

NU's Van Horn meets old team in opener

By Dane Stickney
Senior editor

When the Nebraska baseball team takes the field for its first game of the season against Northwestern State of Natchitoches, La., on Friday, emotions may be running higher than normal for NU Coach Dave Van Horn.

Some Northwestern State players know Van Horn quite well because he recruited them.

Van Horn coached the Demons from 1995 to 1997, winning the Southland Conference title in 1995 and 1997 before taking the job at Nebraska.

The Huskers will open their season against the Demons on Friday at 1 p.m. in the Marriott-West Loop/Rice Classic at Rice University. The Huskers will also play Rice on Saturday and Arkansas State on Sunday.

Northwestern State offered Van Horn's pitching coach, Rob Childress, the coaching job, but he also turned down the Demons' offer to come to Nebraska.

"I'm sure they'll be highly motivated to play a Big 12 school and to prove themselves to their former coaches," Van Horn said.

Two of Northwestern State's play-

ers have played under Van Horn. Three or four were recruited by the coach.

"It might feel a little different seeing those kids in their uniforms," he said. "I'll just black it all out. Since it's the first game of the year, there's too many other concerns."

Van Horn said his main concern is making sure his team is prepared to start the season. Judging from the players' enthusiasm, he said, the Huskers seem ready.

Brandt Vlieger, a senior third baseman, said last year's Big 12 tournament championship has the team excited to take the field.

"Last year's championship gives us confidence. We believe we can beat anyone anywhere."

Brandt Vlieger
NU third baseman

"The enthusiasm is there," he said. "Last year's championship gives us confidence. We believe we can beat anyone anywhere."

That confidence will be put to the test on Saturday when the Huskers play Rice. The team started the year

ranked in the top 10 after making a trip to the College World Series in 1999.

However, Rice has dropped its first three games of the season, all to

Please see **BASEBALL** on 15



Nikki Fox/DN
Ndali Ijomah, a junior marketing major, practices with teammate Gina Pelazini at the Woods Tennis Center on Thursday afternoon.

Nebraska tennis hosts Big 12 foes

By Brian Christopherson
Staff writer

It's a regular Wimbledon fest in Lincoln this weekend, as both the Nebraska men and women welcome top-flight conference brothers and sisters to town.

The Texas women's tennis team has not been defeated by a conference foe in its last 97 matches, its record stretching back to 1991. But the NU women will attempt to hook the Horns at Saturday's 10 a.m. match, hoping not to be casualty No. 98.

"Texas A&M is a great team, but we know we can play with them."

Kerry McDermott
NU coach

vs. Eastern Michigan.

Jacobson is hoping that some young players like freshman Maria Fernandez will come to the forefront and play a factor in the team score.

"Maria Fernandez is a freshman who we see a lot of potential in," Jacobson said. "And there's so much parity on our team that we're not yet set on a certain rotation."

Meanwhile, the Husker men's tennis team will tangle with No. 17 Texas A&M tonight at 6 in the Woods Tennis Center.

NU men's Coach Kerry McDermott might be found whistling a few bars of "There is no place like Nebraska" this weekend.

McDermott said he is happy to be home after a trip to Texas last weekend.

"The guys are really happy to be playing at home for the first time," McDermott said. "Texas A&M is a great team, but we know we can play with them."

McDermott said he also is welcoming the return of his No. 1 singles player and co-captain Lance Mills, who was out with a foot injury in last weekend's matches.

That sentiment may be wishful thinking, considering the Husker's 6-1 slogging at the hands of the Aggies last season. Texas A&M's Jarin Skube also owns a straight-set victory over NU's Kai Rieke at the Rolex Tournament only a month ago.

The Husker men ride a 1-1 record into the match after a disheartening 4-3 loss to Rice last weekend. In that match, the Huskers could not produce a win in the bottom half of the lineup.

NU was also without its leader Mills, but with his return today, McDermott said he is anxious for the early season opportunity with the Aggies.

"This match is early enough in the year that it doesn't make or break our season," he said.

Sweet Sevignity

Big talent on display at 26th Husker Invite

The Nebraska track and field team will be facing its toughest competition of the season Feb. 11-12 at the Frank Sevine Husker Invitational at the Bob Devaney Sports Center Track.

The invitational will include 42 teams with a total of 23 automatic qualifiers for the NCAA Track and Field National Championships in Indianapolis, Ind.

NU Coach Gary Pepin said the meet will serve as a quiz for the coming test - the Big 12 championships and nationals.

Pepin said the team is improving each week as the conference championships approach.

"We have such a good team that we have a lot of people coming on," Pepin said.

With so many teams competing, Pepin said, the meet will have many highly competitive events.

Freshman Carl Myerscough, the No. 2 shot-putter in the country, was knocked off the No. 1 spot by BYU's Jim Roberts. Both will be at the meet on Saturday.

Myerscough will be competing against three of the top five ranked shot-putters in the country.

"It'll be very tough," Myerscough said. "Almost all of the people competing will be at nationals."

But Myerscough said he didn't worry about the other athletes.

"It'll be good to see them before the championships," Myerscough said. "It will let me know what to expect, but I compete against myself. I just want to throw the best I can."

Lesley Owusu, a member of the NU women's 4-by-400-meter relay team, said she is confident the team will do well. The team includes Stella Klassen, Cheryl Harmon, Jelena Stanisavljevic and Owusu.

"If we perform to our maximum potential, then we'll win," Owusu said. "If all goes well, we should win comfortably."

Klassen said she was confident but does not guarantee victory. She said last week's meet in Manhattan, Kan., was the first time the team was able to run together all season.

Steve Smith, NU multi-events and sprints coach, said the relay team will run better than last week, but the women will be competing against five quality teams in Louisiana State, Pittsburgh, Georgia, Manhattan College and Texas-El Paso.

"It'll be a good testing ground to see how people compete against top competition," Smith said.

The Huskers claim the top two women's high jumpers in the field - senior Carrie Branness and junior Jessica Thompson.

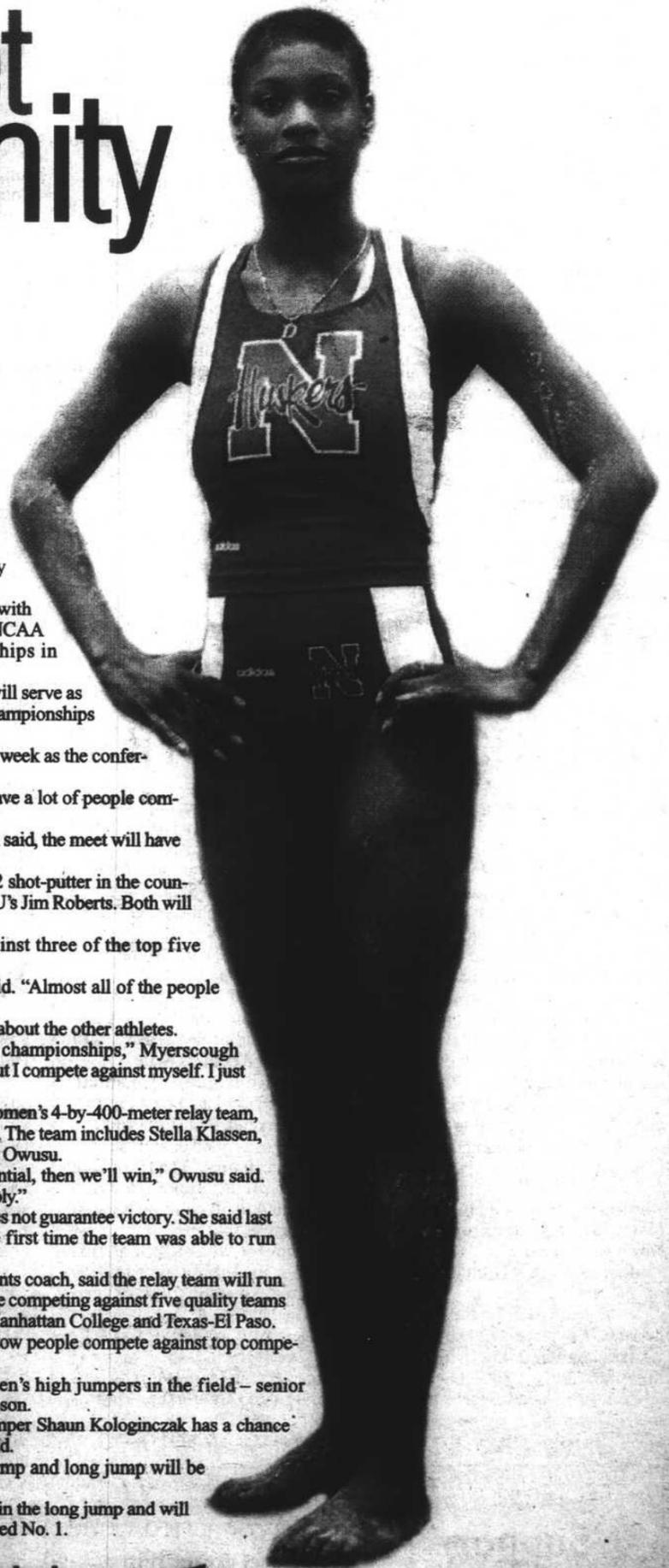
Coach Pepin said sophomore high-jumper Shaun Kologinczak has a chance to win but will be competing in a deep field.

Pepin said both the women's triple jump and long jump will be events to watch.

Senior Dalhia Ingram is ranked No. 3 in the long jump and will face Georgia's Tasha Mahone, who is ranked No. 1.

Long jumper Dalhia Ingram

After a career best leap last week, Ingram takes on the No. 1 jumper in the nation in Georgia's Tasha Malone Finals 6:30 p.m. Friday



story by jamie suhr
photograph by mike warren