

## McCarney dooms ISU's fate

The quarterback, Sage Rosenfels, uses the word underrated.

The fans use the word dangerous.

The coach, Dan McCarney, uses the word improved. Followed by focused, ready, deep and several other adjectives that will supposedly accompany the great Iowa State revival of 2000.

For me, there is no adequate word to describe the ISU football program. I search and search in vain.

Worthless, futile, laughable? No, not those. Not that horribly bad. Mediocre, average, ordinary? Not that either. Considering it has been 11 years since ISU had more wins than losses in a season, the midpoint seems a bit too high a bar for the Cyclones to blow over.

Maybe the numbers describe it better than I can: Take the decade of the 1990s. That's 10 years. Take seven conferences – the Atlantic Coast, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Mountain West, Pac-10 and Southeastern. That's 70 teams.

In 10 years, just two of those 70 teams never went to a bowl game or had a winning record. One of them is Vanderbilt.

The other? That'd be Iowa State. Like Sisyphus, the Clones keep rolling the boulder up the hill. Then one badly timed punt to Kansas State's David Allen, and down it comes.

Baylor, Wake Forest, Nevada-Las Vegas – even those perpetual turkeys tasted reasonable success once in the 1990s. What do the Cyclones have? One significant upset – proof there is a charitable God – over Nebraska in 1992. College football is about what you did last year, not 94 months ago.

It's been 264 months – 22 years – since ISU went to a bowl. Now that there are 700 Internet-sponsored games to fit college teams into, all Iowa State has to do is win six, lose five and stake its claim for the golden hutch trophy in the galleryfurniture.com Bowl. Venerable Coach McCarney, who's on his last leg in 2000 after crafting a 13-42 mark in five seasons, claims he's finally got a team to right the wrongs.

No, he doesn't. Let me tell you what he's got – a loss vs. Nebraska, at Oklahoma, vs. Texas A&M, at Kansas State, at Colorado and vs. Kansas. Six big I's for next year's media guide. New decade. Same old State. Mark it down.

Just one thing will change in next year's media guide – the glowing face on the front, that of a new coach.

This is a good thing, because McCarney, fine man and good recruiter that he is, lacks on-field coaching sense. He needs to be fired, or reassigned. With a new athletic director in place who has no reason to do the coach any favors, he will be.

Let him go run a company. He'd be good at that – infectious spirit, positive attitude. He's a talented backslapper, well versed in the point and greet from across the room. He's recruited some talent. He's plugged some holes, caulked some cracks. Good job, Dan. Here's the retirement watch.

When Jim Walden was coach, ISU had half the depth and talent. And he managed to do the same. Hell, he did better than McCarney, who has beaten one team with a winning record, and a Division I-AA team at that. His teams have lost 12 games by less than 10 points in five years.

That isn't by coincidence. Or sour luck.

How does a team out-yard Iowa 444-230 and damn near lose last year? Forget Allen's punt return in the KSU game – how does McCarney's defense let a lumbering yak like Adam Helm run the option over and over in the second half? And how did Oklahoma, the worst rushing team in the Big 12, rack up 301 ground yards, more than a quar-

## Practice heats up for Husker volleyball

### While Schrad adjusts, middle blockers battle

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

The last time we saw NU Volleyball Coach John Cook, he was predicting a top 10 finish for his Cornhuskers despite the decision to redshirt 1999 All-American Nancy Meendering.

Since then, the Husker volleyball team has been out of view, deep inside the Coliseum, working to make Cook's prediction come true.

It's just a matter of fine-tuning, according to their coach.

"I don't think there have been any adjustments," Cook said. "We adjusted in the spring and in China. It's been all business, and we're going."

One direction Cook may be heading is trying to get 6-foot-2 freshman Anna Schrad into the rotation.

Schrad, who attended Lincoln Pius X High School, was a member of the USA Junior National Team and was named first team All-American by Volleyball Magazine.

Cook said he was very impressed with her numbers in last Saturday's scrimmage.

"She could be a major, major contributor to our team this year. As a freshman she's probably the best blocker I've coached coming into a college program from a high school level."

"She'd be definitely ready to come off the bench. We're going to need her this season."

With the experience Schrad picked up with her stint on the USA Junior National Team, she said adjusting to the college level hasn't been that difficult.

But Schrad said isn't totally ready yet.

"There's a big difference in the mental aspects of the game," Schrad said. "I really don't care what my role is on the team. Right now I look at myself as a role player on the practice side. I'm helping the starters get better and prepared for other teams."

Another interesting development is the competition between sophomore Amber Holmquist and junior Jenny Kropp.

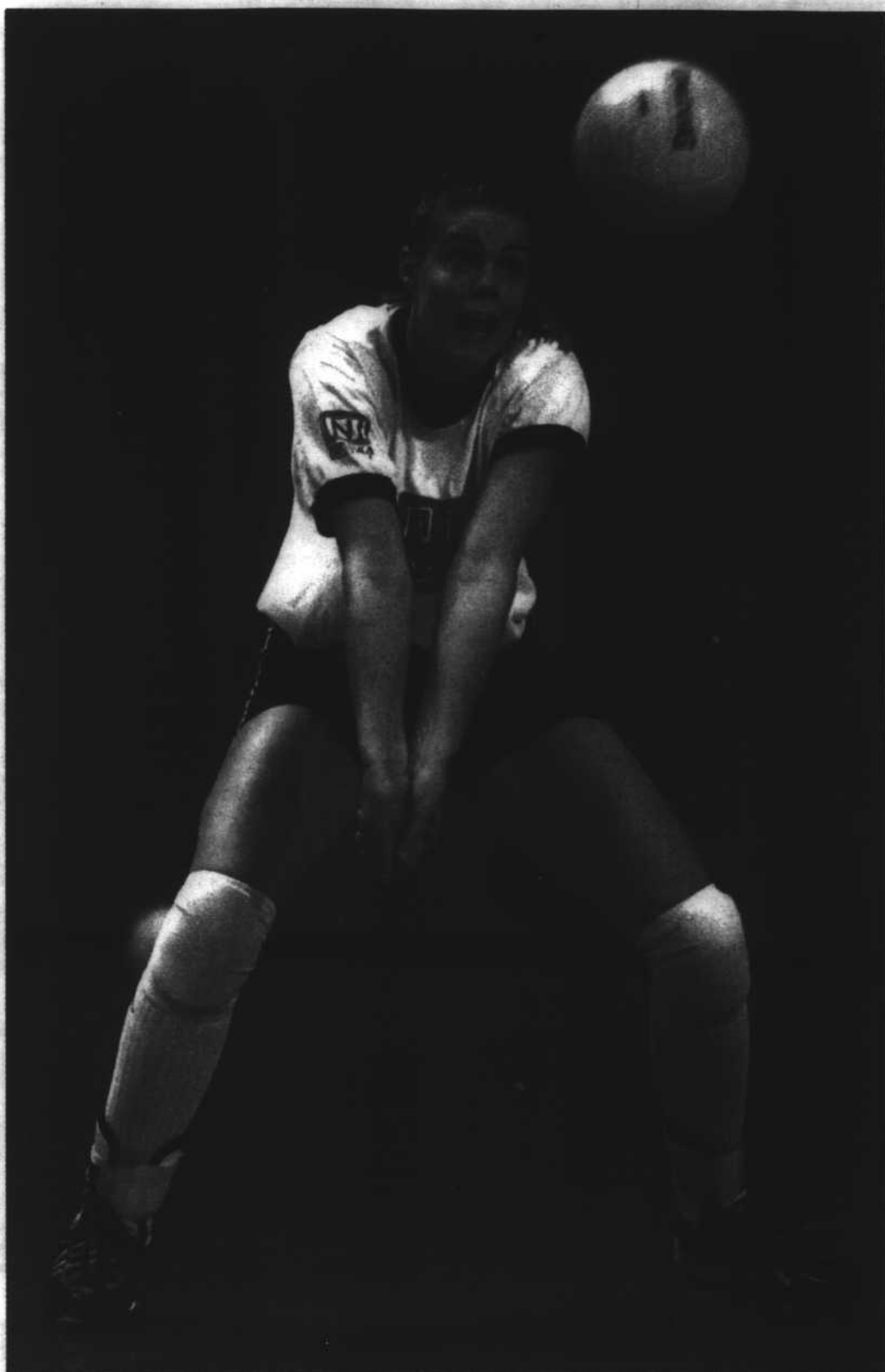
Both are penciled in to be starter for the Huskers, but only one will get to play the full rotation.

"They're both playing in the back row from time to time," Cook said. "We need one of them to go all the way around. I've been very pleased and I think they give us one of the best middle blocking tandems in the country."

Kropp said she doesn't really view it as a competition between the two.

"I don't know when he'll make his decision," Kropp said.

"It's something you just have to keep working hard for everyday in practice."



Steven Bender/DN

Sophomore middle blocker Amber Holmquist digs a ball in Tuesday's practice. She is competing with fellow middle blocker Jenny Kropp to play in the full rotation.

## Walk-on gamble earns Nebraska's Krejci scholarship

■ Krejci doesn't have many statistics but now has the scholarship that makes hard work and preparation worthwhile.

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

O.K., so Pam Krejci isn't exactly Rudy. In fact, she's had her share of successes in the athletic realm.

There was that gold medal in the shot-put along with a silver in the discus at the Nebraska State Track Meet in her high school days. And she had enough talent to be asked to walk on to the University of Nebraska to play volleyball, which isn't exactly chopped liver.

But Krejci became the underdog when she took that offer from the Cornhuskers. She redshirted a year, then only played in one game the following season.

The only stat listed next to her name in this year's media guide is one lonely



Krejci

Nebraska roster.

"I had to do well in practice, and I knew I had to earn it and prove myself everyday," Krejci said.

She earned it.

Krejci scored one for the underdogs when first-year NU Coach John Cook rewarded such diligence with a scholarship as the team prepares for the upcoming season.

The walk-on could no longer be ignored after the success she had this off-season.

attack.

Rudy would have been proud of Krejci's patience and persistence.

Along the way, the sophomore from Crete was hitting the weights and putting in overtime to make a name on the

Krejci finished second in the last team-performance tests that were conducted and can shake the Nebraska Coliseum with her giant swing.

"We call her 'Thunder' because she can really pound that ball," Cook said. "She took a risk by walking on here and switched positions for us last year. And she just continued to mature and develop."

Said Krejci: "It was a good accomplishment to get to that point, but it was part of the plan that I walk-on and work hard and eventually get on scholarship."

She believes that her experience last year at practicing the outside-hitter position fine-tuned her game before heading back to the familiarity of the middle-blocker spot.

"Middle is where I am meant to be, but playing outside made me work on my balance and made me work a lot harder to be a better player," she said.

And now with the scholarship in her

back pocket, the anticipation grows for Krejci and her teammates about the 2000 season.

The combination of junior Jenny Kropp and sophomore Amber Holmquist will serve as good tutors for Krejci.

"Kropp and Amber are potential All-Americans. But I will be ready when the time comes when I get called upon in a tight match," she said.

It's a feel-good story for a player in what Cook hopes will be a feel-good year.

"We want to reward players for hard work and continue the tradition of in-state players at the University of Nebraska," Cook said.

The reward is there, and now Krejci knows she must set her eyes on higher goals.

"I can't wait," she said, searching the empty Coliseum with her eyes as she talks. "All the hard lifting and hard work are all going to pay off and give me the chance to show my skills to the state."

## Cyclones optimistic that breakout season looms in 2000

BY SAMUEL MCKEON

It's 12 days before the first game of his sixth season, and Iowa State Coach Dan McCarney is in full pitch mode, lauding his Cyclones' work ethic, offering up a "heck of a competition" here and a "heck of a competition" there in regards to ISU position battles.

But he stiffens up when asked about expectations.

"You'd have to ask the people who have them," said McCarney of the ever-growing sentiment that his 12-43 record in five seasons is, well, not any good. "I only know what we expect."

For once, McCarney's preached expectations of a winning season and a bowl berth might actually be held accountable by Cyclone faithful and, more importantly, a new athletic director.

The position vacated by well-liked Gene Smith, who now holds the same job at Arizona State, hasn't been filled. But McCarney is under the impression that a new AD will be named

before ISU's money sport – basketball – begins.

Which means the former Wisconsin assistant might have to produce immediate improvement instead of operating under the forgiving Smith, who was willing to see Iowa State grow bit by bit.

If it has McCarney worried, he won't admit it. He expects that if his team performs as he thinks it will, he won't have to.

"This is about as good a football team as I've seen around here," McCarney said one month earlier at the Big 12 Media Days.

Said ISU senior quarterback Sage Rosenfels: "We have the kind of team – a team that knows how to finish games – that won't lose some of the games that we've lost in the past."

Rosenfels would be referring to last season's 4-7 campaign, which started 3-1 before heading south. Aside from a 49-14 pounding at the hands of Nebraska, the Cyclones were in every game, and lost several – like a 44-41 setback to Texas and 16-12 loss to Colorado – by close

margins.

But it may have been ISU's first disappointment of the season that trumped them all – a 35-28 loss to Kansas State that Iowa State led 28-7.

The Rosenfels-led offense went limp in the second half, while KSU racked up yards on the option. An ill-timed punt to David Allen, who then returned that punt for a touchdown, spurred the comeback.

Looking back, Rosenfels doesn't take any credit away from KSU, Texas or Colorado among others. Rather, it was a hiccup in late-game execution that burned the Cyclones again and again.

"I don't know what it was, a missed play here or just something," Rosenfels said. "But we just didn't get it done."

If ISU reverses its trend in 2000, it'll do it without a proven running game, as Darren Davis, the Cyclones leading rusher the past two years, graduated.

Ennis Hayward, who played sparingly in 1999, gets the nod as the starter, although freshman recruit Ja'maine Billups, an

Omaha Central High School product who spurned a scholarship offer from NU, will see time.

Another position that needs to be rebuilt is in its offensive line, where two starters were lost. McCarney said he thinks he's done so, with a converted tight end at one tackle and a 360-pound junior college transfer at the other.

"That's a position that some might see as a weakness that could turn into a real strength for this football team," McCarney said.

Defensively, Iowa State played well in some contests (the loss to Colorado), poorly in others (Oklahoma and Texas) and sometimes both in the same game (KSU).

The key, McCarney said, is finding consistency, and stuffing the run better than last season. It's better than it used to be, defensive end Reggie Hayward said, but not good enough.

"The main focus is going to be stopping the run," Hayward said. "That's how you win in the Big 12."

### BIG XII PREVIEW

Iowa State Cyclones

- Preseason Rank: 5th (North)
- 1999: 4-7 (1-7 Big XII, 4-5 in the North)
- Offensive Starters Returning: 7
- Defensive Starters Returning: 11
- Prognosis: Only an easy non-conference schedule will keep Cyclones record respectable.

Delan Lonowski/DN

Hayward's comment seems to echo the rest of the Iowa State contingent. The Cyclones know exactly how to win. The question for a hot-seated McCarney is: Will they?

"We think most things are in place," McCarney said. "This is as excited as I've been about a football team."