

Sports Opinion



Sam McKewon

## Fans still crazy over Nebraska

Missouri's Chris George pitched a masterful game Saturday in a 7-1 win over Nebraska. He did it on a broken foot, too.

And so he comes over afterward, readying himself for the post-game interview. Sure, he wants to talk about his ability to change speeds and keep hitters off balance. Hell, that's all the reporters cared about. But Chris had something else on his mind.

"You know that crown you guys have on the football stadium?" George asked. "Have you seen that thing? You know it's high in the middle, but it slopes. It slopes. Is that for drainage?"

Yeah, sure. About that third inning...

"Bet it helps you run the option better, going downhill."

It continually amazes me (well, actually it doesn't) that this state, both people in it and people that visit it, has a one-track mind. People live and die football, football, football. Mr. George, a Missourian, clearly had visited the stadium, which is what people do, I guess, when they come. It's NU's Taj Mahal.

When Texas played here, the writer from the Austin American-Statesman wanted to talk about one thing as we waited for UT Coach Augie Garrido: the football team.

This state's going overboard. Really, truly. People showed up to watch grass grow and paint dry at the Spring Game. They show up in malls to get autographs of former Huskers. They have a Web site - a Web site! - to try to get Kent Pavelka and Gary Saddlemyer back on the radio to call Husker games. Even the Omaha World-Herald, reputable and rarely wasteful, used valuable news space to hold a poll determining if Warren Swain and Adrian Fiala were popular enough.

In Monday's Lincoln Journal Star, there was a front-page picture of Lawrence Phillips in the sports section, playing for the Barcelona Dragons. Remember him? The Antichrist? Does he deserve front-page coverage? But readers do want to see, and actually care, how Phillips is doing.

In this multimedia age, the hype will only get bigger. Debates will rage on the Internet about Eric Crouch and Bobby Newcombe. There was even a debate about me in a chat room about the fact I'm always so "negative." When I start becoming a topic of conversation, there's something seriously wrong.

I feel the same way about a masterful pitching performance that's prefaced by a discourse on football fields.

So swings the pendulum. One day, it will swing back.

Sam McKewon is a junior news-editorial and political science major and a Daily Nebraskan senior editor.



NICOLE WILKINSON focuses on her upcoming uneven bars routine in a meet earlier this season. The Nebraska women's gymnastics team finished its season with a sixth-place finish in the NCAA Women's Gymnastics Championships. MATT MILLER/DN

## NU gym teams look to future

Optimism abounds for Nebraska as it enters the next century

BY JOHN GASKINS  
Staff writer

As all three Nebraska women's gymnastics team coaches looked out of the window of their office to their gym floor Monday afternoon, they saw an unfamiliar sight - nothing.

For the last several months, they had seen about a dozen gymnasts tirelessly tumbling, dismounting, sticking their landings. But Monday the gym was practically vacant, giving them a chance to reflect on what was one of the program's most successful seasons, as they finished sixth in the nation for the second time in three years.

"You look at how we've only finished higher than this twice (fourth in 1989 and fifth in 1990)," Kendig said. "I think this ranks right up there as one of our best teams ever."

The same could go for the men's coach, Francis Allen, whose mood was the same as it ever was Friday night after Nebraska's third place finish at nationals - optimism.

"We were a great team this year," Allen said. "I'm a bulls-eye kind of guy, and we'll

shoot for the bulls-eye next year."

Not since 1990, when the men won the national championship and the women finished fifth, have both teams experienced so much success in the same year.

Both teams went undefeated at home and won their conference title. Both teams qualified for the championship round of the NCAA Championships, and had multiple All-Americans.

After a double loss to Washington and Arizona in their second meet of the season, the women reeled off nine straight meet victories.

"The team grew up at Washington," Kendig said. "It was a struggle they all learned from. They got back in the gym and worked hard to make sure that didn't happen again."

Three NU seniors in 1999 broke school records, equaling the feat from the previous two teams.

Junior Heather Brink, senior Courtney Brown and senior Misty Oxford earned eight All-America honors between them. Brown, Oxford and Laurie McLaughlin are three of the five seniors Kendig said would be tough to

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DAN KENDIG  
NU coach

replace. Fortunately for Kendig, he was able to sign four recruits and pick up one to fill the gaps left by the seniors, including "the class of the class," A.J. Lamb, a Lincoln junior prodigy.

"Athletically, on paper, and skill-wise, they'll probably do the same, if not more, than our past classes," Kendig said. "Realistically, though, a freshman is not a senior. We'll definitely lose experience and leadership."

But Kendig will not set his sights any

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## Volleyball scoring debate rages in NCAA

■ New scoring systems would involve rally scoring and 11-minute timed sets.

BY DARREN IVY  
Senior staff writer

When NCAA women's volleyball committee chairwoman Marcia Saneholtz joined the committee in 1993, she remembered discussing possible scoring format changes for collegiate volleyball.

Six years later, the traditional best-three-out-of-five format is still used. However, talk of a new system is still being heard.

"You know what they say about change," said Saneholtz, the senior associate director of athletics at Washington State University. "Change is difficult to accept."

But Saneholtz, a majority of the volleyball committee members and some college volleyball coaches believe a change in game format is necessary for volleyball to remain a top women's sport in the next century.

"Volleyball is a sport I care about a lot," said Saneholtz, a former player

and official. "I think if volleyball doesn't change, it will lose its preeminence in women's intercollegiate sports."

To keep volleyball near the top in terms of popularity, two new scoring systems were experimented with the past two springs, Saneholtz said. The aim of the scoring systems is to make volleyball more fan- and media-friendly by standardizing the length of games.

The new scoring system adopted by the Federation Internationale de Volleyball and USA Volleyball earlier this year is a best-out-of-three set format with the first two sets being rally scoring played to 25 points, winning by two. If the teams split the first two sets, they play a tiebreaker set to 15 points

using rally scoring and winning by two. Saneholtz said the NCAA likely would have adopted a 21-point, best-out-of-three set format this year, except that the FIVB and USA Volleyball were having some problems with their systems.

A more consistent length of game would make it easier for television stations to cover games, said Michigan State Coach Chuck Erbe. Erbe and other coaches are currently filling out evaluative surveys. Then the NCAA will take the surveys and make its next move based on what the coaches recommend. For the 1999 season, the traditional scoring system will remain.

Please see NCAA on 12



Meandering