

# Gaskins: Sanderford helped Fennelly get job; now he wants to beat coach

GASKINS from page 16

matter how good NU was, and was the program Osborne wanted Nebraska to be.

The centerfold was obviously another clear reminder to Sanderford about what he has to compete against, what he wants his program to live up to and why he is just a little more on the edge this week than others (according to his players).

For this is Iowa State week. The Huskers and Cyclones will square off at the Devaney Center tonight in a rematch of ISU's 89-66 smattering of NU in Ames three weeks ago. It's also a rematch of NU's triumphant 68-67 thriller at the Devaney over ISU in front of 13,135 fans - the

largest Big 12 crowd ever.

It also happens to come at a time when NU is 5-2 - two games away from first place and one game behind Iowa State in the Big 12 standings - and riding a four game winning streak, dating back to the ISU loss. At 11-7, NU needs quality wins for an NCAA Tournament berth.

To boot, Iowa State is coming off its first Big 12 loss, Saturday at Kansas, a place where NU won.

But it's more than that. This is a game about two programs with few differences and two extremely driven coaches. While Sanderford, in his third year, is in the process of turning NU into a national power, ISU Coach Bill Fennelly has already done so in five.

Fennelly has also become the dar-

ling of Ames, the Big 12, heck, NCAA women's basketball - the author behind the feel-good story of the year. A local hero living in the dream world he created and built.

And you wonder - how much does this make Sanderford stew? Sanderford was supposed to be the Fennelly of Nebraska, and he might be. But you wonder how much watching Fennelly rise to the top makes the "Bear" growl.

After all, Sanderford helped Fennelly land his dream gig by recommending the former Toledo coach to ISU's athletic department, saying he was "heads and tails" better than the three other candidates.

You also wonder - is Sanderford even more torqued up for this game because of all this?

"He's nervous, and the veterans know it," NU senior guard Brooke Schwartz said. "He tries to hide it but he can't hide it real well."

"This is a big game for him. People see what Fennelly has done for ISU and they need to see what Sanderford's done for Nebraska. This is a game that would help take the limelight from Fennelly and Iowa State and give it to where it deserves to be. The players want to win it as much for him as ourselves, to show him how much we appreciate all he's done for the program."

Schwartz rarely minces words and neither does Sanderford. But while Schwartz called a game against ISU the "greatest game a player at Nebraska can play," Sanderford, looking down at the centerfold, refused to say this is any bigger deal than any other.

"I don't think about that," Sanderford said. "I know you guys don't believe this, but we're taking this one game at a time."

OK Coach, but don't you realize the game is on television, that thousands of people will be there and that maybe a must-get, program-making guard from South Sioux City named Katie Robinette - who's teetering on NU and ISU right now - might be watching?

"If somebody won't come here because we win or lose a certain game, they don't have the substance I want," Sanderford said.

But Sanderford was more defensive, showed a lot more conviction and aggression, and was just flat out dozens of pulses faster than the way he usually interviews on the eve of a game.

He got especially passionate when defending his program, and he's not in great awe of Fennelly's empire. He believes NU is just an All-American (like ISU's Stacy Frese) and a couple of home NCAA Tournament games (like ISU used to draw that loyal fan base) away from building his own empire.

"I built a program a long time before Iowa State had a program," said Sanderford, who guided Western Kentucky to two Final Fours in 15 years before coming to NU.

"I'm happy for Bill and ISU. They've worked hard and deserve the

support they are getting. It's good for the game. We went there three weeks ago and it was a great atmosphere for basketball. That's what it's all about."

"But what people don't remember is, I was in that for 10 years, 15 years (at WKU). Are we trying to get to where they're at? Yes. But what you have to remember is, Bill's been at Iowa State two years longer than I've been here."

"He's going to find out what it's like being the hunted instead of the hunter. He's finding out right now as we speak. He's going to find out what life will be like without Stacy Frese."

Both Schwartz and Sanderford said the rivalry between ISU and NU is one in which the two teams show deep respect for one another.

But Schwartz said what Sanderford wouldn't - that tonight's game means a lot to the Bear. That this is a Fennelly vs. Sanderford matchup as much as it is a Nebraska-Iowa State matchup.

And rest assured, Sanderford might be growling a little bit louder on the bench tonight than usual. He has too much pride in himself or his program not to. In essence, it's his forum to show the world of women's basketball that his empire is getting just as big as Fennelly's.

"I love the people I'm working with at Nebraska," Sanderford said. "The people in this state are very loyal. When we get the product where it needs to be, play the kind of basketball we're capable of playing, we're going to sell tickets and fill this place up, just like they do."

"I don't think Nebraska has to take a back seat to anybody in the Big 12. We're building. Give me five years, and then come back and ask me where we are."

I asked Sanderford if he thinks Nebraska will win tonight.

"Yeah," he said with conviction.

I asked him why. Looking a tad exhausted but almost eerily confident after having to talk about Iowa State for 15 minutes, he closes up the magazine and plops it back down.

"Gut instinct."

John Gaskins is a junior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan staff writer.

## Final day arrives for NU recruits

RECRUITS from page 16

the top classes in the country.

There was some reconsideration on the commitment of defensive back Terrell Butler out of Pebble Brook, Ga.

After committing to NU, Butler then gave some thought to committing to Tulane.

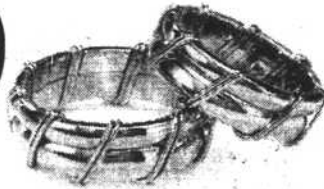
After evaluating his options, Butler found Nebraska impossible to

pass up.

"They just told me what I wanted to hear about playing time and the style of defense," Butler said. "I think it's the best fit for me."

As of now the Huskers have 19 commitments, not counting running back Thunder Collins. If NU were not to get Holiday or Mayes, it is unknown whether it would pursue any other players with the two scholarships.

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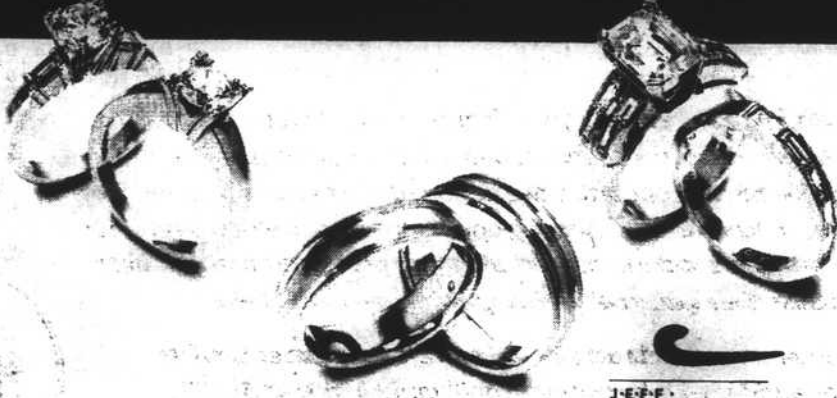
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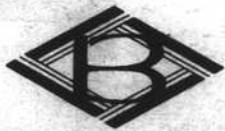


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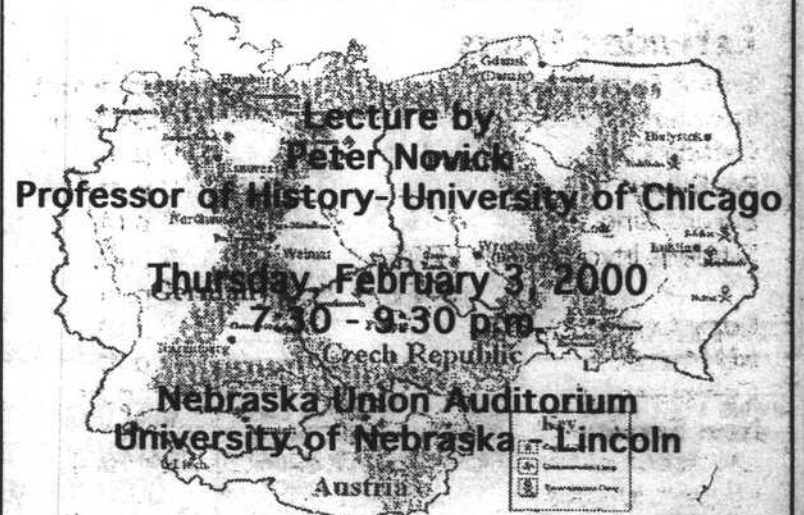
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