

Former Husker Coach Nee content with new position

By Joshua Camenzind
Staff writer

"I'm still 6-foot-3, still married and doing good."

While new Nebraska Basketball Coach Barry Collier adjusts to Lincoln and his newfound settings in Danny Nee's old stomping ground, the former Cornhusker basketball coach wants the people of Nebraska to know one thing.

Danny Nee is doing just fine. "I'm still 6-foot-3, still married and doing good," said Nee on Wednesday from his new coach's office at Robert Morris College in Pittsburgh, Pa.

After being fired by NU Athletic Director Bill Byrne on March 13, many wondered what would happen to Nee, a 20-year coaching veteran with a 361-256 overall record.

With his buyout of \$400,000, Nee didn't have to coach again. But he wanted to and searched for a good fit.

The New York native first applied at the Air Force Academy and was named a finalist before losing out to former Princeton Assistant Joe Scott. Nee said he had no comment on the losing the Air Force position and that "(the media

were the guys who said (he was a finalist)."

After that, Nee applied at Robert Morris, coincidentally located in his wife Janet's hometown of Pittsburgh. He was hired on April 14 and the Nee family's goal to relocate to the East Coast was complete.

The 54-year-old, who guided Ohio University and Nebraska to seven NCAA Tournaments, will make significantly less at his new job but inherited a team that went 18-12 last season. Robert Morris barely missed an NCAA berth, losing in the finals of the Northeast Conference.

RMC Athletic Director Bruce Corrie said Nee was chosen after an exhaustive two-week search.

"We are confident that he will take us to the next level, that being the Northeast Conference Championship and NCAA Tournament," he said.

Danny Nee
former NU basketball coach

Nee said the transition is going as expected, though his family remains in Lincoln while he starts his new job.

"I am just adjusting," said Nee, who is coming back to Lincoln on Saturday to see his wife and family, "trying to get the schedule done and scrambling to evaluate the situation."

Nee would not comment on the situation at Nebraska but did say that former NU Assistant Randy Roth had been hired as part of his new staff.

Roth, who served as an assistant coach at Butler under Collier from 1989-91, has worked with Nee for five years - three at NU and two at Ohio as a graduate assistant.

Another former assistant, Larry Gay, has been hired at Colorado under Coach Ricardo Patton in a similar position.

Former Huskers allege Neumann paid wrestlers

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dance to university personnel policy."

Neumann's top assistant, Mark Cody, was hired as interim coach Wednesday and will seek the job on a permanent basis. A small search committee has been formed, and a national search for a new coach will begin immediately, Byrne said.

In terms of the allegations, one of the former wrestlers, who later transferred from Nebraska's program, said he personally received money, while the other former athlete said he saw teammates get money.

Both athletes said the payments date back to at least the 1995 season.

"To keep everyone happy," said the transfer, "(Nebraska has) got to give out some money."

The transfer said he knew of at least five people who had received "under the table" money during the 1994-95 season, which was his first season at NU. That number grew by his second year, he said, noting that "at least 10 others" had been paid.

The transfer said he was on scholarship his freshman season and was taken off to free room for recruits. NCAA regulations allow for 9.9 scholarships for wrestlers at a cost of \$140,000 total.

This year, NU had 16 wrestlers listed on scholarship.

While the amount Neumann paid wasn't constant for each wrestler, it was around \$420 dollars a month, or about what the wrestler would be getting on scholarship. But, the transfer said, specific amounts never were discussed, and wrestlers were sometimes just paid by ability.

After the wrestler lost his scholarship, he said Neumann summoned him to the wrestling office.

"Neumann said, 'Don't worry about it,'" the athlete said. "He called me into his office, and we talked about (the loss of the scholarship), and he said 'Come and see me for the money, and I'll take care of your rent.'"

"Everything I got was from Neumann. He'd just tell me, 'Here's

some money for this or for that.'"

Eventually, the transfer said, Neumann would stop giving money to wrestlers who no longer had scholarships.

Because of the money crunch, some Huskers faced difficult situations.

"It came to the point where I was getting threats of having my power shut off," the transfer said. "And I didn't have any money."

When he asked Neumann for extra money, the coach "dodged" him, the transfer said, "making it harder and harder to keep quiet" about the under-the-table payments.

After the 1995-96 season, the wrestler asked for his scholarship back and did not get it.

He quit the sport and left Nebraska. Half of his recruiting class left before their eligibility at NU was up, the transfer said.

It's a familiar cycle, said the second source, a wrestler who left the program. He said Neumann never paid him.

But the payments were especially big during the 1994-95 season, when Nebraska won the Big Eight title and finished sixth at nationals, he said.

"It was real big then because when I was there, we were ranked No. 3, and there were 18 of us," the source said. "He'd bring them in and give them a buttload of money."

Current Husker wrestlers, many of whom met with Neumann on Wednesday, continued to back their former coach, insisting they had no knowledge of extra payments.

"Coach said he wished it hadn't come to this," 197-pounder Brad Vering said. "He talked to us like any responsible parent would have talked to his kids. And that's the way we see him."

Captains Vering and Bryan Snyder both said that, to their knowledge, no extra payments had been made during their time at Nebraska.

"I've never heard of any of that going on here," Snyder said. "None of us have."

Hopper's patience pays off

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squarely.

"You have to get up in the count to get good pitches," he said. "You have to be patient."

Mike Anderson, Nebraska assistant coach, said Hopper's patience is sometimes trying.

"It's frustrating throwing batting practice to him," Anderson said. "He takes a lot of borderline pitches, so he wears us out. But it really helps the team out when that type of mentality carries over into the games."

NU Coach Dave Van Horn agreed that Hopper has been a major contributor this season.

"I'm real happy with the way he's developed," Van Horn said. "He just keeps getting better."

Hopper originally came to

Nebraska as a pitcher, but his offensive prowess has taken center stage.

"He was shoving his hitting charts in our nose, telling us how good of a hitter he is," Anderson said. "So we gave him a chance to do both, but he's showed us he is a tremendous hitter."

The Cornhusker coaching staff decided to give Hopper playing time against left-handed pitchers, but his productivity demanded more.

"We just kind of looked at each other and said, 'He needs to start being in there all the time,'" Anderson said. "He just played his way into the lineup."

Hopper said he's benefited at the plate from his pitching experiences.

"It helps me because I know what the pitcher is thinking," he said. "I couldn't have competed with our staff anyway, so I just decided to focus on giving them some support."

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