

Washington on coaching fast track

Brian Washington's coaching plan doesn't include one second of wasted time.

He's already enjoyed his retirement. For two years after retiring from a nine-year career as a safety with the Cleveland Browns, New York Jets and Kansas City Chiefs in 1996, he enjoyed it. It's likely he could've kept on enjoying it. But it wasn't in the plan, which was to return to football, this time as a coach.



Samuel McKewon

The plan brings the former Husker defensive back from 1984-87 full circle, back to NU as a graduate assistant in the secondary.

In a sense, Washington never left, maintaining a residence in South Lincoln throughout his professional career. Washington still has the home; now he occupies one of the lower spots on the NU coaching totem pole.

It's that way because of the plan. Washington had other options when, while teaching business courses in a Virginia high school in 1999, he finally sought to get back into football.

There was an intern position with the Chiefs. There was an inquiry to be coach of the Lincoln Lightning. There was an opening at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. But the plan said choose the Husker pipeline.

"Coach (Frank) Solich and I always had a close relationship," Washington said. "He's the one that recruited me."

Solich had no immediate openings, as grad assistants Jon Bostick and Chad Stanley were on the final leg of their three-year stint with NU. So the coach made Washington a deal - sign on as an administrative assistant, wait a year, then get on the staff all the way at the bottom as a graduate assistant. Washington bit.

So the former all-pro made peanuts doing statistics and computer work for a year. Now he makes peanuts on Husker staff.

This isn't about the money, Washington said. It is about a plan going one year at a time, and likely doesn't include a return NFL trip.

Washington said he knows the league well enough to know he doesn't aspire to coach in it.

"It's a business," he said, "all dollar and cents. It's hard to form relationships with people when you go against a different guy in practice, sometimes every week."

Hence, it's an ultra-competitive universe where physical brutality comes in heavy daily doses. Take the hardest, most emotionally draining game you've ever played in college - Washington brings up NU's 24-20 loss to Texas last year - and multiply it by every NFL practice, every NFL game. You're starting to get the picture.

"And by then, it's about playing ball," he said.

Washington seeks the kind of character-building that comes before that moment. College coaching provides it, because there's still some sense of molding players into their future careers, whether it be football or, more likely, a line of work outside the game. He wants that responsibility now.

Which means he'd rather not wait for the pipeline to work its normal channels, which often includes a three-year job at NU, then a work up the chain of command at Division I schools. At 35, Washington is a late starter. In his mind, there isn't time for a long-term process.

"If I had a five-year plan, I'd be 40 years old," he said.

Yes, there's still some NFL left in Washington, a competitiveness that comes from expecting success, not just hoping for it. So there's a motivation to get moving now.

Husker safety Clint Finley said he likes Washington's approach to the game, his ability to mold individual players to their skills and understand how receivers are "trying to take advantage of our weaknesses."

For his part, Washington said he hasn't been around a group of players so genuinely eager to learn. He doesn't know how long he's going to be around, either. The end of this year, for sure. Then, he'll re-evaluate.

"Let's say that my focus right now is helping make sure we get through this year the right way and take care of business," said Washington. "After one year, we'll see where I'm at. But right now, I'm about putting my time into this year. We got to rake our yard before we rake our neighbor's yard."

No. 1 NU keeps on rolling

■ NU's first Big 12 road game against University of Kansas doesn't faze Cepero, Huskers

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Kansas had everything in place for an upset. A loud, capacity crowd packed into a small gym. A fired-up Jayhawk team off to its best start in school history.

But KU's match with the No. 1 Cornhuskers turned out the same as it has for every other NU opponent.

Before a standing room only crowd of 1,300 at the KU Horejsi Family Athletic Center the top ranked Cornhuskers notched another lopsided Big 12 victory over Kansas 15-7, 15-5, 15-6.

The win over the Jayhawks (10-2, 1-2) was the Huskers (10-0, 3-0) first conference road victory on the season.

One of the main concerns for NU Coach John Cook coming into tonight's match was how first year sophomore setter Greichaly Cepero would

Nebraska 15 15 15
Kansas 7 5 6

handle the loud gym's rowdy crowd.

"One of the challenges for us this week was if Greicha was going to play well tonight," Cook said. "We knew they were going to have this place packed."

"Anytime you go to a different gym you have to adjust to the lighting and the building. Setting is all feel and location. It's human nature that setters use points of reference on how to locate the ball and where to set it."

With a .495 hitting percentage it was easy for Cook to say he was pleased with Cepero's performance behind the net.

Nebraska ended the match with only four errors, compared with the 20 Kansas put up.

"As a coaching staff we really can't ask for anything more than hitting .495 with only four hitting errors," Cook said. "That's exceptional."

Cook's lone concern after the match was his team's defensive performance.

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John Cook
NU volleyball coach

Cook put most of the blame on KU's unorthodox style of hitting.

"We have no way of simulating that kind of in practice," he said.

The Huskers, however, shut down Amy Myatt, KU's best player.

"I thought we did a good job on Amy Myatt. We really put some pressure on her."

Myatt came into tonight's match hitting .406. After meeting the Husker block attack she ended with .057 hitting percentage to go along with a match-high nine errors.

NU was led offensively by their sophomore sensation Laura Pilakowski. She notched a match-high 17-kills and hit .438 on 31 attempts.

Nebraska's lethal combination in the middle, Jenny Kropp and Amber Holmquist each added eight kills respectively.

Third-year Kansas Coach Ray Bechard said Nebraska gave his team more than they could handle.

"I don't think we ever got comfortable with passing the ball," Bechard said.

"I told them we had to value the ball tonight. When the ball is on our side of the net it was extremely important. If you give it back to them they're going to make something happen."

"We played a better team tonight. I think we can give a better account of ourselves after tonight's match."

Husker fans get football fix with T.V. games

BY JOHN GASKINS

You know the old saying, "everybody wants to be on TV?" Well, in the world of major college football - especially Nebraska - almost everyone is. Every week.

Tickets are as hard to get as ever, but the heart-break of the millions of devout Big Red fans state- and nation-wide that don't get to see Nebraska live gets less painful every year.

All they have to do is flip on the tube on any given Saturday, and their beloved Cornhuskers will be on.

Saturday's 2:30 telecast against Iowa will be the 43rd of NU's last 53 games that have been televised since the inception of the Big 12 Conference in 1996. Last year, every game but one was televised.

Tim Allen, associate commissioner of the Big 12 Conference, projects 86 appearances by Big 12 teams on television this season, not counting any pre-season or bowl games.

The increased publicity is partially because of college football's ever-growing popularity. The publicity is also popular with almost everyone involved in football.

"It's always a plus," NU Coach Frank Solich said. "Anytime people get to turn on a TV set and see Nebraska play, it certainly helps Nebraska."

"It gives you exposure. Recruits are always looking for that. Parents are always wanting to get the opportunity to see their sons play on TV. It's good for

Please see TV on 11

'The Ripper' thrashes BMX foes

BY JILL ZEMAN

Mounds of dirt are situated at the Star City BMX track, potential obstacles for any bike racer trying to leap over them.

UNL senior Robbie Richard calmly jumps the five, six and even 10-foot obstacles on the track.

He smiles. They're easy for him.

Richard, a Lincoln native and University of Nebraska student, is the best of the best among those who race BMX bikes. He gets paid to make these jumps as quickly as possible, without wiping out.

It's more than a job for Richard, though. Words like "gnarly" and "stoked" creep into Richard's conversation, particularly when he speaks of his racing, his bike, his way of life.

"I don't know what I'd do without my bike," he said.

While Richard, 24, makes his living as a professional BMX racer, he is working toward a marketing degree he hopes to earn in May.

Balancing the books and the bike is tough, but Richard handles it as well as any of the jumps at the Star City BMX track.

"I ride my bike between classes, and when I get done, the books get set aside and I ride until it's dark," he said. "Then I study."

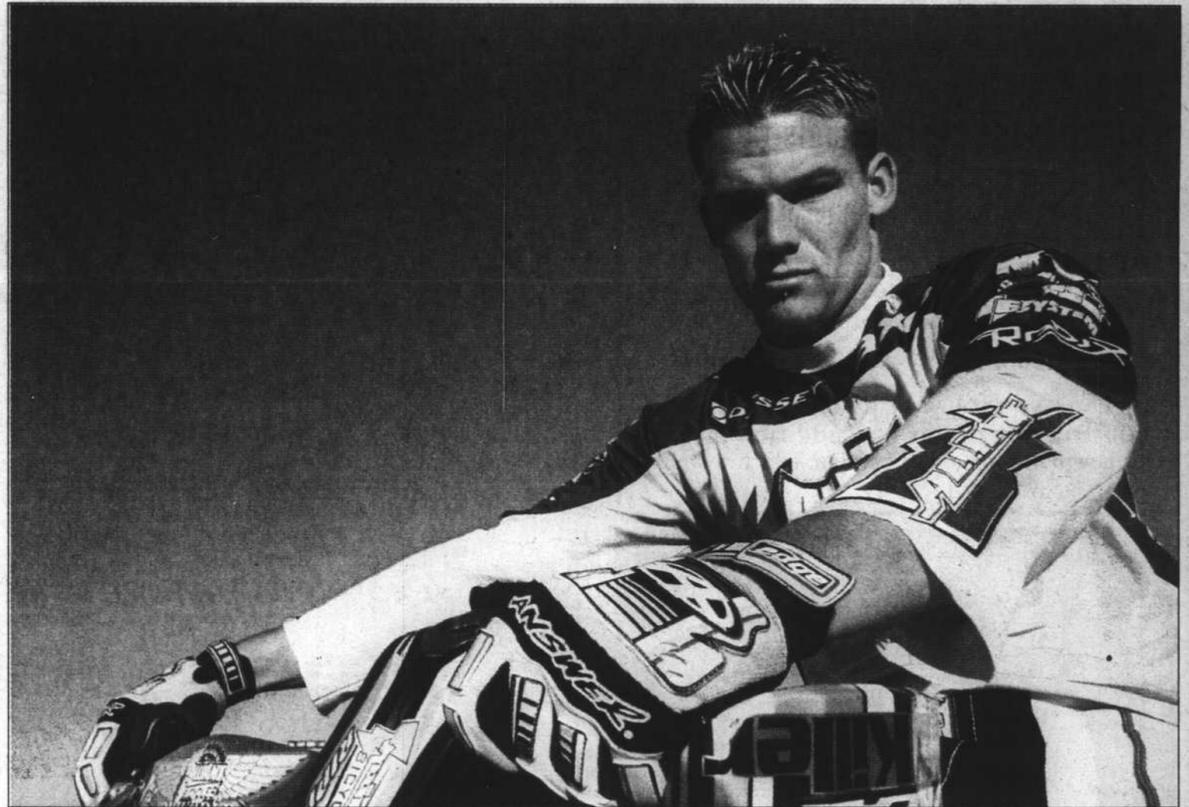
Richard competes on weekends across the nation, which doesn't always work out with his class schedule.

Because Richard doesn't fall under the category of UNL athlete, he isn't excused from his classes when he competes.

So instead, Richard must pick and choose which races he will compete and which classes he cannot miss.

"I'm not as lucky as some of the football players on campus," he said. "I don't get an excuse from school."

In fact, Richard, nicknamed "The Ripper," could be the



Josh Wolfe/DN

antithesis of the traditional Husker athlete, with his bleached blond hair, tattoos and labret piercing - a spike placed directly below his lower lip.

Richard's difference from the UNL efforts goes beyond physical appearances.

"I hate football, I hate Nebraska football," he said.

"There's other stuff out there besides football in this state."

Richard's class conflict played itself out last weekend, when Richard could have competed in one of ESPN's Vans Triple Crown BMX competition.

Richard didn't compete. He

Please see BMX on 10



Josh Wolfe/DN

TOP: UNL senior Robbie Richard, 24, is a professional BMX racer, juggling school and his passion for the track. Richard often rides his bike between classes and competes in events on weekends across the nation.

LEFT: Robbie Richard often jumps as high as 10 feet during competition. The local BMX track, Star City BMX, isn't up to professional standards, he said, which forces him to train in larger cities.

Scout-teamers make big difference for Cornhuskers

BY DAVID DIEHL

In a little over a year at Nebraska, Brett Lindstrom has suffered through countless days of practice and the beatings that come along with it.

He's suffered through one minor, nagging injury after another - like the time he hit his throwing elbow on a defender's helmet and bled profusely.

And don't think he magically escapes major injuries, either. He spent

time on the shelf with a broken foot during his red-shirt season.

All that pain has paid off a little - he was shuffled up the depth chart this spring and started in the Red-White game when two quarterbacks in front of him were held down with injuries.

But his career statistics still show zeros across the board - no passes attempted, no options run and no touchdown celebrations in a shower of cheers from

77,000 people in red.

So goes the football life of the scout-teamer - one of the most vital aspects of the Nebraska football program.

Lindstrom, a redshirt freshman from Omaha, is just one of many walk-ons in the NU program that pay their dues on the Cornhusker's scout team. By giving the starting defenses looks of what they'll be up against in the game, and getting battered and broken in the process,

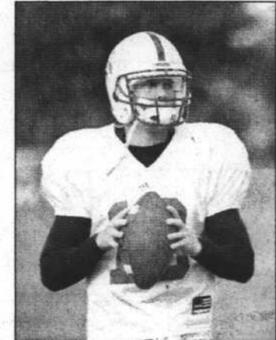
Lindstrom helps Nebraska maintain its standing as a football powerhouse.

In fact, the 50-plus members of the scout team - a group of mostly younger guys and redshirt players - have a big part in the No. 1 ranking, even though they rarely see the game field.

"The scout team is vital to how we operate," Coach Frank Solich said.

The scout team does its work in the days prior to

Please see PRACTICE on 10



Steven Bender/DN

Brett Lindstrom works out with the quarterbacks on Wednesday. During practice, Lindstrom, a scout teamer, often simulates an opposing team's quarterback.