

Booker steps out of brother's shadow

BY DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

If you lined up Dion and Michael Booker side by side and put them in Nebraska uniforms and pads, it would be almost impossible to tell them apart.

At 6-foot-1, 205 pounds, Dion is an inch shorter than his older brother, who was drafted by the Atlanta Falcons in the first round of the 1997 NFL Draft, but he has the same chiseled body and long arms. He also has the same kind of speed and physical abilities.

However, prior to this season the same last name was about the only connection fans could see between the two brothers.

Dion hadn't shown many signs on the football field that he could play like his brother.

But this season, Dion has a new outlook on football, which has helped him feel more comfortable as a back-up free safety. His improved play has earned him respect.

"He's come a long way," said starting rover Mike Brown. "He's finally comfortable in what the free safety does in this defense. You can really tell that he's taken his game to a new level."

"In practice and games, you can see him playing with excitement and ready to take his game to that level where he is going to be a starter."

Dion hasn't always played with that kind of enthusiasm. In fact, there were times last year when he contemplated transferring.

The Outsider

Dion was highly recruited out of Oceanside, Calif., from El Camino High School, but once he was at NU, he almost completely disappeared.

After redshirting his freshman season, Dion

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KU coach aware of challenges Huskers pose

BY BRANDON SCHULTE
Staff writer

Going into last week's game against interstate rival Missouri, few people, if any, gave the Kansas football team a chance.

So, Kansas brought back more than 200 former players, including former All-American running back Gayle Sayers, to inspire the team. The coaching staff asked Sayers to give the team a pep talk before the game.

The talk may have worked, as the Jayhawks responded to Sayers' motivation and, in perhaps its most complete game of the year, defeated the Tigers in a 21-0 romp.

A second-straight win for KU against eighth-ranked Nebraska, though, seems improbable at best. The Jayhawks are a 30-point underdog and haven't defeated the Cornhuskers since Lyndon Johnson was in the White House. Kansas also faces a Nebraska team looking to make amends after its first loss of the season last week at Texas.

Coach Terry Allen is well aware of the obstacle that confronts his team this weekend when the teams meet on Saturday at 6:08 p.m. in Lawrence, Kan.

"We face a team that the University of Kansas hasn't beaten in 30 years," Allen said. "I think the kids understand what they're facing in the task with Nebraska."

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SHARON KOLBET/DN

Michelle Brooks, left, Jeanette Zimmer and Jaime Pauli work together to lead the women's cross country squad. Pauli, who is the team captain, said this year's group was one of the best in terms of its determination and camaraderie.

NU finds strength in numbers

■ NU's women's cross country team faces its biggest challenge yet, the Big 12 championship, this Saturday.

BY JASON MERRIHEW
Staff writer

With talent and great depth, the Nebraska women's cross country team has coasted through competition, spending the last four weeks ranked in the top 25.

However, the Cornhuskers must take that momentum and run up a hill known as the Big 12 championship.

The Huskers are eager to face the toughest conference in the nation this Saturday head-on. Including NU, the Big 12 boasts six of the top 25 teams in the nation.

Colorado's fourth-placed spot is the highest in the Big 12. Kansas State is ranked 7, Baylor is ranked 15, Texas is ranked 16 and Missouri is 24. Nebraska rounds out the

ranked conference teams at 25.

The ranking is a novelty item for the runners and coaches at Nebraska.

"It feels really nice to be recognized by the polls, but on the course is where it matters," NU runner Jeannette Zimmer said. "It gives you a good idea where you stand nationally."

Nebraska's ranking is due in part to the solid individual performances from Jaime Pauli, Michelle Brooks and Zimmer.

Pauli, a senior from Milbank, S.D., was voted by her teammates as the team captain before the start of the season.

"It's a big honor," Pauli said. "It tells you that they trust you."

Pauli's leadership skill is just as important on the field as it is off.

"Jaime lifts the team spirit," Brooks said. "She also pushes me in my training."

Usually overshadowed by Brooks' strong outings, Pauli has quietly had an excellent season for the Big Red.

Pauli has been the second Husker runner to cross the finish line in three races this season.

Her best showing came when NU needed

it the most. NU went to the National Invitational without its star runner, Brooks. Pauli responded with a career best 5,000 meter time at 17 minutes and 54 seconds to place ninth.

Brooks, a senior and native of Preston, England, has led Nebraska in every race she has run this season.

This is the first and last year as a Husker for Brooks. Brooks graduated from Lancaster University in Europe and is using her last year of eligibility at NU.

Brooks' up-front running has sparked success for the team.

Pauli was happy about obtaining Brooks' services.

"It's awesome to have her on the team because we have someone in front," Pauli said.

Brooks' resume consists of many individual awards from the other side of the pond, but she admits that the competition in the States is more challenging.

"The races are faster, and there is more depth," Brooks said.

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Decrease in game population continues

BY DAVID DIEHL
Staff writer

This Saturday, outdoorsmen clad in blaze orange vests and caps will meander through field after open field in search of hunting the almighty pheasant.

Pheasant season officially opens one half-hour before sunrise Saturday morning and runs until a half hour after sunrise Jan. 31, 2000.

But the bad news is hunters may encounter some trouble finding pheasants this season, as they have in seasons past.

Populations for pheasants and most other upland game are down, according to Scott Taylor, Upland Game program manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Taylor says there are not nearly as many birds today as there were 20 to 30 years ago, and that pheasant numbers have stood below average for the last decade.

Taylor provides the human population expansion as reason for the long-term decrease.

"Basically, the driving force behind the pheasant decline has been loss of habitat," Taylor said.

"As crop production has become more intense, we've lost habitat."

As for the recent populations being below normal, blame that on Mother Nature, Taylor said.

"We've had wetter-than-average springs than what is conducive to breeding," Taylor said, and that has hurt the pheasant and other upland populations.

Freshman veterinary science major Ross Nantkes is an avid outdoorsman and has heard about the low numbers of pheasants from farmers in the Seward area, where he does most of his hunting.

"(Farmers) all said that they hadn't seen that many birds during harvest," he said.

Nantkes said that even though the likelihood of taking as many birds this Saturday isn't as high as it's been in the past, there's still something to be said for just being in the outdoors.

"It's more to be out there," Nantkes said,

"...the driving force behind the pheasant decline has been loss of habitat."

SCOTT TAYLOR

upland game program manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

"and not trapped in a dorm room."

The G&P is currently working to increase pheasant populations.

Working with legislation such as the Farm Bill, and, according to Taylor, "making it as wildlife friendly as possible," is one way the commission is trying to increase the number of birds. It is also working with the private sector, getting assistance from farmers and land owners who help with technical assistance and providing and creating habitat.