

Recruits sign with NU squads

From staff reports

Several Cornhusker teams picked up recruits Wednesday and Thursday as the winter signing day commenced for several sports.

The Nebraska wrestling team picked up three signees Thursday, including Travis Pascoe, a future 184-pounder for NU who has a 99-6 career record entering this season.

"Pascoe is one of the top five recruits in the country regardless of weight class," Coach Tim Neumann said. "He is going to have a senior year where he will be high school national champion and a junior national champion."

Travis Shufelt, likely a 149-pounder, and George Kirgan, projected as a 174-pounder, rounded out the class.

In softball, NU officially signed possibly its most significant recruit ever in Papillion-LaVista pitcher Peaches James. James had a 0.04

earned run average this season, winning 79 of 85 games and striking out 852 batters over three years. Papillion has won five straight national titles, four with James. She will enter NU just as ace Jenny Voss is graduating.

In women's basketball, Coach Paul Sanderford signed these players: Grand Island Central Catholic High School guard K.C. Cowgill, forward Shannon Howell of Playa Del Rey, Calif., and Alexa Johnson of Los Angeles. Sanderford also has a scholarship available next season for forward Greichaly Cepero, who currently plays for the NU volleyball team.

The Husker baseball team signed two pitchers, Mike Sillman of Millard South and Jason Burch of Papillion. Nebraska lost out on 6-foot-9 pitcher Kyle Bakker from Millard West High School, as he signed with Georgia Tech. Bakker will likely be taken in the first three rounds of the upcoming Major League Baseball draft in June.

NU welcomes lowly ISU to Coliseum

BY JOHN GASKINS
Staff writer

Poor Iowa State. The Nebraska Coliseum is probably last on the list of places the Cyclone volleyball team would like to be this weekend. But that's where they will be tomorrow night at 7, taking on a red-hot, 12th-ranked Husker team riding a five-match winning streak.

Combine that fact with the way ISU played NU in Ames a month ago, and things could get ugly.

The Huskers bulldozed the Cyclones in three games — 15-0, 15-2, 15-0 — on Oct. 6. The two points were the least scored ever on a Nebraska team in school history.

With that victory, NU started an 11-match stretch that has seen it crawl back to taking sole possession of first place in the Big 12 standings. Thanks to its four-game drubbing of No. 22 Colorado on Wednesday, the Huskers sit 12-3 — one match ahead of Texas, Kansas State and Texas A&M — with five matches left.

In those 11 matches, the Huskers have won 10 matches, 32 out of 38 games, and have hit .292 — a vast improvement from their .235 hitting percentage in their first 14 matches.

Head Coach Terry Pettit has noticed an extra spring in the step of some of his players during the run.

"They're much more consistent," Pettit said. "Their decision-making is better and quicker. We're much less likely to have people run points on us, because they'll recognize what happened. They have a great deal more confidence."

Pettit wasn't talking about the much-improved play of left-side hitter Angie Oxley — hitting .353 the last 10

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JILL MCWILLIAMS
NU co-captain

matches — or the continued dominance of All-American right-side hitter Nancy Meendering. He was talking about the people setting these attackers — junior co-captain Jill McWilliams and freshman Lindsay Wischmeier.

After getting off to a rocky start in the new 6-2 offense, the "quarterbacks" of the volleyball team are seeing nearly equal playing time and setting much cleaner attacks for the hitters. Normally, NU has one dominant setter on the court the whole match in a 5-1 set.

But McWilliams, who was originally going to be NU's setter in the 5-1, said there are advantages to rotating in and out, and such advantages are what have put the Huskers back on top.

"At first it was kind of weird coming off the bench cold," McWilliams said. "But I think it helps to come out and be able to evaluate the situation with the coaches."

"If nothing, we've added a little more to our offense. I've been thinking how hard it would be to prepare for our team. It'd be really hard to defend."

UM Coach wary of Huskers

■ Minnesota has played top teams each of the last three years and have lost two straight to NU.

BY BROCK WENDLANDT
Staff writer

The Minnesota soccer program has plenty of College Cup experience heading into Sunday's 1 p.m. match-up with No. 4 Nebraska at the Abbott Sports Complex.

But it isn't the type of experience where the Golden Gophers received high rankings or hung banners.

Instead, UM (13-8-0 overall and 6-4-0 in the Big Ten) has been a stepping stone on the paths of previous College Cup teams. The Gophers have appeared in five straight NCAA tournaments — losing to eventual final four participants Portland and Santa Clara in the second round the previous two seasons.

Considering UM has yet to make it past the second round, it might be an ominous sign that they are facing the Cornhuskers Sunday. But Head Coach Sue Montagne isn't concerned about history as her team prepares for

top-four seeded NU.

Referring to the early match-up with NU, Montagne said: "That's just the way it goes. We didn't have the type of season we thought we could have, and we know that we are ultimately the ones who control our fate."

The Gophers are led by All-Big 10 first team selection Juli Montgomery on defense and second team selections Nicole Lee and Laurie Seidl on offense.

Montgomery, a sophomore, anchors a Gopher defense that recorded ten shutouts this season. Seidl, a junior, leads the team in assists with 12.

UM, which has won Big 10 titles in 1995 and 1997, finished fourth in the conference this season.

While the result was disappointing, Montagne said, each game has been a learning experience for a team that starts several young players.

"Our season has been a rollercoaster," Montagne said. "We've had so many ups and downs, and it has taken us a while to gel. But considering our play lately, I think our team knows what it takes to win."

The Gophers defeated Eastern Michigan 2-0 Wednesday night, but its play in the Big 10 Tournament is what Montagne is excited about.

"We didn't have the type of season we wanted to have."

SUE MONTAGNE
UM soccer coach

In the tournament, UM lost 2-1 to No. 6 Penn State in the semifinals. The close game was a stark contrast from the 4-0 defeat it suffered during the regular season to the Nittany Lions.

"Playing Penn State the way we did was a big confidence builder," Montagne said.

"Having the opposing coach (Penn State's Patrick Farmer) tell you that you deserved to win in a game like that was a big compliment."

The game with NU, Montagne said, will be much like playing Penn State. Both teams are very athletic, fast and strong.

But Montagne cautioned against comparing the two teams too much.

"The Nebraska game will be like playing Penn State when Penn State is at their very best," she said.

Aikman fights concussion woes

IRVING, Texas (AP) — Troy Aikman used to be flattered by comparisons to Roger Staubach and Steve Young. These days, the comparisons aren't complimentary.

Since suffering his second concussion in as many weeks — the seventh in his NFL career and ninth in his life — Aikman has been reminded often that an accumulation of head injuries convinced Staubach to retire and that Young is being advised to do the same.

Staubach walked away after 11 seasons in Dallas. This is Aikman's 11th season in Dallas.

Among those leading the calls for Young to retire is agent Leigh Steinberg. Steinberg is also Aikman's agent.

"It's completely fair and logical to make the comparisons," Aikman said Wednesday. "But I think it would be unfair to think what's good for one is necessarily good for the other."

"I'm trying to make it very clear that at this time I'm not considering walking away from the game. I still feel like I have years in me and can continue to play."

All that's been decided so far is that Aikman will not play Sunday when the Cowboys (4-4) face the Green Bay Packers at Texas Stadium. It'll be the first time in his career he's missed a game because of a concus-

sion.

He'll decide next week whether his head is clear enough to suit up that Sunday — his 33rd birthday — against the Cardinals in Arizona. Four days later, Dallas plays Miami at home on Thanksgiving.

"I'm hopeful that it will just be one game," he said. "But it's not something that I or our doctors want to rush."

Aikman said it would be wrong for him to even speculate how long he'll be out. An MRI taken Tuesday came out fine, and more tests are planned for later this week.

"I'm not trying to be cavalier in my approach," Aikman said. "The thing that's difficult is that it's not like they say, 'You have a torn ACL in your knee, and you're going to be out this amount of time.'"

"The thing you have to balance is how you feel and what you feel the long-term effects are going to be. Even though this has happened back-to-back, these are not considerations that just came up this week."

"They've been issues in the past for me, and I feel I've been responsible with the decisions I've made, and I'll continue to do so."

The Cowboys, losers of four of five, will also be without Emmitt Smith and Michael Irvin when they face the Packers. Dallas hasn't been

without all three since Smith was drafted in 1990.

Smith had a plate and screws inserted into his right hand Tuesday to repair a broken bone. He's still expected to be out 2-to-5 weeks. There's no telling when or if Irvin will return from a spinal cord injury.

Aikman took a helmet-to-helmet smack from Indianapolis' Jeff Burris two games ago. Although it wasn't initially ruled a concussion, Aikman said, it is now.

That became obvious Monday night when a less-violent tackle by Minnesota's Jerry Ball also left Aikman with a concussion. A second one in eight days can do more damage because the brain hasn't fully healed from the first.

"The headaches are probably about the same," said Aikman, who doesn't remember being sacked by Ball. "Some of the dizziness and uneasiness is something I didn't experience last week."

Even in hindsight, Aikman doesn't regret playing the Vikings.

"I think the decision to play against Minnesota was an informed decision, and I think it was the right decision," Aikman said. "If I was to have another one and two days prior to a game I felt fine and ready to play, I would do that."

Fans can pick seats at Nebraska game Sunday

From staff reports

Five days before its opening season game, the Nebraska women's basketball team will get its second exhibition tuneup of the year against Russia on Sunday, Nov. 14.

The game has been moved from its

original starting time of 2:05 p.m. to 7:05 p.m. to accommodate the Nebraska soccer team's first round match in the NCAA Tournament.

The Russian contest will serve as season ticket night for NU fans, as they can come to the game and pick out their seats for the upcoming season. So far this season, the Huskers

have sold 1,700 season tickets in the newly remodeled Bob Devaney Sports Center, which has HuskerVision screens and a new concourse for concessions.

The Huskers rolled in their first exhibition game with a 102-50 win over Arvi Verintas — a Lithuanian team.

Nebraska not looking past Minnesota's possible threat

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bined margin of 12-1, while Minnesota lost at ISU 1-0 and 2-0 to UK.

NU is 8-1-1 vs. ranked teams, while UM is 0-7 against top-25 opponents.

The Gophers also boast a strong defensive unit, led by goalkeeper Dana Larson, with nine shut-outs. UM's offense hasn't been as dominant

ing this season, scoring fewer than two goals a game.

Nebraska is strong on both offense and defense.

Sophomore midfielder Meghan Anderson leads the team in scoring with 48 points on 19 goals and 10 assists, and defender Sharolta Nonen was named Big 12 Player of the Year. Eight players on the squad received Big 12 Conference recognition.

Coach John Walker said this may

be the best team, top to bottom, he's ever had at Nebraska.

"Our depth is tremendous," said Walker, who was named Big 12 Conference Coach of the Year. "We've never had the balance that we've had this year. It seems like someone different makes a big contribution each game."

The home field advantage should pay dividends for Nebraska. The Huskers are riding a 14-game win-

ning streak at the Abbott Sports Complex, and they own a 54-4-1 all-time record at home. That includes a 4-0 postseason record on the field.

Nonen, for one, said she is more confident when NU plays at home.

"I think it will be an advantage to stay at home," Nonen said. "This is what we were hoping for and what we worked so hard for all season."

While NU appears to have a strong chance of going far this post-

season, Walker doesn't think Nebraska will overlook Minnesota.

"I think our team is confident but not overconfident," Walker said. "When you go back and look at our 22 games this season in terms of us being flat, it has only happened twice, at Clemson and Texas Tech. I'm confident that because of what we have done this season that we won't get away from the qualities that have made us successful this season."