



## Athletes juggle their priorities

■ Classes, practice and games leave them with little free time.

By Derek Lippincott

Staff writer

For Nebraska tight end Tracey Wistrom, football is life; the rest is just details.

There is no such thing as free time. Every hour of his day is scheduled.

Starting at 8:30 a.m., Wistrom's day revolves around his classes and football. He goes to Memorial Stadium and gets treated for any injuries that might be plaguing him. Then he goes to his 9:30 a.m. and noon classes before heading to the stadium for seven more hours.

Wistrom gets taped for practice every day at 1 p.m., attends the team meeting at 2 p.m. and then practices from 3:30 to about 5:45 p.m. After practice, Wistrom lifts weights, ices any injuries, eats at the Hewitt Athletic Academic Center and arrives home usually at about 7:45 p.m.

"I pretty much eat, sleep and play football," Wistrom said. "Here at Nebraska, you have to pay your dues."

Almost every student athlete at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln pays those dues, regardless of the sport.

For Nebraska swimmer Adam Pine, a typical weekday begins at 5:30 a.m.

He hits the water at 6 a.m., gets out between 7:30 and 8 a.m., eats breakfast and goes to class until 12:30 p.m.

He eats lunch and studies before practice again from 2 to 4 p.m. He lifts weights until 5:30 p.m., eats and goes to class again at 6:30 p.m.

Pine said the combination of swimming and academics – no matter how much time it took – was why he came to Nebraska.

"When we have a break from swimming, I don't know what to do with myself with all the free time," Pine said. "What do regular students do?"

Although athletes' days are filled with the sports they play, academics don't necessarily take the back seat.

Freshmen football players have study hall from 7:45 to 9:45 p.m. every night, and athletes must maintain a 2.0 G.P.A. to keep their scholarships. Dead Week is also taken into consideration by coaches.

"Coaches are good about finals week," Wistrom said. "They back off and shorten practice. Finals week isn't that bad for football players."

"The hardest time is during midterms," Wistrom said. "It seems like professors all schedule tests for the same week, and football practice makes it tough to prepare for them."

Many times, athletes also have to miss class for an away event.

Freshman golfer Robert Arthur said

although golf practice may not be as physically strenuous or time consuming, he misses about two days of class per week during golf season.

Arthur said that although he does a lot of his homework on road trips, it is possible to fall behind in classes.

"At the end of the season, you start to fall behind on homework, and you are ready for a break," Arthur said. "School is not too strenuous right now, but I can see it getting a lot tougher my junior and senior years."

Despite the necessity for studying, the daily routine of athletes is strictly monitored. Practices and meetings are mandatory.

"Spending this much time in the pool is something I've always done. Ever since I was 16, I've been doing this," Pine said. "Being a student athlete makes you manage your time better."

The football team's attendance is monitored by a point system. If a player misses or comes late to too many meetings or practices and accumulates too many points, he could be suspended for a game.

Wistrom said although the point system is motivational, most players know what it takes to succeed.

"(The threat of suspension) is motivation enough," Wistrom said. "Everybody here knows what it takes to be successful. There aren't many problems."

TOP: ELVIRA FISHER SWIMS the winning lap of the 200-meter breast stroke competition against Iowa State.  
BOTTOM: DALHIA INGRAM COMPETES in the Triple Jump against Oklahoma last Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

when it is stopped unfairly. Officials keep athletes within some boundary, which is their last and only connection to the real world when the game is going on. Otherwise, it's all prison basketball.

By the time the comeback is complete, Nebraska has won game two. And UT's Big 12 quest is officially over.

Colorado doesn't waste any time with its new fortune. Johnson bolts up the middle for a big gain. Moschetti hits an open receiver on NU's side of the field.

And on the sideline, Dan Alexander prays for another chance.

But Moschetti seems determined, and Coach Barnett marches up the field with him, along with the rest of the Buffs.

It comes down to this: a field goal try of 34 yards from Jeremy Aldrich. Moschetti goes over to the sidelines and holds hands with a receiver. The Husker bench stands up in unison. Solich doesn't crouch or put his hands to his head. He just stands. The fans clad in red mostly scream. One visibly prays to God. The kick is up...

The game's been over for a while. The media have had their ice cream. The KU fans are resting easier, settling into their second half trend of thirsting for an even bigger blowout. But he with the misprinted name isn't stopping anytime.

Ffriend keeps going to the line 11, 12, 13 times. KU isn't quick enough to stop him. Jayhawk center Eric Chenowith, a preseason All-

American in some circles, is always a step behind, always lagging.

Midway through the second half, with Ffriend throwing elbows, Kansas' fans screaming at him for it and Chenowith playing catch-up, Chenowith finally fouls out.

Ffriend makes sure to find his way out to midcourt, where Chenowith is walking toward his bench, and rub it in. Ffriend takes out his mouthpiece, and starts shaking his head up and down at the 7-footer. Ffriend has earned this moment, even though his team will lose.

At the time-out, Chenowith goes back out to talk to the referees, as does KU Coach Roy Williams. They have the game in hand, but it's never too late to put a little extra leverage on the fuzzi.

No good. Moschetti turns away in anger. Husker players celebrate. Frank Solich breathes out. Dan Alexander stops praying. And one NU fan screams, "There is a God!"

Sanderford walks by and ambles down the hall. A few minutes later, he's back, and before he even reaches the court, he's yelling out a different play for his team to run.

"Vanderbilt! Vanderbilt! Vanderbilt!" Sanderford yells. "Let's run that agin."

Colorado made its field goal. In overtime. And Nebraska had its own chance to score and went for the touchdown. This time Alexander held on to the ball. And NU scored on a one-yard plunge into the end zone.

The Huskers win.

Mike Brown and Eric Johnson sprint off the bench like children, holding one finger to signify, in reality, the national championship they just lost a chance at because of the closeness of this game.

Fifteen hundred miles away, a freshman named Michael Vick watches it on a big screen in Blacksburg, Va., and winces at the

final score. The Virginia Tech quarterback need not worry. Nebraska had won, but this time, winning was not enough. It lacked style points required.

And in college sports, sometimes style is what's all about.

Thoom, thoom, thoom – air. Ingram lands hard in the sand pit, a long jump for her, probably her best of the young season.

Except for one problem – Ingram scratched on the board. The board marker waves her red flag, and all goes for naught. The jump doesn't count.

Ingram gives a little shrug. She'll start the grinding process over in a few minutes when she'll again clap, again take off, again jump and again try not to scratch.

And do it until she gets it right, or until her chances run out – like every other athlete there is.

Because this is their stage. And their bull, it will rage. And that's entertainment.