

NU gears up for final scrimmage

BY DAVID DIEHL

Today marks the last major scrimmage Nebraska will engage in before its Sept. 2 season opener vs. San Jose State.

The scrimmage will pit the top offensive and defensive units against the scout team, which will simulate sets and plays of San Jose State.

Coach Frank Solich said Thursday that his team was "enthusiastic" about the scrimmage and was crossing days off the calendar.

"They're ready for a game-type scrimmage," Solich said. "We've worked them very hard. It's getting close to game time. There's a point in two-a-days when that first game looks way down the road. Now it's getting to the point where a couple more days, and it's game week."

The game will be pretty wide-open, at least as far as play selection and game atmosphere, Solich said. Limiting the offense, he added, will be a no-contact policy on the quarterbacks.

The offense, which has been particularly sluggish, will be a focus, Solich said.

"I want to see some consistency from them," he said. "If you're going to have a running game you can't have it first (down) and 15, or second and eight."

Some of the offense's sluggishness may be because of the defense it has faced all spring and fall. Validating the strength of the defense, two of Nebraska's Blackshirts have been named to preseason award lists given to the best players at their positions.

Senior linebacker Carlos Polk and cornerback Keyou Craver have been selected as preliminary candidates for the Butkus and Jim Thorpe awards, respectively.

The Butkus Award will be awarded Dec. 8 in Orlando after the list of names is whittled from 70 to three finalists. The Sporting News and Lindy's magazine ranked Polk, a 1999 All-Big 12 pick, as a top-5 candidate for the trophy after he finished second on the team with 83 tackles last year.

Craver, a junior, is on Jim Thorpe's primary list of 40 cornerbacks and safeties. Craver had the second most pass break-ups, 12, on last year's squad. He picked off three passes, as well.

The Thorpe Award will be announced Dec. 7 on ESPN.

Red-white tune-up set for Saturday

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

There's a bristle of excitement at the NU Coliseum these days.

The John Cook era has arrived and will kick off in full swing Saturday when the new volleyball coach watches his first Cornhusker edition take to the floor in the annual Red-White game at 7 p.m. in the Coliseum.

And it's all business for Cook and his first team heading into the scrimmage.

"We're trying to make it as game-like as possible," Cook said. "We're going through our pre-game meal, our pre-game warm-up and our meeting."

Cook continued with the theme that this team was already playing at a higher level than last year's unit that bowed out in the Sweet Sixteen.

"We're very patterned. We're organized," he said.

"We know what spots we're supposed to be in, so I feel that we are probably a couple months ahead of where we'd normally be at this time a year ago."

With the knowledge of his team's potential, Cook can't help but be excited about the level of play that will be featured in Nebraska's only game scrimmage before next Friday's home opener against Northwestern.

"The roles are pretty much established," he said. "We know who's going to be on the court and who's coming off the bench."
"So we'll just use it to fine-tune and compete in front of people and make it as competitive as possible."

Please see RED on 9

Huskers hope to buck season-opening woes

■ Husker soccer team hits the road to battle tough Minnesota Gophers team in 2000 season opener on Saturday.

BY ANAND MADHAVAN

The Cornhusker women's soccer team doesn't have a great opening act.

Despite having a combined 104 wins and only 22 losses in the last six seasons, NU only has a 3-3 record in season openers. This is despite the fact all six openers have been at home.

This Saturday, for the first time in the team's history, NU will open the season on the road against the Minnesota Gophers. Coach John Walker and his team hope this opener's outcome will be

better than years past.

"Any time you play on the road, and you play a quality team, it's gonna be hard," Walker said. "Just like any road game, you want to get a good result."

While NU has struggled in openers, they have historically handled the Gophers. Nebraska has won both times it has faced MU, including a 5-0 rout last season in Lincoln.

According to Walker the Gophers won't hand this year's game to the Huskers.

Minnesota is led by seven returning

starters, including senior forward Laurie Seidl, who scored 21 points and earned All-Big 10 honors last season.

"Seidl is one of their stronger and athletic players," Walker said.

"They have other players like Erin Holland who also is a great player. Their team has great experience and are really well rounded."

In the past, the Gophers employed an attacking, very athletic style. But a new head coach could twist the Gophers game plan and change their style of play.

Senior captain Christine Gluck looks forward to the challenge of opening the 2000 season by visiting a team as good as Minnesota, who is ranked No. 27 in the NSCAA Umbro preseason poll.

"I think it's a good character builder,

whether on the road or home. We will be excited and ready to play," Gluck said.

In preparing for the Gophers, Gluck believes physical and mental toughness will be a big factor in the first game of the season.

Coach Walker is preparing his team to come out with a high level of intensity.

"You're trying to prepare for the season. Minnesota is one of the best teams we play," Walker said. "We are gonna come out sharp and be competitive at a high level."

Gluck and the rest of the Huskers are excited about the opener at Minnesota, as well as the rest of the season.

"Every game we play we definitely are gonna go at them. It's gonna be high pressure all over the field," Gluck said.

Paige Phillips returns after two surgeries

BY JAIME SUHR

Nebraska soccer player Paige Phillips' scarred left knee still aches and swells but reminds her of how far she's come.

Two years ago, she accepted a scholarship to one of the top programs in the country and was returning for her senior year at Millard North High School.

Now, after two years filled with injury, recovery and re-injury, Phillips will step on the field in a meaningful game for the first time in a long time.

It has been two, long years.

"It was hard knowing I couldn't play," she said. "I knew what I could do, but I wasn't able to."

Two games into that senior season, Phillips blew out her ACL and tore cartilage in her knee. Lying on the grass, clutching her knee, all Phillips could think about was soccer.

"I was crushed," Phillips said. "Soccer is such a big part of my life, and in one second it was gone." After meeting with doctors, Phillips was told the rehabilitation process would take six months.

Phillips had to prove them wrong. Nebraska Coach John Walker told Phillips her scholarship would be waiting for her when she stepped on campus.

Walker, who has had several knee operations, told Phillips to take all the time she needed to rehabilitate the knee. Phillips promised him she'd be back by the time fall practice began. Walker quickly dismissed her prediction.

Phillips had to prove him wrong.

During her rehabilitation, the midfielder would spend two hours a day in the weight room trying to regain her full range of motion and strengthening her quadriceps.

Phillips said her sister Megan Phillips helped her. Coincidentally, the elder Phillips was a physical therapist who had also torn her ACL.

Four months later, Phillips was cleared by doctors to play - two months earlier than previously believed.

Phillips began practicing again, but something was wrong. Her knee was properly healed, but she wasn't the same player.

Please see PHILLIPS on 9



Husker sophomore midfielder Paige Phillips has had two major surgeries on her left knee. After two years Phillips returns to the field Saturday against Minnesota.

David Casen/DN

Kansas State looks for QB to lead team past Huskers

■ Incumbent starter Beasley and newcomer Eil Roberson engage in quarterback battle.

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

Jonathan Beasley has a great deal of pressure on his shoulders these days.

The Kansas State senior is entering his second season as the Wildcats' starting quarterback and, as a co-captain, will be looked upon to provide the leadership expected to help No. 8 KSU contend for a national championship.

While a win over Nebraska in Manhattan, a Big 12 Conference championship and a berth in the Orange Bowl are in the sights of the Glendale, Ariz., native, one man might hamper those plans.

Eil Roberson.

Roberson is a redshirt freshman, regarded by many around Manhattan to be the next great Wildcat quarterback.

KSU Coach Bill Snyder admits that Roberson is the future of Wildcat football. But where does that leave Beasley?

"Jonathan came out of the spring as the No. 1 and will enter fall camp as the No. 1," said Snyder, whose team opens the season Saturday against Iowa in Kansas City.

"In all honesty, the gap was closed, and, nevertheless Jonathan remains our No. 1 quarterback."

Snyder did hint that all efforts would be made to find playing time for Roberson, who dazzled fans in the spring game with 186 yards and three touchdowns on just 13 carries.

So how does all of this make Beasley - the Holiday Bowl MVP who led KSU to a 11-1 record last season - feel?

"It doesn't bother me," Beasley said. "It is just one of those things that makes a team better - knowing that they have two quality quarterbacks, and if one goes down - they won't miss a beat."

The irony of the matter is that Beasley once found himself in Roberson's shoes.

"It has been kind of like a quarterback controversy since I have been here," he said.

Beasley arrived in Manhattan in 1996 and played in eight games as a true freshman, followed by five as a sophomore.

He redshirted in '98 before gaining the starting spot last season.

The quarterback put up some big numbers - 1,805 yards passing for a 20.1 yard average - but was unable to push KSU past Nebraska and into a Bowl Championship Series game.

BIG XII PREVIEW

■ Kansas State Wildcats

- Preseason Rank: 2nd (North)
- 1999: 11-1 (7-1 Big XII, 2nd in the North)
- Offensive Starters Returning: 8
- Defensive Starters Returning: 7
- Prognosis: Only the Big Red stand in the way of a Kansas State undefeated season.

Delan Lonowski/DN



Kansas State wideout Quincy Morgan hopes to elude more Husker defenders this year in their Nov. 11 showdown in Manhattan.

Mike Warren/DN

Snyder said it was unfair to judge Beasley because the senior found himself sandwiched in between arguably the greatest Wildcat of all-time, Michael Bishop and Roberson. This, however, does not detract from what Beasley is capable of doing, Snyder said.

"He has the experience within our program and the knowledge of the understanding of the nuances that are present," he said.

"You look at Jonathan and say, 'He's not as athletic as the other two,' and that is accurate. But Jonathan, in his own right, is

a great athlete."

Great athletes will surround whoever takes the reins as KSU's quarterback. David Allen, a senior who is one of the most dangerous punt returners in the nation, is expected to start at running back.

Allen will be paired with two deadly wide receivers - junior Aaron Lockett and senior Quincy Morgan. Morgan averaged 24 yards per catch last season and Lockett has 1,459 yards receiving in two seasons.

Those two, combined with Allen, who needs 172 yards and one touchdown on punt returns

to break both career NCAA marks, make for an explosive attack that should put up points.

The defense should be stingy as usual, returning seven starters from a squad that was second in the nation in 1999. Strength will be found at every position.

The defensive backfield returns three starters from a group that ranked No. 1 in passing efficiency in the nation and intercepted 16 passes.

"Returning seven of the top eight players could allow this group to be as effective, or more so, than last year," Snyder said.