

The facts don't scare KSU's North Platte native

■ **Kelle Branting** and the Wildcats are coming to Lincoln to win, though they have never done it.

By **JOHN GASKINS**
Staff writer

Kansas State middle blocker Kelle Branting laughed when she was told that no Big 12/Big Eight Conference opponent had won on Nebraska's Coliseum floor since 1977.

"That's the first time I've ever heard that," Branting said. "It really doesn't bother me. I love to play great competition. Any time that you get to play Nebraska at Nebraska, you should be excited."

And despite another daunting fact — K-State hasn't beaten NU in all 58 of its previous tries — Branting said no historical information will faze the 24th-ranked Wildcats (6-2) when they open up 1999 Big 12 play against No. 5 NU (8-2) in the Coliseum at 7 tonight.

The match will provide extra significance for Branting, a North Platte

native, and four other Wildcats who hail from Nebraska. Third-year KSU Head Coach Jim McLaughlin said he expected an emotional homecoming for the Nebraskans, some of whom grew up attending Husker matches and might feel they were overlooked when NU didn't recruit them.

"They're pumped up about it," McLaughlin said. "They love it. Nebraska is a great volleyball state. It would be very special for them to beat Nebraska and show them, 'Hey, we're good, too.'"

The five Nebraskans include

sophomore hitter Liz Wegner of Tecumseh, who is second on the squad with 4.92 kills per game. McLaughlin said recruiting Nebraska players has been one major reason for K-State's recent success.

The 'Cats finished 19-12 last season, made it to the second round of the NCAA Tournament and are looking to build themselves into a Big 12 power. McLaughlin said he expected to improve on KSU's fifth-place finish from 1998 and wanted to prove wrong the coaches who picked the 'Cats to finish in the same spot in this year's pre-

season poll.

One way he's gone about doing that is intentionally setting up a grueling non-conference schedule that included matches at No. 2 Penn State and No. 5 Long Beach State — the top two teams in the nation in 1998.

And although they lost both matches 3-0, McLaughlin said it was the perfect preparation for playing NU in the Coliseum.

"The pressure will be on Nebraska," McLaughlin said. "They're supposed to win these matches at home. We're going up there to win."

Anderson steps up to new Husker soccer roles

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MVP awards. She was 10 years old.

"She could be in with the 16- and 17-year-olds, and she would be the MVP of the camp. You knew then she was going to be a good player. You never know back then how good they actually are going to be. It is nice to see her now doing so well, having known her back then."

Anderson was playing soccer well before she met Bechtold. Soccer has been in Anderson's blood for as long as she could remember. She had two older brothers who played soccer and parents who were avid soccer fans.

When Anderson was 8, her parents wanted to get her on a club team, but the only one available was a 12-and-under team. She made it. From that time forward, Anderson always played with older girls.

"It didn't phase me that people were bigger or faster," Anderson said. "I was always way littler, but I liked the challenge. I was always quiet because I wasn't their age. I did my job and moved on."

Those days of playing with older girls at Tranquility Park made the transition to college soccer an easy one. Playing with sophomores,

juniors and seniors was nothing new.

However, the role she played was different. A season-ending injury to left midfielder Jenny Benson during the summer forced Anderson into immediate action at that spot.

Anderson was accustomed to playing center half, but she grew to like her new left midfield position. She scored five goals and dished out nine assists while starting every game.

Anderson also had to adjust to a new soccer environment. She no longer had Tranquility Park. Schulte Fieldhouse and Abbott Sports Complex became the new spots for the soccer rat.

Anderson could be found in the fieldhouse early in the morning doing individual workouts with Bechtold. She also would get to practice early in the afternoons to take free kicks and stay afterwards to get more shots in.

"She has a tremendous work ethic," Bechtold said. "When Meghan reaches a goal, she is going to reach for the next one and next one. She sees her game as always improving. That work and attitude helps her keep exceeding expectations."

Before the 1999 season, Coach John Walker met with Anderson and

told her that one of his expectations for the upcoming season was for her to be more offensive minded.

Already Anderson is doing her best to exceed that expectation. Her six goals already are more than she scored last fall, and they tie her for first on the team. She also has added two assists and her 14 total points ranks her second behind Lindsay Eddleman.

She is doing this in a position she doesn't feel comfortable at — center midfield.

With Benson healthy again this fall, Anderson moved to center midfield to benefit the team.

"I had always played center half," Anderson said. "It is my natural position but not on the college level. In the middle, you have two or three people on you instantly, and everyone is so big."

She may feel a little out of position, but her coaches feel she is doing well.

"The midfield is a better fit for her," Bechtold said. "She can attack more, and she can distribute. She has very good vision. She and Amy (Walsh) really complement each other well."

In her second season, Anderson

complements nearly all of her teammates. But even as a senior in high school, she didn't see herself becoming a Husker.

The only reason she took a visit to NU was to get her parents off her back. But as soon as she got into the car after her visit, she had changed her mind and knew that staying in her home state was the right decision.

"I am extremely happy with my decision," Anderson said. "I grew up in Nebraska, and I grew up as an underdog. I feel a responsibility to show the rest of the country that we can play soccer in Nebraska."

"I am not a glamour girl like some of the players at other schools are. I fit in well at Nebraska."

Anderson hopes she has set an example to other top in-state players by going to Nebraska. Paige Phillips, the top player last year, already has followed her lead and is at NU this fall.

Just because Anderson is in Lincoln, she can't escape the irresistible force of Tranquility Park.

When Anderson gets down or stressed, she returns to the soccer fields of her youth to soothe herself.

"I go home and go to Tranquility and watch little kids' games."

Nebraska takes first in Arkansas

From staff reports

The Nebraska women's golf team shot a 306 to finish in first place at the Razorback Invitational Tuesday in Rogers, Ark.

With last week's win at the Big 12 Fall Preview, the Cornhuskers have now won back-to-back tournaments for the first time since the 1989-90 season.

Four Huskers placed in the top 10. Nebraska finished the two-day invitational with 604 shots — ahead of Florida and Nevada (617), Arkansas (621) and Iowa State (630).

Husker Sarah Sasse shot a 75 Tuesday, good for a two-day total of 150 and a fourth-place finish. Amy Roux, shot a 79 to tie for fourth with Sasse at 150.

NU's Elizabeth Bahensky (73,80) and Amanda Krane (79,74) finished the invite in ninth place at 153. Catha Fogelberg (82,78) rounded out the Husker lineup with a 160, good for 26th place.

Evans: Solich changed his mind

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posed to be doing," Evans said. "I don't see the point in beating California 45-0. We knew we were going to beat them."

On Tuesday, Solich addressed some of the problems with the rushing offense so far this year. He did not rule out throwing the ball more against Missouri but said the team would remain committed to running the ball.

Evans said he knew exactly what Nebraska's problem was in comparing this year's offense to offenses of the past under Coach Tom Osborne.

"The play calling is so bad that I even knew what we were going to run before it came into the huddle," Evans said. "We ran the same stuff. After a turnover, we always run an option. Go ahead and look."

"When Coach Osborne called a play, he was playing chess. When Coach Solich calls a play, he's playing checkers."

Evans said he sympathized with current players and would urge any future recruits at I-back "not to go there."

"The program isn't what it seems," he said. "It's like two programs; Coach Solich's team and (Defensive Coordinating) Coach (Charlie) McBride's team."

Some of those current players spoke Tuesday in response to Evans' initial comments in the Tuesday editions of the Omaha World-Herald and the Lincoln Journal Star. Evans refused comment to the DN Monday night.

No. 1 I-back Dan Alexander said the team didn't feel Evans belonged on the team anymore.

"All this goes to show what people have known throughout history, that selfishness doesn't get the job done," Alexander said. "We have to work as a team, as a community, as a culture to

"Eric knows what's going on. He knows he really quit."

DEANGELO EVANS
former NU I-back

get things done.

"We forgave him, but we weren't sure it'd be the best thing for him to come back to the team. There were guys that wanted him to come back. Other guys didn't want him to. But we didn't want to divide the team about this. We wanted to stay unified."

In discussion of Evans' situation, some of the team members were following the orders of Solich, Evans said, who had a personal problem with the I-back, stemming from the original Sunday night conversation when Evans said he was quitting the team.

"I know he is egotistical," Evans said. "There is no reason I shouldn't be back on the team. But I offended him personally."

The personal factor is important with Solich, Evans said. It's what has kept Crouch and Correll Buckhalter, who essentially did the same thing, on the team, while he is off it.

Crouch denied Tuesday that he had ever left the team.

"I never quit the football team at all," Crouch said. "I never missed any practices. I never missed any meetings. I was never given a second chance. That's out of the question. I never needed a second chance."

"I'm not going to listen to anything said about that situation. A lot of things that are said, some of those things are false."

Said Evans: "Everybody on the team knows Eric dropped his classes and went back to Omaha and was saying he wasn't coming back. Eric knows what's going on. He knows he

really quit. Solich went and got him in Omaha. That's a fact."

Evans also said he would forgive junior rush end Aaron Wills for comments made last week. Wills said Evans would have a hard time gaining trust with fans and teammates.

Wills apologized Tuesday for the statements.

"I said those comments, and after reading them in the paper I realized that in talking to my mom and my friends, those comments did sound very harsh," Wills said. "I'd like to publicly apologize to DeAngelo."

Evans said now that the ordeal is past, he is glad Nebraska didn't take him back. He isn't sure where he'll transfer yet but assumes he'll do well wherever he goes.

As for the NFL scouts ... "They know who I am," Evans said. "If I just stay healthy, I'll be fine. Trust me."

Nebraska also wants to move forward from the Evans issue, for better or for worse. Solich said he understands Evans' statements over the last few days — "I know he is tremendously frustrated," Solich said, "and when you are tremendously frustrated, that tone can come out."

As for the team being distraction-free, Solich said he only hopes it is.

"I can't give a 100 percent guarantee about anything," Solich said. "This was disturbing to everybody. It wasn't good for anybody, but we move on. The team would certainly like to have no distraction."

"Can something come up down the road? Anything can come up."

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