Minnesota starts strong, can't maintain

BY BROCK WENDLANDT
Staff writer

Minnesota Soccer Coach Sue Montagne had been in this position before.

In previous years, her Golden Gophers had twice traveled to Lincoln in November only to be met with winter conditions and dismal results. The most memorable was a 1996 NCAA game when Nebraska pulled out a mud-caked 3-2 quadruple overtime win on a cold, sloppy Abbott Sports Complex field.

But with the temperatures well above freezing and the sun luminous in the sky, it appeared even Mother Nature was ready for a different outcome for the Gophers on Sunday. And for the first 10 minutes of the match, UM also looked poised for the change.

Senior midfielder Jamie O'Gara gave the Gophers their best chance at a scoring opportunity when she took a thrown ball from senior forward Nicole Lee and struck a shot that was kick-saved by Cornhusker goalie Karina LeBlanc. O'Gara rebounded the save and sent another shot wide of the goal.

The early advantage, Montagne said, would have been instrumental for a UM win.

"If we would have gotten an early goal," she said, "it might have been a different game. Nebraska is one of those teams that picks up speed when they get a goal and just keeps going and going."

Montagne said the Gophers, who are normally a possession-oriented team, were looking to change their strategy and serve many long balls on the Huskers. She wanted them to play their passing game with one and two touches to utilize team speed.

"We knew our forwards could run with their defenders," she said, "and we were also ready to win a lot of balls."

Lee said that although the goal was to pressure NU up front, the Huskers had talent to counter.

> *"Their defenders are probably some of the best we've gone against this season."*
>
> NICOLE LEE
> Minnesota senior forward, on Huskers

"Their defenders are probably some of the best we've gone against this season," she said.

With strong defensive play and by pouring on five goals, the Huskers provided UM their third straight second-round NCAA exit.

The result left Montagne with this question: How can her team, who met the same chilling fate in 1996, change its fortune of traveling to NCAA destinations in November and falling short?

The simple answer: "We have to do the job during the season," she said.

NU gets revenge on K-State

HUSKERS from page 8

Head Coach Frank Solich said. "And we were able to mix in some throws."

But Nebraska's defense supplied the offense with good field position most of the day. It harassed Wildcat quarterbacks Jonathan Beasley and Adam Helm into completing only eight of 32 passes for 142 yards. Many of Beasley's 16 incompletions were so off the mark that it seemed K-State receivers were wide open, as Husker defensive backs chased the ball.

"Some of that is us getting pressure on Beasley," Nebraska defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said. "And some of that, obviously, is just Beasley having a bad day. But our pressure got to both of them."

In all, the NU defense forced five turnovers, including one interception. It allowed only 234 total yards.

Nebraska fumbled an astonishing 10 times itself – a team record – but lost only three. Still, fumbles by Alexander and No. 2 I-back Correll Buckhalter may have cost them their jobs, as No. 3 I-back Dahrran Diedrick filled in nicely with 14 carries for 93 yards.

"It was that many?" Solich asked when told the number of fumbles. "That's rough there. That certainly doesn't help us."

Especially when NU fumbled at the KSU 1-yard line ahead 7-0. But Nebraska special teams dynamo Randy Stella blocked a punt to give the Huskers a safety and a 9-0 lead. NU then scored on the ensuing possession to go ahead 16-0. The Wildcats never got closer than 10 after that.

That didn't mean Nebraska wasn't worried with the 15-point cushion. K-State is traditionally a second-half team and had the ball to start the final 30 minutes. Despite good field position, nothing ever materialized. Once, KSU Coach Bill Snyder tried a fake punt at midfield that was snuffed out by Husker senior Greg List. It seemed to signal an end to any chances the Cats might have had.

"We knew they were a second-half team," Ralph Brown said. "And that's something we harped on at halftime. When we came out and established ourselves, it was almost like they felt they had no shot."

Nebraska added a field goal and two touchdowns – a 46-yard run from Diedrick and an Eric Johnson 15-yard fumble return – to cap NU's scoring. Kansas State got itself a late touchdown, as well, as the second resembled stop-and-go, rush-hour traffic, as opposed to the frantic mad dash of last year's game.

It made the Huskers look all the better. With a win over Colorado, NU would earn its rematch against Texas in the Big 12 Championship. Win there, and it might be a trip to New Orleans for the Sugar Bowl and the national championship, which few would have predicted three weeks ago.

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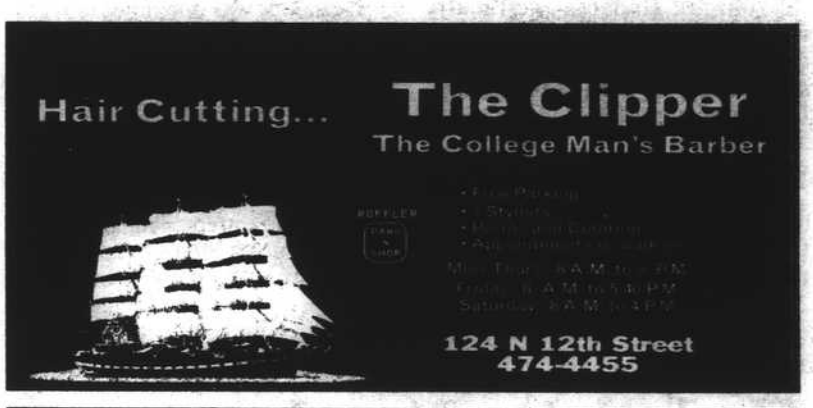
>
> RALPH BROWN
> NU cornerback

This Saturday's Florida-Florida State game, along with the Southeastern Conference Championship, in which Florida will play, will go a long way toward determining whether NU can make a title run. Solich won't concede anything, but post-game interviews proved he was thinking about it.

"I'll see where this game plays into it when the voters vote and they tabulate it all," he said. Hopefully, the system will put the two best teams in the national championship game, whoever that might be."

After Saturday, it be the Huskers.



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Cornhusker Yearbook
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Huskers roll over Iowa State

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON
Staff writer

Iowa State proved to be little more than a light scrimmage for the Nebraska volleyball team Saturday night.

The Huskers had no trouble in a 15-2, 15-4, 15-5 waltz over the conference cellar-dwelling Cyclones at the NU Coliseum.

NU took only 68 minutes to improve to 21-5 overall and 13-3 in the Big 12 Conference, good for first.

Fourteen players found their way onto the floor for the Big Red, as Pettit used the mismatch as an opportunity to garnish some game experience for those who have not seen much action this year.

Still, middle blocker Jenny Kropp said it wasn't hard for Nebraska to stay fired up, and her 11 team-leading kills and .600 hitting percentage were the fuel of that fire.

"We go out there and try to kill them, basically," Kropp said. "We want to let them score no points."

> *"We go out there and try to kill them, basically."*
>
> JENNY KROPP
> NU middle blocker

Iowa State did score a few, but never was the game in doubt, and Pettit was pleased with the performance of his team.

"I thought we were pretty alert after giving the team some time off this week," Pettit said. "They had their legs tonight."

The Cyclones were stuck in neutral all match long, finishing with a .000 hitting percentage. ISU is still looking for its first conference win.

"We can't match Nebraska point for point," Iowa State Coach Linda Grensing said. "I think it's a matter of who's going to have good nights for them, 'cause there are too many good players,"

Nebraska players had to be their own worst critics after the match,

Greichaly Cepero tallied eight kills and had a .583 hitting percentage and still plucked out negatives in the Huskers' performance.

"These games you know you're going to win, you're not going to be satisfied if you don't work on the fundamentals for bigger games," Cepero said. "I don't think we did as well on those little things tonight."

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Cross country title hopes up in air

■ **Third-place** finish puts women's fate in hands of NCAA committee.

From Staff Reports

The future of the Nebraska women's cross country season is now in the hands of an NCAA selection committee.

On Saturday, the Huskers, led by senior Michelle Brooks, just missed an automatic birth into the NCAA Championships by placing third. They needed second.

Brooks had a season-high seventh-place finish in 17 minutes and 19 seconds at the Midwest Regional Championship in Savoy, Ill. Senior Jaime Pauli had a career best time of 17:35, placing 11th.

Since the Cornhuskers missed the automatic bid by one spot, NU will be in contention for one of the 13 at-large bids into the NCAA championships, which will be held Nov. 22.

The men's season came to a conclusion Saturday, placing seventh. The young Huskers were led once again by junior Marcus Witter. Witter ran the 10,000-meter course in 31:09, good enough for 11th place. Aaron Carrizales was the next Cornhusker to finish, placing 26th in 31:37.

The women's team will find out about the fate of its season sometime this week.