

## Jacobson finds Mexican gem for NU tennis team

■ Maria Fernandez has shot herself up the Husker ranks with a 9-1 record so far.

By Mike Callahan Jr.

Staff writer

Scott Jacobson landed the No. 2 high school tennis player in Mexico by checking his e-mail.

In the fall of 1998, the Nebraska women's tennis coach received a message from Maria Laura Fernandez, a talented young woman from Puebla, Mexico, about 90 miles from Mexico City.

Fernandez sent out an e-mail to a number of colleges looking for a place to play tennis. Jacobson answered. And eventually Fernandez chose Nebraska.

Now, 10 matches into the 2000 campaign, Fernandez is sporting a 9-1 singles record at the No. 3 slot for the Husker women's tennis team and a 9-1 doubles record to boot.

Jacobson is ecstatic about the play of his young, rising star.

"Maria has great work ethic and is always there," Jacobson said. "She is obviously playing at a very high level."

How good is 9-1 at the No. 3 slot? Take into consideration who she's played thus far.

Jacobson mentioned Fernandez has battled two opponents that NU's No. 1 player, Sandra Noetzel, has challenged in previous years.

"The young lady from Texas Sandra lost to last year, Maria split with," Jacobson said, "and the girl from Southwest Missouri that Sandra had a tough three-set win against, Maria beat her 6-3, 6-2.

"We don't want to take anything away from Sandra - she's the best we've ever had - but these outside comparisons are the best judge for where Maria's at."

In her most recent singles match, Fernandez defeated Oklahoma City's Melisa Lemus 6-4, 6-1.

Fernandez, who has been playing tennis since she was 6 years old, is from a city

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**Maria Fernandez**  
UNL tennis player

with a population of about two million. She claimed it was an easy decision coming to Nebraska.

"The coach and the assistant coach were very nice, and Nebraska has a good program," Fernandez said. "I love Lincoln because, to me, it's very calm."

With a solid young crop of women supporting this year's Huskers, the future looks bright for Fernandez-led teams. NU has just landed two of the top players in California for next year's recruiting class.

Complimenting Fernandez's winning ways and competitive flair is a championship mentality. She believes the Huskers can win the national championship while she's here.

"I think we can win a Big 12 championship or even a national championship while I'm here," Fernandez said.

Jacobson said he loved that attitude. When asked about her national championship ambition, Jacobson giggled in a way that only a coach can giggle after expectations are born.

"The great thing about Maria is that the sky's the limit," Jacobson said. "She recognizes the gift that we have in our program and if Maria says it, I'm up for a national championship in good old Lincoln, Nebraska.

"It's going to take some great strides, but hey, you never know."

You might say Fernandez is shooting a little high. But the first step towards winning a championship is believing. Fernandez believes.

## Baseball team slams UNO Mavs

NU wins in sloppy contest

By Jason Merrihew

Staff writer

The Nebraska baseball team turned a sloppy game into a one-sided, 18-2 blowout over in-state foe Nebraska-Omaha on Tuesday.

The Cornhuskers (8-5 overall) converted 18 runs off of just nine hits in their home opener at Buck Beltzer Field; only five of the runs were earned.

"We didn't do much offensively," NU Coach Dave Van Horn said.

The Mavericks (1-6) committed six errors, including two key errors by shortstop Jason Herzog.

Nebraska struck blood first in the bottom of the third inning, when Herzog was unable to field a Jamal Strong ground ball. Senior Jim Bailey scored on the error, and Aaron Gozart was able to advance to third base. Adam Shabala followed Strong, hitting into a fielder's choice to the pitcher, allowing Gozart to score.

The UNL pitching staff was able to keep UNO hitless for three and two-thirds innings, until John Shoemaker hit a double, setting up Eric Gordon's at bat with a man in scoring position. Gordon belted Brandon Penas' pitch over the left-field wall, tying the ball game 2-2.

<b>HUSKERS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>MAVERICKS</b>	<b>2</b>

The bottom of the fourth was when the wheels fell off for the Mavericks. After the first two Cornhuskers were walked in the fourth, Bailey hit an RBI triple that hit the top of the center-field wall.

The Huskers continued to pour on the runs, scoring four runs in the fifth, five in the sixth, four in the seventh and one in the eighth.

Shortstop Brandt Vlieger led Nebraska offensively with five RBIs on two hits. Senior Justin Cowan added three RBIs on two hits.

Van Horn used the game to allow his pitching staff some valuable work on the mound. The Huskers used five pitchers in all.

"We got some pitchers in who needed to throw," Van Horn said.

Sophomore R.D. Spiehs struck out five of six batters he faced in the two innings of action he saw.

"Coach (Van Horn) told me that I was only going to pitch two innings," Spiehs said. "I just went out there and threw hard."

Junior right-hand pitcher Andy Bent picked up his first victory of the season after pitching two scoreless innings and striking out two batters.

## Huskers beat Bears in tourney

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job handling the pressure. Once we got the ball over halfcourt was when we turned it over. We just didn't take very good care of the basketball."

Baylor committed 15 first-half turnovers while shooting 29 percent (8-18 from the field). For the game, the Bears turned the ball over 24 times, 18 of which were NU steals.

Center Casey Leonhardt, who had been in a late-season slump full of foul trouble and poor shooting, bullied the Baylor posts with 19 points and 11 rebounds. NU was 6-0 when the junior transfer from Illinois earned a double-double.

"When Casey plays well, the team plays well," Went said.

Went also had one of her better games, scoring all 12 of her points off four three-pointers, tying a season high.

Lost in all of Nebraska's high scoring glory were off nights from senior guards Brooke Schwartz (nine points) and Nichole Kubik (six points). It was the first time in 57 games that either of the two scored in single figures.

Went said the Huskers expect a close and physical game with Kansas and a fired-up Jayhawk team that was swept by NU during the regular season for the first time since 1988. A third victory over KU and an 18th win would probably ensure Nebraska an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament.

But Sanderford refused to say if Tuesday's victory - NU's fifth in a row - was already enough.

"I have given up trying to figure out the NCAA committee," Sanderford said. "All I have control of is my basketball team. We've been playing with our backs against the wall for about a month, so tomorrow will be nothing new to us."

"I'll believe we're in the NCAA tournament when we win Saturday night (the championship game) or when we see our name on television on Sunday afternoon."

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