

Vedral case black eye for all

Who is guilty in the Mark Vedral sexual assault case? Legally, no one.

Ethically, everyone, probably. Vedral, obviously. Even his own defense admitted that, at best, Vedral had approximately three minutes of conversation with his accuser before they began having sex.

That doesn't exactly leave Vedral dressed in his Sunday finest.

Then there may be the woman who accused Vedral of sexual assault.

The jury obviously doubted her testimony that she was asleep for most of the encounter.

Was she telling the truth? Only she and Vedral know.

Everybody who has watched the case will blame one, the other or both. I'm uncertain about the events on May 5, and uncomfortable assigning absolute guilt for those events.

I do know, however, that the Nebraska football team has dealt with the Vedral mess just fine - if you believe football players can't speak for themselves.

I hope NU Coach Frank Solich feels guilty for placing a gag order on his team and coaching staff in regard to the Vedral case or his return to the team.

Solich will say barring his players from speaking makes sense for one very simple reason - it takes attention away from football. Sidetracks the players from the most important issue at hand, the Hawkeyes.

Truthfully, Solich is protecting the players. Protecting them from themselves, protecting them from adulthood.

I hope we, as a football-crazed state, feel guilty for buying Solich's coachspeak line on the matter, actually believing that Iowa's offense is more important than discussing sexual assault.

At our core, many of us truly believe that discussing Vedral's position in the starting lineup is more important than having the players explain to us just how they feel about Vedral, the case, the situation, the attitudes that made the situation possible.

Is this real life? Does an office skip talking about an employee in Vedral's situation to talk about the paper clip supply?

Do other student groups? What about the Student Senate?

Nope. I certainly hope the football team deals with this issue in-house. I have a feeling they won't, though.

The football team also needs to deal with the Vedral mess out in public for everyone to see. Sure, this scrutiny would be far stronger than a student senate or other organizations might face. Of course, they also don't have the chance to perform in front of hundreds of thousands of screaming, adoring fans.

But, instead of holding Vedral and other NU athletes accountable to speak about their actions, you let them get away with it time and time again. You let Nebraska (and college) athletes live in this alternate reality.

Let it happen, too. We create the atmosphere in which a 21-year-old's strength and speed is more important than his mind, his values. These are not mindless children. They are adults.

We excuse often inexcusable behavior of Nebraska athletes. We do this because we feel it is a necessary byproduct of athletic greatness.

It should stop, but it won't. In fact, when Mark Vedral is announced as a starting linebacker for the first time at Memorial Stadium, a rousing ovation by some 75,000 fans will follow. It is inevitable.

The crowd will be cheering a person we would likely shun if Vedral was a co-worker, a classmate, instead of a football player.

The message we will send to Mark Vedral, Nebraska football player, will be one of total acceptance, a figurative slap on the back. While you stand and cheer, it is my sincere hope that deep in your soul, somewhere beneath the layers of a heart that bleeds Husker red, you feel very, very guilty.



Matthew Hansen

Vedral returns to Husker squad

■ Acquitted of sexual assault charges, the linebacker is back at practice.

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

Cornhusker linebacker Mark Vedral rejoined the Nebraska football team on Saturday, one day after he was acquitted of charges of first degree sexual assault.

The Huskers and NU Coach Frank Solich readily allowed Vedral to return to the practice field for the first time since spring football.

When Solich was asked if he had second thoughts about allowing Vedral back on the team, he immediately responded "no."

Solich said his decision was final, and the team's unity council would take no further action. He also appointed himself the team's sole spokesman regarding Vedral.

"The fact that he was

found innocent weighs heavily into what we are doing," Solich said. "There are times when you wonder what is right for the individual and the team, and you make decisions that are based on all of that. You just try to move forward with it and move on."

Before Saturday, Vedral had not attended meetings or practices since the May 5 incident.

However, Vedral was not completely cut off from the team.

"I have been in contact with Mark for a number of reasons," Solich said. "One of them is to make sure he understood that he just wasn't being abandoned."

Vedral, who has chosen not to speak on the matter at this time, will be eligible to play in next Saturday's game against Iowa. But Solich wouldn't make any promises regarding the linebacker's return.

"It will all depend on what type of playing condition he

"It will all depend on what type of playing condition (Vedral) is in."

Frank Solich
NU football coach

is in," he said. "You know he has not been on the field getting any type of workouts. Consequently, it will take him a while to get into football-playing condition and also to make sure he gets all of his assignments down."

Vedral was listed as the team's starting weak-side linebacker, ahead of junior Randy Stella, the current starter, before the May 5 incident and subsequent sexual assault charge.

Only time will tell whether Vedral will regain his starting weak-side spot or help at the strong-side position. That spot is currently filled by former walk-on Scott



Mike Warren/DN

Mark Vedral, a junior weak-side linebacker, was acquitted of first-degree sexual assault charges on Friday in Lancaster County Court. Vedral was reinstated by Coach Frank Solich after the acquittal and returned to practice for the first time since the May 5 incident.

Shanle, a sophomore, with true freshman T.J. Hollowell and former walk-on senior Rod Baker as back-ups.

One area that Vedral might be able to make an immediate impact in is on special teams, an area of concern after Notre Dame returned a kickoff and a punt

for touchdowns against the Huskers.

"He was our leading tackler on special teams last year as a punt coverer," Solich said. "Not having him not being a part of it has meant a great deal to this team as far as having an experienced guy out there."

Nebraska holds Tigers in three games

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

The top-ranked Nebraska volleyball team is making it look way too easy.

Before a season-high NU Coliseum crowd of 4,167, the Cornhuskers (9-0, 2-0) manhandled an undefeated Missouri (10-1, 1-1) squad 15-0, 15-9, 15-3.

The Tigers came into Lincoln with plenty of momentum, after knocking off No. 19 Texas A&M earlier

in the week.

NU shot down any aspirations MU had of an upset by shutting out the Tigers in game one.

After the win, Nebraska Coach John Cook said he was happy with how his team played and kept their focus throughout the match.

"As a coaching staff, we're really pleased we came out focused the first game," Cook said. "When you beat somebody 15-0, you're doing almost everything perfect."

"If you do crush somebody the first game, it's a natural thing to take a deep breath and relax. We have to learn to deal with that."

Offensively the Huskers were led by the hitting of sophomore Laura Pilakowski and junior Jenny Kropp. The two combined for 27 of the 47 total kills with an impressive .376 hitting percentage.

Defensively, NU's blocking game proved to be dominant once again. The Huskers held the Tigers to a .069 hitting percentage, just under their season average of .106.

Pilakowski said she thought MU would play them a lot tougher since they came in undefeated.

"We did expect a harder game," Pilakowski said. "We never know how the other team is going to play. We just have to play our game."

Coming into Saturday's match, the Tigers only big-game experience came against A&M, also the only ranked team MU had played before Saturday.

The Husker's tough schedule prepared them for Missouri, Pilakowski said.

"We've played top teams," Pilakowski said. "Playing top teams helps you every game you play. You have to play every point."

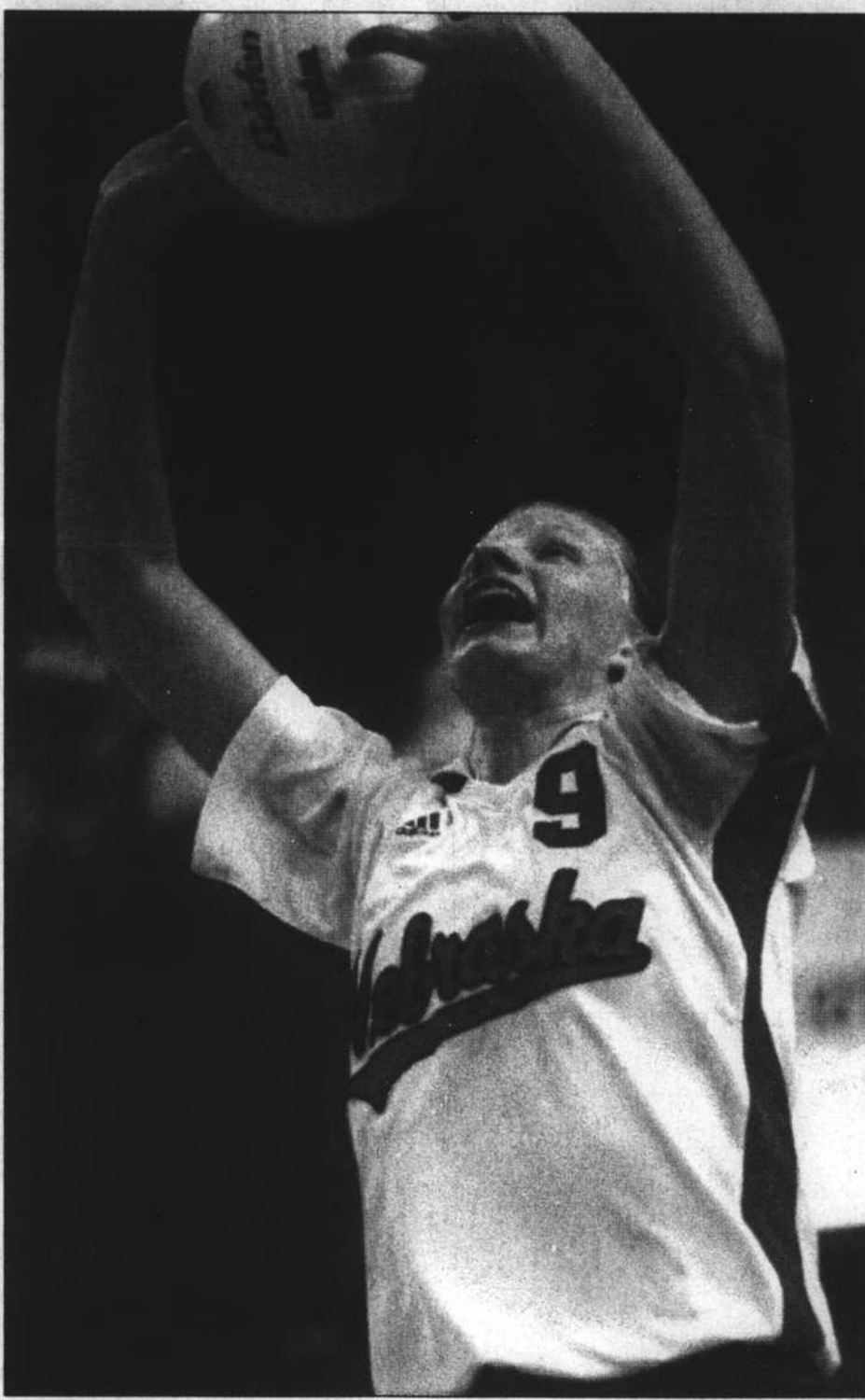
The only leads MU had on the Huskers came at 1-0, 2-1 and 3-2 in the third game before Nebraska scored 13 points to end the match.

Cook said he really wasn't surprised about his team's dismantling of Missouri.

He knew the Tigers, on paper, hadn't really played a formidable opponent.

"They played a lot of lower level type teams," Cook said. "I think when you come into this environment and play against the Huskers for the first time, things are happening awfully fast that they're not used to."

"That's always a risk you take when you schedule easy non-conference (games)."



Mike Warren/DN

Sophomore middle blocker Laura Pilakowski sets during Nebraska's sweep of Missouri on Saturday night at the NU Coliseum. Pilakowski dominated the Tigers with 17 kills and a hitting average of .464 while the Huskers handed Missouri its first loss. The Huskers remain unbeaten and ranked No. 1 nationally.

Huskers shut out two more

BY JAMIE SUHR

Carrying the nation's top scoring average into the UConn Classic this weekend, the Nebraska

Nebraska soccer team found itself relying solely on

defense for the first time. The Cornhuskers walked away from the tournament with its fifth and sixth shutouts of the season after defeating both host team University of Connecticut 2-0 and Dartmouth 2-0.

Sunday's game against UConn remained scoreless until 3:23 remaining in the first half when Danica Carey found the ball in front of the net after a corner kick.

NU would strike again just 4:27 into the second half when Najeh Williams blasted a shot off of the crossbar and past Husky goalkeeper Maria Yatrakis.

The Huskers kept the pressure on the Huskers, forcing goalkeeper Karina LeBlanc to save six of her nine shots in the second half. The nine saves were a season-high for LeBlanc.

"I was most satisfied with the battling we did out there," Coach John Walker said. "It was a tough win on the road."

The Husker defense was just as stingy Friday, with LeBlanc notching a shutout against Dartmouth.

While NU didn't allow a goal, it was out shot 12-10, marking the first time the Huskers were out shot this season.

Christine Latham's goal at 7:45 into the game would be all the scoring the team would

Please see SHUTOUT on 9

NU teams finish second amid tight quarters at Greeno

BY JILL ZEMAN

Members of the Nebraska cross country team know Pioneer's Park well.

The team practices at the park, several members have competed there in meets, and some ran the course in high school.

But normally, when the team runs this route, it's not clogged with hundreds of driven competitors out to defeat them.

That was the case Saturday, as the usually serene park transformed into a clustered convention of nearly 600 runners for the 11th annual Woody Greeno/Nebraska Invitational.

Despite the chaos, the men's and women's teams performed well.

Each took second place in the competition, with the U.S. Air Force Academy leading the men and Kansas State University claiming the women's title.

The women's race was dominated by the Kansas State team, as a stream of pur-



David Clasen/DN

NU runner Marcus Witter wipes sweat from his eyes after finishing fourth in the Woody Greeno Nebraska Invitational cross country meet on Saturday.

ple and silver-clad runners trickled in one after another claiming the top four races.

The 5,000 meter race was won by Kansas State sophomore Amy Mortimer with a time of 17:14.3.

Freshman Ann Gaffigan was the first Husker to cross the line for the women,

coming in eighth place with a time of 18:25.7.

Jay Dirksen, the Nebraska cross country coach, said he was pleased with Gaffigan's performance, particularly because it was her first collegiate meet.

Sophomore Kathryn Handrup and senior Amie Finkner Jorgensen took 12th and 13th places, respectively.

"This was the best race I've seen Amie run," Dirksen said.

Sophomore Jenna Lucas took 21st and senior Jaimie Kruger placed 35th out of the pool of nearly 300 runners.

On the men's side, the 8,000 meter race was won by Kansas State's Shadrack Kimeli with a time of 25:01.7.

NU senior Marcus Witter wasn't far behind, as he finished fourth with a time of 25:16.10.

Despite his high finish, Witter said he was disappointed with the race.

"This was my last home meet, and I wanted to win," he said.

Witter attributed his finish to a slow start, which, coupled with nearly 300 runners scrambling to lead the pack, made it

difficult for him to make up the distance.

"There was nowhere to go," he said.

Dirksen agreed and said at times, there were too many runners without enough room to maneuver.

"Some of them were running in grass up to their knees," he said.

Other Husker top finishers were sophomore Mike Kamm, who claimed 14th place, and freshman Kyle Wyatt, who finished 17th.

While Dirksen said he was pleased with the team's performance, he emphasized that they are not in their top physical shape.

The men's and women's teams are conditioned to peak physically in late October, Dirksen said.

As training intensifies throughout the season, both the men's and women's teams should make great strides, Dirksen said.

"We had a good start, and we'll improve from here," he said.

The team's next challenge is Saturday at the Roy Griek Invitational, in St. Paul, Minn.