

NU betting early success continues in KU road game

■ The Jayhawks are 10-1, but Coach John Cook is betting his team's attitude will win the day.

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

So far, the Nebraska volleyball team has passed every test thrown at them.

On paper, the next test isn't a difficult one, but Coach John Cook and his team know it's definitely an important one.

Tonight the top-ranked Cornhuskers (9-0, 2-0) open up Big 12 conference road play in Lawrence against Kansas (10-1, 1-1).

The Jayhawks started off 10-0 against weak non-conference competition before losing at Texas A&M on Saturday.

This is the same Texas A&M team that was beaten by Missouri. Nebraska demolished Mizzou in three sets last Saturday.

Despite the comparisons in his team's favor, Cook said he

expected a tough match from the upstart KU squad.

"We're going against a hot team," Cook said. "A team that's had a lot of early season success."

"They have a new arena down there that Roy Williams built for them. It seats about 2,000 and is really loud. It's kind of a cracker box-type gym."

If NU has a defense against the Big 12 road atmosphere, it will be the team's attitude, Cook said.

"This team, if you're around them enough, takes care of business and likes playing," he said. "It's a pretty boring group to be around. They love this team and they love to play volleyball."

Also making it tougher for the Jayhawks will be a tweaked Husker attack. Cook said Nebraska would open things a little in Lawrence.

To this point, Cook said the Huskers have been very conservative when it came to showing different attacks.

"We've kept things very vanilla like," Cook said. "We're going to

start adding some things as we go to the Big 12.

"Were going to work on some combination type sets. We want to try to find a way to get (Kim) Behrends and (Anna) Schrad some kills.

"Laura Pilakowski has only done the basic. We can actually have her go all over the court to attack balls. She's really dynamic that way."

While KU will see some new wrinkles from the Huskers, almost everything the Jayhawks do will be unfamiliar to Nebraska.

But this is how Cook wants it. Jenny Kropp said the team had a very limited scouting report for Kansas.

"We don't go into in-depth scouting reports this year," Kropp said. "This year we focus more on ourselves."

"Coach Petit would know every girls' number, what rotation they were in, what their tendencies were and where they hit the ball. I like the way we do it this season much better."

Crouch genuine in a false world

GASKINS from page 10

for the No. 1 football team in the country.

And let's face it, he's got the teen-idol looks and mannerisms — the boy-next-door-thing — going. Women love it. Most guys wish they had it. Combine that with athleticism and, in Nebraska, you're a god.

But what separates Crouch from a lot of super-sports gods is he doesn't act like one, except when he's on the field. He's a high-profile athlete you feel you could, God forbid, have an intelligent conversation with at some coffee house or a fellow sports nut you could tell jokes and stories with at any dive bar in town.

Never, ever, ever, has Crouch given any indication when talking to the media that he's "gotta go." He's never turned down an autograph. He's usually smiling and acting damn glad to see you.

And he's self-conscious. Very

self-conscious. Several times in an interview, he'd laugh and say, "This sounds kind of strange, but ..." before revealing something about himself.

But according to him, he's not as self-conscious as he used to be. High school teammates say Crouch spoke about as much as the goal posts in high school.

Crouch remembers being a redshirt freshman at NU, when after practice was over on Fridays, he'd head straight to his car — already fully packed with laundry and homework — and bolt up I-80 to go home to Millard and his family and high school friends. He was homesick and shy.

But playing well and having people shower you with praise can get you to come out of your shell quite a bit, and Crouch has. He certainly isn't the mute he or his peers say he used to be.

He doesn't scowl or dismiss

the Heisman questions, or the "How does it feel to be a celebrity?" questions. He appreciates them. He doesn't take them seriously, either. He's just a guy.

And his teammates don't mind his pub, either. Receiver Matt Davison — one of Crouch's better friends — said one reason Crouch's teammates respect him so much is the way he handles himself and his image, that no matter how much teammates make fun of his fame (Davison calls him "Heisman" all the time), he never budges or gets mad.

Folks, there's not much else to say. Eric Crouch is as genuine as they come. Maybe things will change if things start going wrong for him, but I doubt it.

There, you have it — a sports-writer who just wrote a kiss-ass column drooling about how great of a guy a high-profile athlete is.

Eric Crouch deserves it.

Husker Notes

The good news: Nebraska has finally found an 11th and final opponent for the 2001 and 2002 seasons.

The bad news: That opponent is more well-known as a first name than a college.

Good news: Troy State, located in Troy, Alabama, is 3-0 this year and gunning for a national title.

Bad news: That national title is in Division I-AA. Troy State will join the Division I-A ranks next year. They'll get thrown into the fire right away, as their first Division I game will be in Lincoln.

The Alabama school will make \$475,000 for each game.

— Correll Buckhalter returned to practice Tuesday

after taking 10 days off with a hyperextended knee. NU Coach Frank Solich said Buckhalter looked good following the lay-off, and would be ready for Saturday's home game against Iowa.

— Meteorologists are predicting a far different forecast from the Husker's first home game. Temperatures are expected to drop into the 50's by Saturday. Against the Spartans on Sept. 2, highs reached three digits in the stands and over 110 degrees on the field.

— The Big 12 Conference announced Monday Nebraska's game with Missouri on Sept. 30 will be at 6 p.m. and will be televised nationally by FOX Sports Net. — From staff reports

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Lifter stripped of silver medal

■ A positive steroid test leads to the first drug scandal of the Sydney Summer Olympics.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SYDNEY, Australia — On the same day a Bulgarian weightlifter kissed his silver medal goodbye in a drug scandal, a hamstring pull forced American sprinter Inger Miller to bid farewell to her 100-meter medal hopes.

Scandal and injury were the stories Wednesday (Tuesday CDT) after Miller confirmed her debilitating leg injury, and the International Olympic Committee stripped weightlifter Ivan Ivanov of his medal in one of the first two doping cases during the Sydney Games.

Ivanov tested positive for a banned drug, as did hammer thrower Vadim Devyatovsky of Belarus. Ivanov, who kissed his barbell after clinching his medal Saturday (Friday CDT) in the 56-kilogram class, tested positive for a diuretic.

Diuretics, often used to reduce weight by flushing fluid from an athlete's body, are also used to mask the presence of other performance-enhancing drugs.

Devyatovsky tested positive for the steroid nandrolone in an out-of-competition test in the athletes' village, IOC executive board member Kevan Gosper said.

MILLER OUT: America's No. 2 sprinter, Inger Miller, confirmed that she is definitely out of the 100 meters and possibly the entire Sydney Games after straining her left hamstring in a pre-Sydney workout.

Miller, who finished second to Marion Jones in the 100 and 200 meters at the U.S. trials, was hopeful that rest would sufficiently heal the injury in time for the 200 on Sept. 27 and the subsequent relays.

"I'm disappointed ... but I've got to go with the flow," she said Wednesday (Tuesday CDT). "I'm still young and I've got other chances."

Miller was considered a likely medalist in both the 100 and the 200.

SWIMMING: Jenny Thompson has one last chance.

Lenny Krayzelburg has one more chance.

The two American swimmers qualified Wednesday (Tuesday CDT) in preliminaries for their Sydney gold-medal

quests. For Thompson, it will be the final opportunity to win an individual gold after six relay medals. For Krayzelburg, it offers an opportunity to pick up a second gold medal.

Thompson, America's most decorated female gold medalist, swims in the 100-meter freestyle against world record-holder Inge de Bruijn of the Netherlands. U.S. swimmer Dara Torres also qualified, finishing right behind de Bruijn.

Krayzelburg set himself up as the favorite by setting an Olympic record in preliminaries of the 200-meter backstroke. His 17-year-old teammate, Aaron Peirsol, finished second.

No swimmer has equaled the performance of Ian Thorpe, the acclaimed Australian sensation. The 17-year-old Thorpe captured his third gold medal of the Sydney Games by leading his team to victory Tuesday (Monday CDT) over the U.S. team.

Thorpe has also captured a silver at his hometown Olympics, never finishing behind any American. His lone second-place finish came when Dutch swimmer Pieter van den Hoogenband took the gold in the 200 freestyle.

Typically, Thorpe helped the Australians set a world record in the 800-meter freestyle relay by opening a two-body length lead on the first leg. The Americans took the silver, their second in the relays, while the Netherlands earned the bronze.

The Americans captured a gold of their own, their sixth in swimming, when Tom Malchow set an Olympic mark in the 200 butterfly. Teammate Cristina Teuscher picked up a bronze in the 200 individual medley, giving the United States 14 medals in four days at the Olympic pool.

MEN'S SOCCER: The U.S. men's soccer team made it to the Olympic quarterfinals for the first time ever.

On the Melbourne Cricket Grounds, the American soccer players notched a historic 3-1 victory Tuesday over Kuwait. The Americans, needing a win to advance, outplayed their opponents to earn one.

A first-half goal by Danny Califf preceded second-half tallies by Chris Albright and Landon Donovan as the Americans won for just the fifth time in 25 Olympic contests dating back to 1924. Two of those wins were against Kuwait.

In three preliminary games, the Americans wound up 1-0-2, good enough to move forward.

"The girls did what they could. We had nowhere to go but up."

Kelli Hill

U.S. women's gymnastics coach

GYMNASTICS: The Magnificent Seven of Atlanta were replaced by a fourth-place finish in Sydney for the U.S. women's gymnasts, the first time since 1988 that the Americans failed to medal in Olympic team competition.

But though the team did not defend its 1996 gold medal, team officials were encouraged by its showing after a last-place finish in the 1999 world championships.

"The girls did what they could," Coach Kelli Hill said. "We had nowhere to go but up."

The gold this time went to world champion Romania. Russia won the silver and China took the bronze.

BASEBALL: Three up, three down for the U.S. baseball team. The Americans, managed by Tommy Lasorda, captured their third straight victory when Kurt Ainsworth shut down the Netherlands 6-2.

Outfielder Ernie Young had a homer and three RBIs to lead the U.S. offense.

Ainsworth, picked 24th in the 1999 baseball draft by the San Francisco Giants, settled down after a shaky first inning to pick up the victory.

The U.S. pitchers have allowed just four earned runs in three games.

TENNIS: After snatching up titles at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open, Venus Williams arrived in Sydney as the player to beat for the gold. Henrieta Nagyova of Slovakia wasn't up to that task as Williams crushed her in straight sets, 6-2, 6-2, in her first Olympic match.

BOXING: One thing Jermain Taylor learned as an auto mechanic: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Armed with that knowledge, the 156-pounder stuck with his right hand against Dimitriy Usagin of Bulgaria and knocked his opponent out with 10 seconds left in Round 1.

The first eight U.S. boxers in the ring have won their opening Olympic fights, compared with a 7-0 start for their Cuban counterparts, the main competition.

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