

## NU downs Creighton again

By BRANDON SCHULTE  
Staff writer

OMAHA — Playing in blustery conditions, the Nebraska softball team needed all seven innings to overcome an upstart Creighton team.

With NU trailing 2-0 in the top of the seventh, Jennifer Lizama was the hero who laced a triple to right center field to score two for the Huskers. Lizama then scored on an Alice Brewer sacrifice fly to give Nebraska a 3-2 win in front of 68 fans at Dill Field.

Jenny Voss entered in the middle of the fifth in relief of Lori Tschannen and picked up the win. With the victory, Voss moved into first place in the all-time victories list at Nebraska, though she did-

n't know the win had any significance until she was told afterward.

"I'm not a big stats or numbers person," Voss said. "Right now isn't the time to worry about the record. We're getting too wrapped up in it. I have to stay focused at the task at hand."

With the win, the Huskers have defeated the Bluejays three times this season and improved to 17-11 for the year, while CU dropped to 13-20.

NU Coach Rhonda Revelle sees the squad turning the corner, noting the come-from-behind win.

"I think the last six games, we've started to gain a little momentum," Revelle said. "I believe that the momentum will continue after the week-long break."

Cindy Rothemeyer started things off in the seventh with a single to right when bad communication between the CU right fielder and the first baseman allowed Rothemeyer's bloop to drop for

a hit. Next, Ginger Taylor beat out the throw to first on a bunt to put runners on first and second. Both advanced on a wild pitch. That set up the triple by Lizama.

Finally, Brewer bunted. CU looked Lizama back to third, threw Brewer out at first, and then threw back home to try and get out Lizama. Lizama beat the tag.

"It was kind of an interesting call," Revelle said. "I told Alice to be ready to squeeze. I thought we could decoy the infield by bringing in a right-handed hitter. It turned into a safety squeeze when she bunted."

With the lead, Voss mowed down CU for her 10th win of the season. Tschannen went 4 1/3 innings, giving up both Creighton runs.

"We'll take the win either way," Lizama said. "We knew if we kept putting the ball in play, things would happen."

## NU coaches consider turf replacement

By DARREN IVY  
Senior staff writer

Imagine an artificial playing surface that looks, feels and plays like grass, yet it doesn't wear out as grass does over the course of a season.

An artificial surface that eliminates painful turf-burn injuries yet still gives the same torque release as grass. A surface that allows athletes to slide, pivot and twist in their cleats without worrying about catching a cleat in the turf and blowing out a knee.

The product is FieldTurf, and it may be installed in several Nebraska athletic facilities by 2000.

Former Coach Tom Osborne already has endorsed it. Earlier this month, NU Football Coach Frank Solich and NU Baseball Coach Dave Van Horn inspected a pair of fields in Wichita, Kan., and Amarillo, Texas.

With the current AstroTurf in Memorial Stadium due for an overhaul after the 1999 season, Nebraska football coaches and NU facilities managers are in the beginning stages of selecting a new surface.

FieldTurf is one option, said John Ingram, NU director of facilities.

"It's promising," said Ingram, who went along with Solich and Van Horn on the one-day trip. "As we're moving toward replacing the field, we need to look at all the right systems. We're examining options with many different artificial surfaces. But only time will tell what happens. Sometimes with these new systems, you need to take a little bit of a leap of faith."

Solich said the surface plays slower than AstroTurf, but faster than grass. Unlike

### Types of playing surfaces

**Natural grass**  
Natural grass is the slowest surface of the three and also the most forgiving. Wear and tear and sloppiness in bad weather are problems.

**AstroTurf**  
AstroTurf gets rid of some of the wear and tear, but is hard on the knees and other joints. There is padding below, carpet above.

**FieldTurf**  
FieldTurf is a supposed combination of grass and AstroTurf. Padding and carpet are mixed together, much like grass and dirt would be.

JON FRANK/DN

AstroTurf, which has padding underneath and then the carpet stretched over the top, FieldTurf incorporates the padding and turf together as one piece. The padding or infill is made from graded silica sand and ground rubber. It surrounds each FieldTurf fiber like natural earth holds a blade of grass.

From reports Solich has received, FieldTurf is safer on injuries than AstroTurf. This is a major consideration, Solich said. FieldTurf surfaces also deliver optimal performance in wet or dry conditions and provide the ideal playing conditions all year long.

Each blade of FieldTurf grass is UV protected and is resistant to the most extreme temperatures.

Company officials promote the surface to last as long as an AstroTurf field and cost substantially less to install. FieldTurf surfaces are relatively new, Ingram said, so no major colleges have installed it in football or baseball stadiums.

Earlier this year, the Lincoln School Board voted to install FieldTurf at Seacrest Field, 72nd and Adams. The field is to be completed by July.

NU players and coaches hope the Lincoln Public Schools will allow the Cornhuskers to practice several times there to see how they like it.

Two Huskers, senior safety Clint Finley and junior receiver Matt Davison, already have tested FieldTurf. They went on the trip with Solich. Finley hopes the Athletic Department installs FieldTurf because he said it's easier on his knees.

Finley said they took all kinds of shoes and tested each of them on the surface. All the shoes worked well, Finley said, so it would be a matter of preference as to which shoe to wear.

"I thought the detachable cleats worked better on this than on real grass," Finley said. "On real grass you get a divot and your feet slide."

Solich also was impressed with the surface, but he said NU officials are still looking at all options.

"It seemed to hold up really well," Solich said. "It looked like the kind of surface that may be very good for us. We are really looking at all options right now. A decision on the playing field surface doesn't have to be made right away."

## Spring Report

# Davison seeks life after MU 'miracle'

By ADAM KLINKER  
Senior staff writer

It is an image not easily removed from the mind's eye of Nebraska football history: the Miracle in Missouri.

It happened in Columbia, Mo., in a game that would ultimately be the deciding contest in the Cornhuskers' 1997 National Championship season.

It happened at such a precise moment in time. It happened to one freshman player, in the right place at the right time — a football falling awkwardly toward the turf like a tumbling cosmic body, bounding off other bodies and coming to rest in the freshman's hands.

They were Matt Davison's hands. He pulled the ball in, flopped to the ground and in almost the same motion was back on his feet, holding the ball in one hand, valiantly proclaiming the catch to the nearest official.

Touchdown. NU goes on to beat Missouri. Davison is an instant hero in his home state, wins an ESPY award and the Huskers win their third national title in four years — undoubtedly, a watershed moment in his career.

"In some ways, it's an incredible thing that happened to him," Nebraska Receivers Coach Ron Brown said. "But Matt's too much of a competitor to settle for that."

But football, in an imitation of life, marches on. And Davison goes right along with it. Indeed, he said, he's been trying to live down that catch in Missouri.

A year and a half later — spring practice in 1999, and sure, they still talk about "The Catch." But that's not all they talk about. For certain, the luster on the 6-foot-1 junior-to-be from Tecumseh is far from worn.

Fathers still flock to spring practices to get their kids in a picture with Davison. Davison happily hoists the younger ones up, cradling them in his hands — those same hands that have plucked the football from the blue sky hundreds of times over, in practice, in games, in defeat, in victory.

They talk about his other catches, they talk about what's to come. Davison smiles. An autograph? No problem. How good are we going to be this year? Always the competitor, Davison's

Please see DAVISON on 9

## McBride: Defensive line solid for '99 season

By DARREN IVY  
Senior staff writer

What a difference a year makes on the defensive line.

Last spring, sophomores Jeremy Slechta and Jason Lohr were in high school. But injuries at the interior lineman positions during the fall forced them into immediate action.

This spring Slechta and Lohr are considered battle-tested veterans. Their experiences as true freshman, along with the development of junior Luis Almanzar and the return of starters Loran Kaiser and Steve Warren give NU one of its deepest interior lines in many years, NU Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride said.

That added depth could spell trouble for opponents, Kaiser said.

"The depth will have a big impact," Kaiser said. "You get that rotation in there and keep everybody's legs fresh. This way you don't just have to

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depend on two people. You have four or five people you can depend on. It will make a big difference on the pressure we get on the ball."

Pressure on the quarterback and in the backfield was something that was lacking last year. Warren said the goal for this year's group is to be a dominant defensive front again.

Applying the pressure from the rush end spots will be senior Aaron Wills and junior Kyle Vanden Bosch. They replace departed seniors Mike Rucker and Chad Kelsay as starters. Rush end is another deep position and junior Brandon Mooberry and freshmen Chris Kelsay, Justin Smith and Demoin Adams are likely to see action.

Kaiser said Vanden Bosch and Wills are spe-

cial players good enough to start for almost any team in the country last year.

While McBride was mostly pleased with the play of the defensive line last year, he said more time would be spent on fundamentals this spring. He said players put themselves in positions to make tackles last year but broke down fundamentally.

"We're going to hone in on running the same thing over and over again," McBride said. "I feel really comfortable with doing that because you get to a point where guys feel confident about playing the base thing. You can win with those things just because you're fundamentally sound."

Chemistry is another thing that makes this spring's defensive line a force to reckon with, Kaiser said. Players aren't only close on the field, but off the field as well. It's like "one big family ready to kill some people," he said.

Warren said the unity and chemistry was already showing in spring practices.

"We're bonded enough so we know what each

other is going to do," he said. "I know what Kaiser is doing, and Kyle and Aaron know what each other is going to do."

With Kelsay, Rucker and Jason Wiltz gone, Warren appears to be the new leader of the group. He knows that if the defensive line were to have a bad year, it would come back on him because he is the senior.

He watched last year as people lost hope midway through the season, and playing football became a chore rather than a game. Warren doesn't want that to be the case this year.

"At practice I try to keep everybody having a positive attitude," Warren said. "I think this year we need to go out and have fun. If you go out and play hard and have fun, good things will happen."

Almanzar said the hard work that everyone put in during the winter should also bring good results.

"I don't think a lot of people realize it, but (the defensive line) is going to be one of our strong points this year," Almanzar said. "We should be pretty good."