

captivating PERFORM l a n c e

Soccer team's tough loss to Notre Dame contradicts season

By Brian Christopherson

Staff writer

Why does sports captivate us so?

Here's why.

Amy Walsh stood a few feet from the ball, ready to strike, ready to tie the shoot-out with Notre Dame.

Count it. Walsh was a senior, a goal scorer, a competitor. She wouldn't miss this one?

Nebraska hadn't lost a match all season and if ever a team appeared ripe for their first ever Final Four appearance, it was these Cornhuskers.

However, after 150 minutes of breathtaking action, including four overtimes; the match had come down to a shoot-out, and the Irish had snagged a 4-3 lead.

A miss by Walsh, and NU's great season was done. Walsh missed.

Notre Dame players smiled and hugged, while many Husker players cried, wiping away the tears streaking down their cheeks.

It wasn't supposed to happen like this.

The Huskers were conference champions, and probably as good as any team in the country, but on that day, they walked off the field in defeat for the first time all season.

Amy Walsh will never have another chance to put the uniform on for Nebraska, and she won't have the opportunity to make another run at the national title next season with her teammates.

However, think of the great stories Walsh will have to tell to her grandchildren of that 1999 season

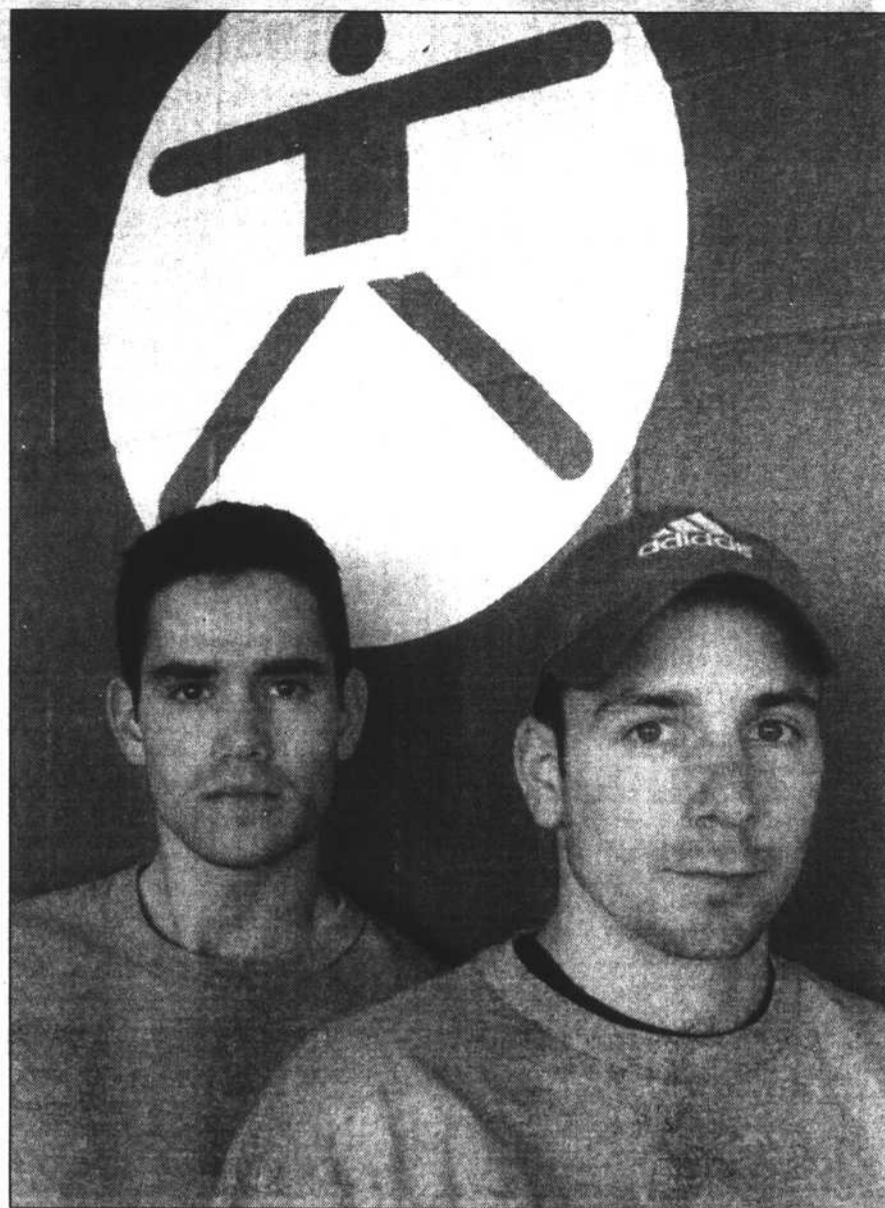
The girls in scarlet and cream went as far as any Husker team before it that year.

She might even have time to tell the grandchildren about the one shot that she didn't score that year.

She should. Win or lose, it was captivating.

KarinaLeBlanc ▼

photo by Heather Glenboski



▲ Marshall Nelson Jason Harbadura

photo by Heather Glenboski

One DEFINING moment

Injuries haunt men's gym team season progress

By John Gaskins

Staff writer

The 2000 Nebraska men's gymnastics team's season may have been defined by a single routine.

It happened Feb. 4, during the Huskers' dual at Oklahoma.

Never mind NU already had been pummeled by OU on the scoreboard. The night belonged to senior Marshall Nelson, who was having another brilliant performance in his return from a knee injury that sidelined him for 1999.

The three-time national champion already had set two school records on the season and won two events on the night. After what Assistant Coach Jim Howard called a near-perfect routine, Nelson prepared himself to land. It was a crash landing, as Nelson fell to the ground, having re-injured his fragile left knee.

And save a courageous pommel horse routine at the NCAA championships, it was that landing that ended his collegiate career.

So much talent. So much promise. So much heartbreak. So went the Huskers' season.

After a third-place showing at the NCAA championships in 1999, with junior Jason Harbadura returning to defend his NCAA all-around crown and Nelson returning, NU's future looked bright.

"With Jay and Marshall healthy, there's no doubt in my mind we would have had a shot at the whole thing," Allen said after NU failed to make it to the second day of the NCAA team championships in Iowa City, Iowa.

But instead things turned dim early and often. Harbadura was out nearly the entire season with shoulder and back injuries. Grant Clinton and Blake Bukacek were injured most of the time. Then came Nelson's tragedy.

Still, the Huskers trudged on, using scores of newcomers. They shocked higher-ranked foes Stanford and BYU by finishing second at the Mountain Sports Pacific Federation Championships to close an improbable NCAA berth.

"It was a good, scrappy team," Allen said. "I think all that adversity gave them thicker skin and made them stronger."

