

Huskies hope to test UT

■ Kimani Ffriend and Steffon Bradford look to stack up against Texas' Chris Mihm and Gabe Muoneke Tuesday.

By Joshua Camenzind

Staff writer

On paper, the frontcourt matchups in tonight's 8 o'clock game between Nebraska and No. 17 Texas look to be even.

But Husker Coach Danny Nee was quick to point out one discrepancy that the statistics do not show.

"Chris Mihm and Gabe Muoneke against Kimani (Ffriend) and Steffon (Bradford) look real great," Nee said. "Except they both have four years of experience and my guys are into their about 16th game. I think in about the middle of the game that will show up."

Nee described the Longhorn post players as two of the best combinations in the country with Mihm and Muoneke averaging a combined 31.8 points and 16.4 rebounds per game.

In comparison, Ffriend and Bradford are averaging 25 and 17.4 respectively.

Ffriend, coming off his second straight Big 12 Rookie of the Week selection, said he will have to have a big game

for NU to win in Austin, Texas.

"I am very confident that I am going to give a good show against Chris Mihm," said Ffriend, who has tended to play better against tougher foes.

Ffriend said with NU's 2-3 record in the Big 12, it needed the victory over Texas to be a force in the conference.

The deciding factor in the game might be UT's bench, which includes solid contributors in Chris Owens and Darren Kelly. Owens and Kelly are averaging 10.2 and 9.2 points, respectively. NU will look to combat the two with the solid bench play of Cary Cochran and Louis Truscott.

Cochran has shot 3-pointers at 54 percent in his last six games and played what Nee described as "his best game ever at NU" with eight points and eight assists vs. Baylor.

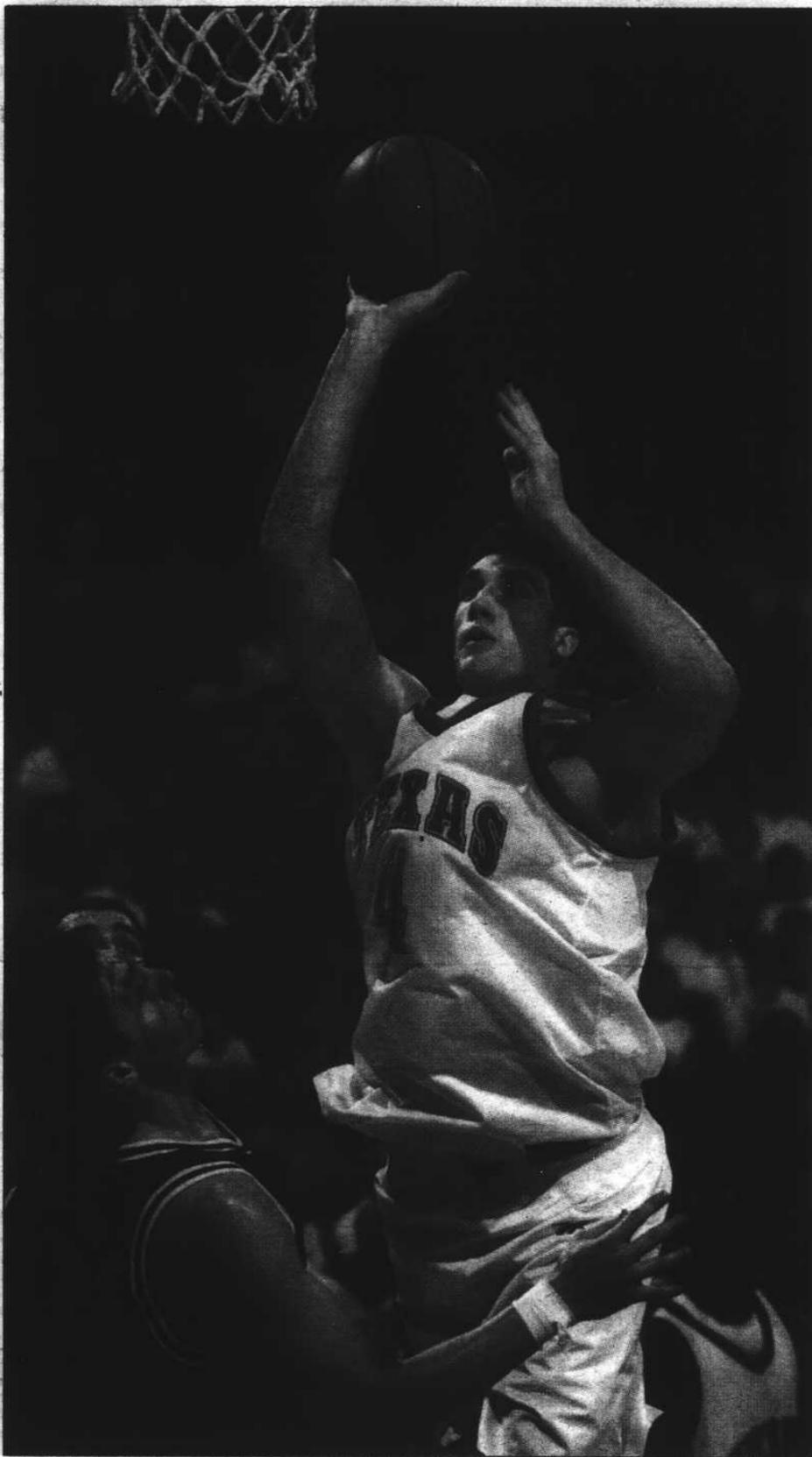
While Cochran has shined in Big 12 play, other Huskers have struggled.

Point guard Danny Walker has struggled shooting, while forward Larry Florence continues to be stuck in a slump that has haunted him throughout the conference season.

Walker, who was recruited by Texas last season while at Compton (Calif.) Community College, said he feels it is time for he and Florence to break out.

"Everything is coming together offensively," Walker said. "Larry is in his funk, but he hit some shots last game, and I think he is going to come out of it."

Nee realizes that if his team is going to reach .500 in conference play and match its longest winning streak of the season with a victory over Texas, it will have to play better than in earlier showings on the road.



CHRIS MIHM will present a stiff task for the NU frontcourt as the Huskers face No. 16 Texas tonight in Austin. NU is looking to extend its winning streak to three games in Big 12 Conference play.

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— FOOTBALL — Huskies' training begins

By Brandon Schulte

Staff writer

After a 12-1 campaign in 1999, many Nebraska football fans are already itching to get the season underway.

And so are the players, 22 days after a 31-21 win over Tennessee in the Fiesta Bowl.

There is no rest for the weary as the Cornhusker football team is

back at work.

Nebraska started winter conditioning on Monday. For the next six weeks, the team will take the first steps to improve on its No. 3 national finish last season.

Boyd Epley, Nebraska's director of athletic performance, said this is one of the few times of the year that the athletes get bigger, stronger and faster.

"This is the time of the year to make physical improvements," Epley said. "Spring is an evaluation period, and the fall is not a time for us to have development. So winter and summer are the two key periods for us to improve the athletes."

"The goal really hasn't changed. We're trying to improve lean body mass — put a bigger engine in the same size of car."

To ensure maximum physical development of each player, the players are divided into four corners, or groups, with other players who play similar positions and have the same goals.

Once cordoned off into appropriate groups, the equipment and training is specialized to that group's needs. Supervisors are assigned to monitor each specialized group.

Though the programs are the same at the beginning for the entire group, they are eventually tailored to each player, Epley said.

"We start out by trying to write a program for the group, but it ends up being modified," he said. "Just

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— SPORTS OPINION —

Injury puts aside promising season for NU's Jones



Samuel McKewon

Stephanie Jones allowed herself about 10 minutes to feel the unfairness of the world bearing down on her — and the pain bearing down on her left knee, the victim of an anterior cruciate ligament tear.

Then, the Nebraska forward let it go.

It was just as well; her freshman season for the Cornhuskers, which

had started out with so much promise, had come to an abrupt end in a Dec. 12 game against Creighton.

"Ten minutes was all I gave myself to feel bad because things happen for a reason," Jones said. "It's not going to kill me, even though I think it's going to sometimes."

"Bad things happen to everybody." And sooner or later, injuries catch up with nearly every athlete. For 13 years, Jones had escaped any major harm to her body — nothing that ever kept her out of the three sports she played year-round.

"I had mono once in freshman year of high school," Jones said. "That's about it."

Karma bit back in a big way earlier this season.

It couldn't have come at a more inopportune time for Jones. On repu-

tation alone, there was no bigger freshman signing than hers in NU hoops' history — men's or women's. Jones turned down NCAA runner-up Duke and current No. 1 Connecticut to come to Lincoln.

The 6-foot-2 native of Omaha was starting to feel comfortable in the flow of the college game, averaging 5.6 points and 4.0 rebounds a contest. She was, and continues to be, the only freshman who had started a game for NU this season.

Jones' tallied high marks became a key part of Nebraska's trapping defense. She had a good shot at Big 12 Freshman of the Year.

And then came the injury, after Jones had played only 54 seconds of NU's 77-69 win over the Bluejays.

Because the injury came in the seventh game of the season, Jones is

in jeopardy of losing her entire year of eligibility. NU needs to play 31 games for Jones to get it back for sure.

The Cornhuskers are scheduled for 27. That means Nebraska has to make a strong run in the Big 12 or NCAA Tournament for Jones to feel safe — if not, her chances of getting the year stand at 50-50.

"It was just the whole thing," Jones said. "I was in the seventh game, I was just getting my starting position — all these things that Coach (Paul Sanderford) had talked up about me — I had them. And now they're gone."

So instead of practicing with the team, Jones rehabilitates her knee. An ankle injury in her left foot was taken care of along with the knee surgery, so she just got out of her cast last Thursday. Before then, Jones hopped

around on one foot and shot baskets.

Her rehab schedule requires her to be a morning person — she works on her knee from 7-8 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, then heads off to class.

In one of her range-of-motion exercises, Jones lies on a padded table, stares up at a ceiling and moves her leg up, down, up, down. As a spectator sport, it ranks only slightly above watching grass grow.

And doing it isn't much fun, either.

"It's frustrating because I've never had to deal with this," Jones said. "I've never had anyone tell me I couldn't play or that I wasn't able to. Thirteen years out of your life is sports, you play three sports in high school, every

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