huskers a month ago. KSU has lost three straight games.

Kansas State's recent demise may come from the absence of junior center Angie Finkes. Finkes, who averages 11.2 points per game, has not played in the Wildcats' last four games and may miss tonight's game.

"I think it hurts Kansas State some," Sanderford said. "But they have played four straight games without her."

The game is not only significant

because of tournament ramifications, but it also marks the final game for four seniors at the Devaney Center. Kate Benson, Cori McDill, Lisa Reitsma and Monet Williams will play in front of the Devaney Center crowd for the last time.

"It is pretty amazing," McDill said. "These four years have gone by pretty dang fast."

Reitsma played only one year of basketball, and Williams played two. Benson and McDill have been at NU for their entire careers.

"Our seniors have done a pretty good job leadership-wise this year," Sanderford said. "We are going to

miss those four seniors."

But if Nebraska is to reach its tournament goal, Sanderford said, those same seniors must step up in the last few weeks of the season.

Against Texas Tech, seniors Angie Braziel and Rene Hanebutt combined for 55 of the Red Raiders' 75 points.

In Sunday's game, McDill did not attempt a shot in 10 minutes of play. Reitsma did not score and Williams contributed eight points.

"(Tech's seniors) basically controlled the game," Sanderford said. "This is the time of year where you look for experienced players to make the big plays."