

NU's Adams quiet but effective

In a Nebraska football camp, where 400 kids become a maze of 40-yard dash times, swim moves and free T-shirts, first impressions last. And Demoine Adams wasn't about to flunk his debut.

NU Rush Ends Coach Nelson Barnes was impressed. There was the speed. The ever-running motor. Strong instincts. And, well, there was the speed again. Again and again and again.



Samuel McKewon

But Barnes couldn't help noticing a problem. Not with Adams' work ethic, or his drill work. Adams just looked ... sick.

"It got to the point when, after one of the sessions, Demoine was just out of gas, just sick," Barnes said of the sophomore starting his first game at rush end Saturday against San Jose State. "I went over to see what was wrong with him, and he wouldn't say what his problem. I finally got it out of him."

"He was having an asthma attack through the whole thing." You begin to notice this pattern with the 6-foot-2, 235-pounder. Thoughtful, business-like, tough to a fault. And reserved, both in a small volume of words and tone of voice. When Adams speaks, it's worth listening. He's deemed it worth saying.

An asthma attack—not so bad that it's worth complaining about. Apparently, neither was the left knee injury Adams tried not to report when he arrived in his first season. He hid it as long as he could, he said, until the coaches spotted it, and he coughed up the truth, leading to arthroscopic surgery and a redshirt in 1998.

And if injuries are worth toughing out, it doesn't bode well for TV cameras and notebooks.

Until now, the native of Pine Bluff, Ark., hasn't seen the point. With the media, that is. Cornhusker beat reporters enjoy the idea of the scoop on the next big fish in the red pond. In spot action last season behind Aaron Wills, Adams showed flashes of the show he hoped to put on this season, so the media cast out the worm. And Adams swam away.

"I was just trying to stay focused," Adams said. "I was just getting playing time and everything. I didn't want to get too caught up in the media."

So Adams "evaluated" how he'd talk to the media.

"I don't want to start talking and land in controversy," he said. "I feel more comfortable than people think about talking. Sooner or later, once I started getting more playing time, I'd have to start talking to the media."

Which means Adams is ready after earning the starting job after two-a-day practices. His quiet act in the media has allowed him to nab the slot with relative obscurity. Notice, too, in a depth chart littered with "and" or "or" at several positions, Adams is alone as the top left rush end.

Behind him are three equally untested and talented players who all had their shot of winning the job, Barnes said, and couldn't surpass Adams in workouts. When he received his Blackshirt last Monday, he expected that a few other rush ends would, too.

But Barnes has two rush ends positions to fill. Two Blackshirts.

"Demoine is the No. 1 guy, no if, and or buts," Barnes said. "There's nothing next to his name. He'll be the first in there. He's earned it."

Adams hears that and responds with a smile, a shrug and a guarantee that backups Chris Kelsay, Justin Smith and J.P. Wichmann are just as capable. It's likely, Adams said, that all four will see time against SJSU Saturday.

"And when you're out there, you're a Blackshirt," Adams said.

That comment is a good mark of Adams, brought up "sir" and "ma'am" school of manners, along with the balancing of school and sports, as he expects to graduate in three years with a degree in political science.

He rattles off these academic goals with an air of accomplishment that suggests the "shy" tag has been unfairly placed. Adams isn't introverted, Barnes said, just measured with words and goals.

"You never have a problem with Demoine," Barnes said. "He's always ready to go, every play, every down."

Asthma, or any other obstacle, be damned.

Pre-game rituals help players prepare for game day

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

Nebraska quarterback Eric Crouch dashes around the left side of the San Jose State defense and just before being hit by a Spartan linebacker, pitches it off to a Husker running back, who scores a touchdown.

Kicker Josh Brown lines up for a game-winner against the Spartans from 45 yards out and the kick sails straight through the uprights.

Joe Walker returns the opening kickoff of Saturday's game 101 yards for a touchdown, breaking through four defenders and juking the kicker out of his shoes.

These Husker heroics haven't happened—yet. But the three NU players and most of their teammates will have performed similar feats thousands of times

in their minds by 11:30 a.m. Saturday, the beginning of the 2000 season.

From the moment they are awakened on a Saturday game day, five to six hours before kickoff, NU players turn to visualization techniques to prepare for that day's game.

"I would say that the mental aspects are a good 95 percent of what I do," Brown said.

Thinking about the game is what the Huskers are taught to do.

Team psychologist Jack Stark distributes weekly tapes to the players in the hope that peak performance can be achieved at the exact time the ball is snapped.

The players said the tapes helped them to clear their minds so they can concentrate on their assignments.

"It helps the players who have a hard time getting riled up, get up," said offensive lineman Dave Volk. "And the guys who have trouble getting too riled up—it helps calm them down."

The players are instructed to listen to certain part of the tapes each night of the week to the point where Saturday becomes their peak day for performance.

Coach Frank Solich said the routine the team goes through helps them focus and Stark does a good job adapting to various player's needs.

"There are some individuals who prepare differently, and he does a great job finding them their best way to prepare," said Solich, who puts his team up in a

Please see RITUALS on 9



Jake Gillespie/DN



Mike Warren/DN

Husker freshman pitcher Peaches James (right) and sophomore outfielder Kim Ogee joke around during practice on Wednesday. The Huskers are busy preparing for a fall season that includes two tournaments in late September and early October. During the fall, NU is looking to build on last year's 52 wins, a school record, and a sixth consecutive NCAA Tournament berth. To do so, they must replace All-American hurler Jenny Voss. James, a highly touted recruit, is expected to help fill the void.

Swiney is marked man in secondary

■ The sophomore cornerback is ready for action again after being absent nearly two years.

BY JOHN GASKINS

Replacing an All-American at your position is tough enough. Playing for the first time in almost two years after coming back from medical hardship certainly makes life tougher.

Then you flip open Sports Illustrated's college football preview issue, in which an anonymous coach singled you out as the guy to pick on if you want your offense to beat Nebraska.

Ouch.

Such is the life of NU right cornerback Erwin Swiney as he prepares for a rude awakening to the gridiron this season.

"I'm expecting a lot of teams to come throwing at me," Swiney said. "They know that I haven't been out there, and they probably feel I'm the weaker corner. That's going to test me right away, and that's better for me."

It will be a stern test right off the bat. San Jose State threw for 249 yards per game last season.

Sure, Swiney's backfield teammates—Keyou Craver, Dion Booker, Clint Finley and Joe Walker—are now proven veterans, which alleviates some worries about replacing Ralph Brown and fellow All-American Mike Brown.

Sure, the Lincoln Northeast standout has solid experience—starting 13 games at left cornerback and was third on the team in pass breakups with 13 in 1998.

What might worry George Darlington and NU fans this year are the passes Swiney didn't break up and the ones he got burned on.

Like the third-and-18 bomb Randy McCown threw to Chris Taylor for an 81-yard touchdown to send Texas A&M on its way to an upset.

Or any of the bombs Troy Edwards caught in his record-breaking performance for Louisiana Tech. Or, despite mostly decent coverage, any Kevin Lockett catch in the Kansas State loss.

But Darlington said he was not as worried as history might make him.

"Erwin played hurt most of the time," Darlington said. "And that made it especially difficult on him. Now, thankfully, he's 100 percent and a year older and has improved."

Swiney had surgery after the 1999 spring game to repair abdominal muscles, a problem that had bothered him since his arrival at NU.

After that, he went on the same rehabilitation program former NU running back DeAngelo Evans was on. He performed precise exercises in the NU gymnastics facility and spent countless hours in the whirlpool. When he realized the recovery process was stalling, Swiney decided to take the redshirt.

"He's a fighter," Craver said. "He handled it very well and very maturely, and I think it will pay off during the season."

What impressed Darlington the most was Swiney's performance on the scout team.

"That gave me a good perspective," Swiney said. "I was on the sidelines during the games, but I learned a lot just by watching."

Swiney not only took note of the pristine play of the Browns, but also noticed the frequency at which teams threw in then-

Please see SWINEY on 9

Husker volleyball welcomes new coaches

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

The Nebraska Athletic Department surely plopped down a few extra dollars into the volleyball program going into this season.

There was the expense of practice gear and all the materials that go along with running a highly touted volleyball program.

But maybe Bill Byrne should have forked over some athletic department green to purchase some name tags and get-to-know you worksheets for the team, coaches and fans.

There's a new look coaching staff sitting the sidelines this season for NU, as first-year Head Coach John Cook tabbed Staci Wolfe and Craig Skinner as his assistant coaches.

Cook is no fresh face, having served as an assistant to long-time Head Coach Terry Pettit. But Wolfe and Skinner had no connection to the NU volleyball program before being offered assistants' positions.

Despite their lack of Big Red background, neither Wolfe nor Skinner pondered the decision of coming to Lincoln to assist the No. 6 team in the country for too long.

"It's probably the Cadillac of volleyball programs," Skinner said. "So it wasn't a very tough decision when John asked me to

come back and join him."

Skinner had assisted with Cook at Wisconsin from 1994-96, as the Badgers climbed to national prominence under their direction.

"He brings great familiarity, having coached with me for three years at Wisconsin," Cook said of Skinner. "He's excellent in the gym and he can pretty much train any position."

Nebraska's top assistant coach, Staci Wolfe, is familiar with excellence as well.

Cook stole Wolfe from the University of Florida, another big-time volleyball program, after five-years as an assistant coach for the Gators.

Wolfe is also not new to the NU Coliseum, where she played at four times as a swing hitter for Colorado from 1991-94, leading the Buffaloes to the Big Eight Tournament Championship in 1992.

"I am here because it's Nebraska volleyball, and a chance to be a part of this program," Wolfe said. "I wasn't going to leave Florida for just any opportunity though."

But Wolfe said coaching at Nebraska was a "golden opportunity" for her.

"What Coach Pettit left us here is quite an opportunity and it doesn't come around but once in a lifetime. I just happened to be



Assistant Coaches Staci Wolfe and Craig Skinner work with the NU volleyball team and Skinner joined the volleyball program in March after coming from Ball State last year. Wolfe joined the team after coaching at Florida last year.



Steven Bender/DN

at the right place at the right time."

Cook said Wolfe seemed to fit the mold of what he was looking for in an assistant coach.

"I really liked the way she related with the Florida team. I like her presence in recruiting and she provides a female on staff that the players can relate too," Cook said.

The new assistants have grown on the players as well, with the introductory aide of the team's summer trip to China.

"They have been very positive. They're very encouraging toward us," junior outside hitter Kim Behrends said.

"As a team, we're just having fun and I think we play better when we're looser."

The move by both coaches to join Cook at Nebraska appears to be paying off.

"Athletically, and with its potential, this team has a chance

Please see ASSISTANTS on 9

Here comes the Lincoln 'Saltdogs'

BY JASON MERRIHEW

Much debate and considerable anticipation ended Wednesday afternoon with a proclamation by the president of Lincoln's new minor league team.

"We have just let the dogs out in Lincoln, NE," Lincoln Pro Baseball President Charlie Meyer proclaimed on Wednesday.

With that, it was official. The Northern League Baseball franchise in Lincoln will be known as the Saltdogs.

"We feel we have a very unique and appropriate name for our Northern League baseball team," Meyer said. "Salt certainly has a historic place in Lincoln history, referring to the salt basin area where the city was established. And we feel dogs fit in with our whole fun and family atmosphere that we want our fans to experience when they come out to the ballpark."

The team colors will include navy blue, red and gold. The mas-

Please see SALTDOGS on 9