

# Nee hopes cobwebs are gone for opener

By JOSHUA CAMENZIND  
Staff writer

The Nebraska basketball team took its share of licks while going 1-1 through two exhibition games, but it hopes to start off on the right foot tonight when the Huskers face Eastern Illinois at 7 at the Devaney Center.

Questions still abound as to the state of the team, but those must be thrown aside while NU defends its homecourt for the first meaningful game of the season.

"We are really excited," guard Cary Cochran said. "We have not had two good showings yet. We have played below our potential twice."

Two areas of concern still nag the Huskers: suspect defense and turnovers. Coach Danny Nee said

those areas will improve in the next weeks.

"Turnovers, executing the offense, playing good transition defense — the things that concern all coaches at this time of the year," Nee said. "We have been working on fundamentals, but it is time to play. We have had enough time. We will improve with game situations; I just hope we have enough quality minutes to win some games."

While game problems can be worked out through teaching and learning, the Huskers have one problem that will seem to go away only with time — Cookie Belcher's wrist.

The ongoing saga of Belcher's status for the season continues, and Nee said the team will make a decision after the Minnesota game. Belcher has said that Dec. 31 will be the date he decides whether or not to redshirt this

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DANNY NEE  
Nebraska basketball coach

season.

Nee said Belcher is the "best defensive player I have ever had" and that the team has one big blemish right now — not having him in the lineup.

"He played on the white team (in practice)," Nee said. "He is on the enemy now. We are going without him. He really raises the level of practice on the scout team. He steps across and makes us better."

Without Belcher, the two guard spots have been plagued by turnover problems through the first two games. Nee said a combination of things will be needed to remedy the problems.

"(It will take) repetition, really defining the combos that will play together," Nee said. "Limiting the combinations to what we think is the best chemistry and most successful. And then talking to the players about it, showing them on film and emphasizing what we are trying to do."

# NU to face improved Colorado

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ered offense, which was in top gear in its last two games against Texas A&M and Kansas State.

"It will be a huge challenge," Barnett said. "They do everything almost perfectly."

Despite that near perfection, NU has struggled with Colorado the last decade. The Huskers are 7-2-1 in the last 10 encounters, but four of those wins were by five points or less.

One of the first things Barnett did when arriving in Boulder was to reiterate Bill McCartney's philosophy of designating NU as CU's rival.

On his weekly Big 12 teleconference Monday, Barnett talked about how he used to watch the CU-NU game each Thanksgiving and wish he were a part of it.


Barnett now has his wish.

"We are really looking forward to it," said Barnett, whose team has compiled a 6-4 and 5-2 record in the Big 12 this season. "Our players are. Our community is."

The Huskers also are looking forward to it, especially the defensive backs, Keyuo Craver said. The Buffaloes' offense averages 34 pass attempts per game, which should give NU's secondary ample attempts to pick off Mike Moschetti. But it also means they will have constant pressure on them to stay with receivers Javon Green and Marcus Stiggers.

"This is going to be a challenge to us," Craver said. "We like challenges and look forward to going there."

**Happy Birthday**



**Jimmy Hynes**  
Enjoy it with the turkeys!

# NU women face tough road test

■ Montana, which just opened a new arena, should be a challenge to beat.

By JOHN GASKINS  
Staff writer

It's safe to say the Nebraska women's basketball team's loss to Wisconsin on Sunday didn't exactly help the Cornhuskers in the momentum department.

Coach Paul Sanderford was looking for a solid victory against the relentless Badgers so the Huskers would be riding a wave heading into Friday's 8:05 p.m. matchup at Montana. Instead, Wisconsin wiped out NU and left the Devaney Center as the third team to beat Sanderford at home in three years.

It left Sanderford slightly pessimistic about playing the Lady Griz coming off a loss.

"This hurts us to lose a game this early at home," Sanderford said. "We've never come close to that before. I don't know how that feels. Plus, now we've got to go on the road

"It's only the second game of the season. I'm not throwing in the towel."

PAUL SANDERFORD  
NU women's basketball coach

and play a good Montana team in Missoula, Mont., where it is almost impossible to win."

The Huskers will be the second team to grace the confines of the brand new 7,500-seat Adams Center. Montana downed Idaho, 79-62, in the arena's debut. UMT's program is one that Sanderford would like to see NU become — a pillar of consistent winning.

Last year's injury-plagued, 12-16 squad was Coach Robin Selvig's first to have a losing season in his 21 years at the helm. Montana is a consistent 20-game winner (18 times), Big Sky Conference Champion (13 times) and NCAA Tournament competitor (13 times).

Sanderford was clearly disgusted

with NU's performance Sunday and pointed out plenty of statistics in one department NU has floundered in — turnovers. The Huskers had 32 of them Sunday and averaged 27.5 per game in the first two games, and opponents averaged 15 steals.

On the bright side, NU has grabbed an average 14.5 steals and caused an average of 30 turnovers. That, plus NU is averaging 99 points per game and is outshooting opponents 53 percent to 44 percent, which left Sanderford with a shred of optimism.

"We learned a lot (Sunday)," Sanderford said. "It's only the second game of the season. I'm not throwing in the towel. I still think we're going to be a pretty good basketball team."

# Huskers, UT lock up in key matchup

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"It doesn't get any better than this," Monson said. "It's just as an exciting time to play them. This is why you play college volleyball."

NU (23-5 overall) is currently in first place at 15-3 in Big 12 play, while UT (20-6) sits one game back in second at 14-4, tied with Texas A&M (23-5). If both NU and UT win Wednesday, Saturday's match will decide who will be crowned conference king.

The Huskers own that distinction right now, having won two of the past three Big 12 titles, including last season's, when they went 19-1 and edged the Longhorns by one match. Texas won the conference's only other championship in 1997.

It's a critical match and a big rivalry for NU Coach Terry Pettit, who is 13-11 against Texas, also the team he beat in the national title game in 1995.

"It's a great opportunity for these women," Pettit said. "It's what you hope happens in college sports — to play a great opponent with everything on the line. I think it's a tremendous set-up for an NCAA Tournament match for us."

The revenge factor doesn't hurt either. Texas defeated Nebraska 15-13 in the fifth game in Austin on Oct. 23 to take over first place and put NU two games back. UT's Erin Aldrich (32 kills) and Kelly Tilson (31 kills) used career-high nights to shut down NU.

Since then, the Huskers have won eight-straight matches while the Longhorns have gone 5-3. Since UT hit .270 in the first match, NU has risen to the top of the conference in defense, allowing opponents to hit just .125 for the season.

"We're a much, much better team than we were in that match," Monson said confidently. "It's an exciting match because when we beat Texas, it will give us a great seed in the tournament."



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