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UConn shocks No. 1 Duke

Richard Hamilton scores 27 as Huskies capture NCAA title

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Connecticut spoiled the Duke Invitational.

The Huskies beat top-ranked Duke, the team no one thought could be beaten in this NCAA tournament, for its first national championship in its first Final Four appearance.

Monday night's 77-74 thriller ended Duke's 32-game winning streak, kept the Blue Devils from an NCAA record for wins in a season, and prevented them from ending the '90s with a third national championship.

Richard Hamilton led third-ranked Connecticut (34-2) with 27 points, but it was some tremendous team defense and a big shot and free throws by Khalid El-Amin that won it all.

Trajan Langdon led Duke (37-2) with 25 points, but Duke's last two possessions ended

with him making turnovers. And so the Blue Devils fell short of what everyone had expected — another title.

These were the only two teams to hold the No. 1 ranking this season and they played a final game worthy of the two best.

"We lost to a great basketball team. We were beaten tonight, we didn't lose," Duke Coach Mike Krzyzewski said.

"We picked it up in the second half and we had some opportunities, but they put the pressure on us and were tough to defend," he said. "We got some good looks and had a chance to win, but they made the play and we didn't make the play in the last minute."

Connecticut was able to keep the game at a pace it liked even though most everyone thought the Huskies should try to slow the tempo. The quick pace made for what seemed like constant lead changes, the last coming with 3:50 to play when Hamilton's free throws gave the Huskies a 70-68 lead.

He hit a 3-pointer 21 seconds later for a five-point lead and suddenly Duke was playing a role it had very little experience at this season — the chaser.

"We're happy as heck, and we truly believed we could beat them," UConn Coach Jim Calhoun said. "I said before the game that we hadn't played our best yet. If you count character, I think tonight we did."

William Avery's free throws with 54 seconds left got the Blue Devils within 75-74. El-Amin, whose driving basket had given Connecticut the 75-72 lead, missed on a drive with 24 seconds left and Duke had life.

The crowd of 41,340 at Tropicana Field, the court where Duke's season ended a year ago, was roaring as the Blue Devils went for the final shot without calling a timeout.

Langdon, the fifth-year senior who made the Final Four in his last chance, tried to get by Ricky Moore, one of the game's best defenders. Langdon spun but Moore was there. Langdon took an extra step and was called for traveling with 5.4 seconds to go.

El-Amin made two free throws with 5.2 seconds left to get the lead back to 3, and Langdon's last chance at tying the game ended when he fell near the 3-point line and lost control of the ball.

With that, Connecticut charged the court and had the title everyone thought Duke would claim.

Spring Report NU center motivates teammates

By DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

At 6-foot-2, 300 pounds, Dominic Raiola is not the prototype for a cheerleader.

But the sophomore center from Honolulu was that and more for the Nebraska football team, teammate Russ Hochstein said.

Before the Kansas State game, Nov. 14, 1998, arguably Raiola's biggest game as a Cornhusker, he veered off the path his NU teammates were taking to get from the locker room to the field and ran right in front of the Wildcat student section. Raiola was booed and had things thrown at him, but he loved every minute of it.

"They were some ruthless fans," Raiola said, "but it was pretty fun."

Hochstein said: "He loves (the hostile environment). He feeds off the crowds' emotion and plays with it inside himself. He likes getting people fired up. He's kind of a cheerleader."

Being the spiritual leader and the snapper, Raiola is an important cog in the Big Red wheel. The way Raiola develops this spring could determine the success the offensive line has in the fall.

Junior guard Billy Diekmann said Raiola had already stepped up and was ready to be a leader of the group.

"He's very enthusiastic," Diekmann said. "He knows what it takes to play. He's as serious as you possibly can be about football. That's probably why he has had the success he's had."

As a freshman, Raiola saw action in all the games as a special teams player and at two offensive line positions. This year he will be the starter at center and play on special teams as well.

Raiola's goal as a starter is to return the offensive line to greatness.

"We're trying to get back to where we were a few years ago," Raiola said. "We have an attitude at Nebraska where we're supposed to dominate up front. I don't think we had that last year."

Being on four state championship teams at St. Louis High School in Honolulu and on the roster for the 1997 National Championship, Raiola knows how to win. He felt he had a blueprint for success he hoped others would follow.

"You have to have the intensity and a winning attitude," Raiola said. "If you don't want to get it done, you aren't going to get it done. You got to want it out there."

"Hopefully that intensity will rub off on others, and we can be one intense offensive line. You have to have a little nastiness, too. Football is not a nice sport. It's pretty violent. You have to be up for the challenge."

Offensive Line Coach Milt Tenopir said Raiola's attitude made him special.

"Dom is the kind of guy you look for," Tenopir said. "He has the right attitude and passion for the game."

In Raiola's first year at NU, which he red-shirted, he watched as the offensive line man-handled everyone it came across.

Then came the 1998 campaign, Raiola's first season, and the disappointing 9-4 season. The offensive line was criticized for being soft. Raiola didn't take losing well. After several of the losses, he was alone on the back of the bench with a towel over his head.

He doesn't want to relive those bad feelings again this year.

"I hate losing," Raiola said. "I like to win. That's a reason I came here. I won a lot in high school. Obviously Nebraska wins a lot."

NU readies for rival Creighton

■ Husker softball team hopes for victory tonight, despite a game schedule that keeps it moving.

By BRANDON SCHULTE
Staff writer

Coming off weekend splits against Texas and Texas A&M, the Nebraska softball team (16-11) hits the road again for the 27th time in 28 games to face Creighton (13-19), at Dill Field in Omaha tonight.

NU Coach Rhonda Revelle admits she would have liked the team to come back from Texas with a 3-1 Big 12 record, but realizes the team can't dwell on last weekend with the Bluejays waiting in the wings.

"NU vs. CU is just one of those rivalries," Revelle said. "Creighton is going to fire on all cylinders for us. They are a very reputable team, and their record isn't indicative of their abilities."

The teams are familiar with one another, by virtue of facing each other twice this season.

The most recent game Mar. 23 went to the wire as Jaime Fuente singled in the winning run in the bottom of the seventh for the 6-5 Cornhusker victory. NU also won the first game 4-1, at the NIST Tournament in California.

Sophomore Lori Tschannen will throw for the Huskers. She has compiled a 2-3 record in eight appearances and an earned-run average of 1.54.

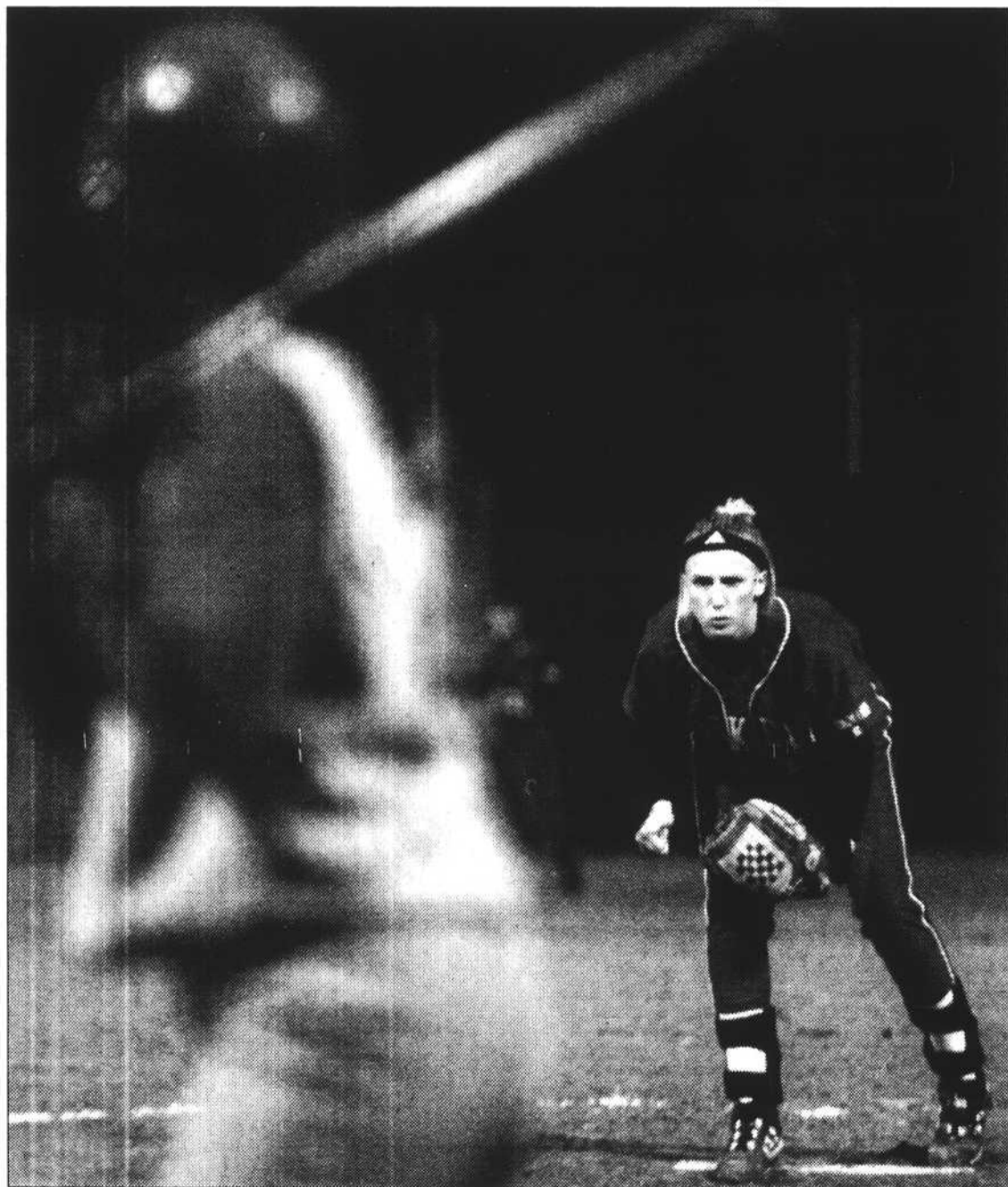
In her last start at Texas, Tschannen received the loss as her teammates recorded just as many errors (four) as they did hits.

The Huskers' fielding percentage of .923, their lowest since the 1994 season, has caused Revelle some concern.

"Errors make the difference," Revelle said. "The errors we are making are easily correctable. We just need to take better care of the ball."

Creighton will be led offensively by Jamie McMurtry and Heidi Geier, who pace the squad with .392 and .383 averages respectively.

Nebraska will counter with junior Jennifer Lizama, who leads the squad in batting average (.392),



LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN
JENNY VOSS isn't scheduled to start against Creighton; however, she does lead the team in victories and may see action in relief.

home runs (6), runs scored (28) and hits (31).

Coming into the game, the Cornhuskers have played four times in the past three days and hadn't received their customary day off Monday following a road trip, while the Bluejays have been off since the last meeting between

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RHONDA REVELLE
softball coach

the teams. The lack of rest is something Nebraska has tried to prepare for.

"We had a serious talk about what tomorrow means," Revelle said. "We didn't take our typical Monday off after the weekend. It

will be important for us to get right back up."

After playing 17 games in 17 days, the weary Cornhuskers will have a week off before a rematch with the Bluejays on April 7 in Lincoln.