

Megan Cody/DN



Jennifer Lund/DN

A man works on the new baseball stadium north of the Haymarket. Nebraska will not play in the new stadium for most of the season, as construction isn't expected to be done until late May.

Baseball plays waiting game for new facility

BY DANE STICKNEY

It looks like the Nebraska baseball team will be spending another season at the Buck.

Well, most of the season anyway. Construction on the new baseball complex, which is just north of the Haymarket, is progressing, but it probably won't be finished until the beginning of the summer, said Charles Meyer, president of the Lincoln Salt Dogs, the minor league team that also will play at the complex.

"We're shooting for a May-to-June time frame," Meyer said. "I'm pleased with the progress. I think it's coming along nicely."

Nebraska baseball Coach Dave Van Horn said he is hoping the stadium will be finished sooner, so the Cornhuskers can make their much anticipated move from the dilapidated Buck Beltzer Stadium.

But because the college baseball season starts in mid-February, the Huskers will be stuck in Buck for most of the season instead of a brand-new ballpark.

"We're just trying not to think about it," Van Horn said. "We know that it's going to be a state-of-the-art complex, and all of us really want to get over there, but we just have to wait."

Last season, Nebraska came within one win of going to the College World Series, but the team had to go on the road for the entire postseason because Buck Beltzer was deemed unfit to play host to a regional or super-regional tournament, Van Horn said.

"It was real frustrating not being able to host a regional," Van Horn said. "We put up a good enough season to make a bid at the regional, but (the NCAA) told us we didn't have a park capable of hosting one of those tournaments."

The new stadium will be a prime target for a regional, Van Horn said, and he and the rest of the team hope the stadium will be completed by mid-May so Nebraska could play host to one this season.

A formal bid for a regional tournament must be in by April, Van Horn said, so the stadium must be well on its way to being finished by then.

"We're planning on it being ready by then," Van Horn said. "But we can't worry about it. We just need to focus on winning enough games to get into a regional, then we can worry about where we'll play."

Even though the Huskers may not set foot on the field this season, the team is still reaping benefits from the new stadium by using it as a recruiting tool, Van Horn said.

"Even though we've had success at the Buck, there's no fence, and the outfield is ripped up because the football team practices out there," he said. "When we show recruits (Buck Beltzer) and then we go over to the new stadium, their facial expression completely changes."

The construction will not delay the start of the Salt Dogs' schedule, but Meyer said he is still eager to see the finished product.

"It's going to be one of the best college and university parks in the country," Meyer said. "It will be great for us, the university and the city, and we're all anxious to see a completed version."

But until then, Van Horn and the Huskers have to continue to play the waiting game.

"I've just told the players to not even ask me about it anymore," he said. "We're all real excited to play over there, but all we can do is hope for nice weather so the construction can get done as quickly as possible."

GameBreakIN

Huskers play themselves in video games

BY DAVID DIEHL

There you are, slouched on the sofa in a posture that would make your grandmother cringe.

You're watching the television screen intently, sporadically shouting out instructions and some harsh expletives at the tube.

"Quit dropping the damn ball! ... Where the hell did you learn how to pass block? ... You suck, break that tackle!"

The football game before your eyes is not real. It could be one of the many out there such as Playstation games NCAA Football 2000 or GameBreaker. Millions of computations send images of simulated, computerized football players onto the screen. It's all just a simple game, but you still get enraged as if it actually was you and actually was real.

What would that be like? To be on a video game—inside it? To be projected on televisions all across America?

"It's kind of weird," said Nebraska fullback Judd Davies. "I think it's kind of funny being in a game."

How can it be funny or weird? Little kids are glued to their television sets watching and controlling you. They are trying to juke the free safety out of his shorts and prance down the field untouched for the score. You say that would be weird?

If you could only be on the video game, it wouldn't be weird. It'd be something to brag about. You could walk down the street, hold your chin a little higher and puff your chest out a bit more.

"I meet people, and they tell me about my stats and how well I played," said NU running back Dan Alexander. "It's interesting and it's fun for me to hear about it. But it doesn't really affect me."

But it could affect you. All your friends would be using your body to sack the digital quarterback or for a computer-generated diving grab. You'd be proud.

"I told all my friends back home that I was on a game," said linebacker Randy Stella. "They all went out and bought it and began playing with me."

"I had to check myself out. I think they slipped up on a few things. They didn't show my breakaway speed."

Randy Stella
NU linebacker

Yep, it'd be your friends that would give you the most love. They'd let you know about it, too.

"When I first went back home," said Correll Buckhalter, a Collins, Miss., native, "everyone was like 'I was playing with you.' It feels good to know people all across the country got a video game with you and run it with you."

Please see **GAMERS** on 9

Husker linebacker backs up his words on the football field

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

Nebraska's Carlos Polk has never been a big fan of the silent treatment.

In fact, not many people have ever seen the middle linebacker with his mouth shut.

"I always know that when he is talking, he is feeling pretty good," said Craig Bohl, the first-year defensive coordinator and linebackers coach.

Polk is hard to miss on the field, whether it is in a practice or game situation, because his motor is always running. The middle linebacker refuses to shush.

"That is the way I play my game, and I like to mess with my opponents mentally and psyche them out," Polk said. "That is the way I have been playing for I don't know how long."

What has been a comfortable tactic for Polk has not always gone over well with his peers. Before he established himself, his elder teammates were not so receptive to his jabbering style.

"I used to have to run the stairs every now and then for getting in a fight with one of the linemen. They don't like a freshman coming in and running his mouth like I did."

Carlos Polk
NU middle linebacker

Polk recalled his freshman season when he played scout teams—a time when his talking was perceived by many as showboating.

"I used to have to run the stairs every now and then for getting in a fight with one of the linemen," Polk said. "They don't like a freshman coming in and running his mouth like I did."

But Polk admitted he was put in his place several times as a rookie.

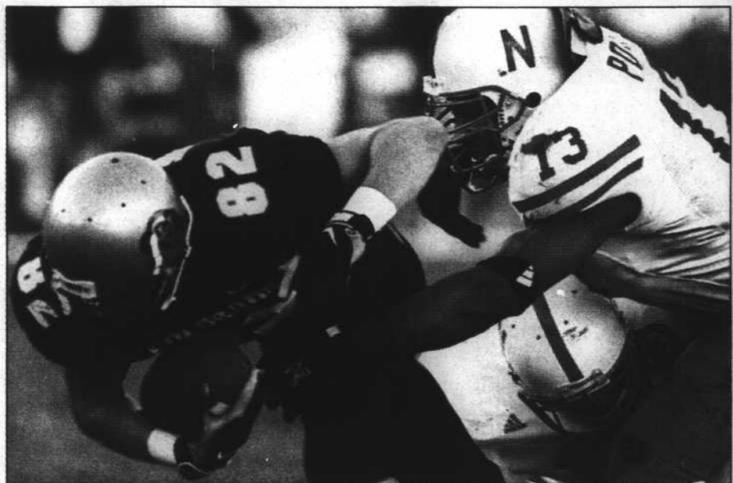
"I was going against Jon Vedral, and I was in the middle of the field, and he came back and cracked back on me," Polk said. "At the time I was

talking, 'I see the screen; here it comes,' and he gave me a real ear-hole shot, and I kind of bit my tongue.

"That is something that I will never forget because he showed me that this is not high school. This is college football."

The loud freshman is now an All-American candidate and senior captain, and players and coaches have adjusted accordingly. His NU teammates recognize the talking as part of Polk's game.

Please see **POLK** on 9



DN File Photo

Senior middle linebacker Carlos Polk is known for both tackling opponents and trash-talking them. The All-American candidate leads the Huskers in tackles this season.