

Sports Briefs

Loftin's behavior unusual, says Iowa vice president

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — All agreed that the extortion and theft charges against former Iowa football player Ryan Loftin were unfortunate — but no one could explain why he put himself in that situation.

The charges came two weeks after Loftin quit the team and then had his scholarship revoked by first-year Coach Kirk Ferentz.

Loftin is accused of threatening to expose NCAA rules violations in the Iowa program and provide information on the team to opponents — including Nebraska — if he didn't get his scholarship back.

"It's reasonable to expect that some people recruited under one coaching philosophy aren't going to want to continue under something

different," said Ann Rhodes, Iowa's vice president for university relations. "But usually people just leave the team. They don't engage in this kind of behavior."

Loftin faces a charge of extortion, a felony that carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$7,500 fine, and fifth-degree theft, a misdemeanor.

According to charges filed by the Johnson County attorney's office, Ferentz received a letter signed by Loftin threatening to expose NCAA rules violations and share information about the team to opponents if his scholarship was not restored.

The letter also said other disgruntled former players would be enlisted to generate negative publicity about Ferentz and the football program.

The theft charge alleges Loftin took notebooks belonging to the athletic department. It is punishable by up to 30 days in jail and a \$100 fine.

Tigers lean on defense

BY SAMUEL MCKEWIN
Senior staff writer

Editor's note: This is the seventh story in an 11-part series exploring Nebraska's opposing football teams in the Big 12 Conference.



Posey

Missouri football team to replace the 3,438 total yards Corby Jones and Devin West took with them after graduation.

So to nab their third straight winning season and bowl invitation, the Tigers may have to rely on an unlikely group of players — the defense.

While much of the preseason focus in Columbia, Mo., has been on replacing the aforementioned quarterback-tailback combo, it will be the Mizzou defenders who'll likely determine the fate of the team — especially early. And the defense knows it.

"Our offense is young and talented, but they need time," said senior cornerback Carlos Posey. "As a defense, we have to do what we've been doing to get the offense fired up."

Last season, the Tigers gave up an average of only 18.6 points per game, good for 22nd in the nation. MU got the same ranking for total yards allowed per game (313.3). More importantly, the defense made big plays; it had five touchdowns of its

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LARRY SMITH
Missouri head coach

own in 1998.

There are some holes to plug, especially in the secondary, but even Coach Larry Smith sees no other avenue of leadership.

"We'll lean on the defense; we'll depend on them," Smith said. "The mentality is they will set up the offense, keep the offense going."

The offense may build itself around All-American center Rob Riti as neither Jim Dougherty nor Kirk Farmer has established himself as the starter at quarterback, and the tailback position will likely be done by committee.

The receiving corps is relatively deep but suffered a serious loss when starter John Dausman tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee Aug. 16. Either way, somebody has to get those receivers the ball.

Smith said he guesses he'll play both quarterbacks in early contests — maybe name a permanent starter, maybe not. If that fails, true freshman Darius Outlaw might get a shot. Whoever the signal-caller is, Missouri will likely throw more this season without a solid option tandem.

The quarterback situation, Smith said, reflects a larger problem with the 1999 team: inexperience.

"I'd say that this is the most talent-

ed, least experienced team we've had in three or four years," Smith said. "Of the top 44 players, 22 are redshirt freshmen or sophomores."

One sophomore Smith doesn't have to worry about is defensive end Justin Smith, who had 86 tackles and 13 tackles for loss in his freshman season. He'll likely be an All-America candidate this year — and he's just getting warmed up, Larry Smith said.

"Justin's just scratched the surface," he said. "He's starting to use his head and not just rely on his ability."

Despite the inexperience and a kicking game that lacks a named starting kicker or punter, Smith talked optimistically about his squad.

In his five-year tenure, he said, MU has garnered credibility in the state and has started to keep the best talent in recruiting season. Posey, Riti and Smith boast about depth in the future. There seems to be a rejuvenated attitude among the ranks.

The Missouri media guide proclaims, "It's a great time to be a Tiger!" and despite all the losses on offense, Riti still thinks the team can pull out a winning season.

"We're used to winning," Riti said. "Winning becomes perpetual, winning becomes easier. We have the desire to get there again."

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NU looks to start new streak

BY BRANDON SCHULTE
Staff writer

Nebraska Coach Terry Pettit said there's no question the Cornhusker volleyball team would rather be practicing today.

But sandwiched in between the State Farm Classic and the Florida SunTrust tournament for NU is a home match tonight against Drake at 7 p.m. in the Coliseum.

Looking to rebound from its first-ever 0-2 start, Nebraska will attempt to start a new home winning streak after having its 65-game winning streak broken in the building last weekend.

NU doesn't appear worried about a third straight loss to start the season. "I know nothing about Drake except that their setter is Heather Harr (graduate of Lincoln Southeast)," NU

"I know nothing about Drake... our match focus is going to be on Nebraska."

TERRY PETTIT
NU volleyball coach

Coach Terry Pettit said. "Our match focus is going to be on Nebraska."

The Huskers will focus on their complicated 6-2 attack that they used last weekend to take advantage of the squad's depth.

Freshman setter Lindsay Wischmeier, perhaps the least-heralded member of NU's recruiting class, will play a big role in the Huskers' success this year. She had 61 assists in the State Farm Classic — with many of them being to All-American Nancy Meendering, who pounded out

54 kills in the two games. Coming off a 13-14 season, Drake (0-0) will counter with Harr and middle blocker Kim Bahr.

Bahr led the Bulldogs with 3.77 kills-per-game last year. After facing two top-eight teams, Wischmeier isn't overly concerned with Drake — or anyone else for that matter.

"If I can survive Penn State and Pacific in my first two games," Wischmeier said. "From here on out, it's going to be a lot easier."

4th-string QB to transfer to UNO

From staff reports

Nebraska's fourth-string quarterback, Jay Runty, has decided to transfer to Nebraska-Omaha for the 1999-2000 campaign.

Runty, the son of former NU quarterback Steve Runty, played in four games last season, rushing three times for 59 yards, including a long of 28 yards against Iowa State.

"I expected that would be the case," Cornhusker Coach Frank Solich said Tuesday. "We wish him well. It was tough on him to be listed fourth."

Runty had been battling for the No. 3 slot with fifth-year senior Jeff Perino, who is recovering from three knee surgeries. Perino was vying for the No. 2 quarterback slot for a short time during the spring of 1997 with Matt Turman behind starter Scott Frost.

Division-II UNO confirmed Runty's choice on Tuesday via fax.

The Mavericks had been going through a quarterback controversy trying to replace All American Ed Thompson. Curtis Miller will start for UNO this weekend against defending national champion Northwest Missouri State.

In other news, Solich confirmed Tuesday that freshman wingback Josh Davis will not make the trip Saturday to Iowa because of team disciplinary guidelines.

Davis pleaded guilty to felony burglary and misdemeanor theft charges after being accused of taking a Sony PlayStation from a Loveland, Colo., home and selling it to a local pawn shop. He was placed on probation and could have the charge dismissed if he completes probation.

The son of former Nebraska I-back Tony Davis, Josh will likely play this season at wingback, and could also possibly return punts. Originally, Davis was recruited as a running back. Solich also said Tuesday that

freshmen Toniou Fonoti and John Garrison will most likely play Saturday against the Hawkeyes. Fonoti is the No. 2 left guard behind James Sherman, while Garrison will hold duties as the long snapper in punt and field-goal situations.

Other freshmen will make the trip, Solich said, but he could not guarantee any playing time for those players.

Josh Brown and DeJuan Groce, both redshirt freshmen, should see time Saturday, Solich said, assuming Brown recovers fully from a groin injury that had plagued him through most of fall camp. Groce, the No. 2 left cornerback, joins starters Ralph Brown and Keyou Craver to form a nucleus Solich likes very much.

"We have three cornerbacks who we feel very good about right now," Solich said.

Redshirt freshman Chris Kelsay will also be in the rush end rotation. Right now, Kelsay is listed No. 2 behind Aaron Wills at left rush end.

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