

Both team, fans tough for Collier

Leaves turning brown, air becoming cold and football season heading into the heart of the conference season can only mean one thing.

Basketball season is officially upon us.

Mid-October is a great time for many of us roundball lovers. In places such as Durham and Chapel Hill, N.C., Lawrence, Kan., and Lexington, Ky., it represents a time of anxiety and a start of five months of devotion ending with March Madness.

In Nebraska, there is no such anticipation - most of the state does not even know the game exists until February. Then, the Kansas game rolls around and the dust has settled from Nebraska's latest bowl game and run for the national championship in football (and now volleyball and soccer).

Tomorrow morning, when new NU Coach Barry Collier rolls out the balls at 9:30 a.m., Nebrasketball begins a new era - one that will be met by both challenges and hopefully triumphs for the few die-hard Husker fans left.

Collier, who came to Lincoln from Indiana, a state that worships its best jump-shooters and puts up with profane-speaking coaches as long as they deliver results, has a task at hand that no coach has succeeded yet in Lincoln. The new coach must find a way for his team to be seen and heard in the shadow of Frank Solich's army across campus. Danny Nee was close to getting there a couple of times a while back but was still stopped way short. NU fans don't put up with coaches who don't produce results when they are expected to, and Nee faltered greatly in that department. (His attitude and demeanor didn't do his cause wonders either.)

With the football, volleyball, soccer and various other sports considered yearly for national honors, Husker faithful are yearning for a competitive product that also represents the state - hard-working and scrappy.

Collier should deliver in that department. His teams at Butler were defense-minded, and he has already shown he won't take any crap from the players.

People have praised the discipline that has been instituted over the circus that Nee has overseen the last couple of years. Despite the odds that are stacked against him, Collier's task of growing a basketball following in the Cornhusker State isn't as much of an uphill climb as some may think.

Believe me, it's a long process that may take a couple of years, but history proves that it can be done.

Football and basketball can coexist in Nebraska - it has been done in Gainesville, Fla., Columbus, Ohio and Fayetteville, Ark., three colleges rooted in the pigskin.

Even Notre Dame, the cornerstone of college football, experienced the "madness" last year and should have another good team in 2000-2001.

This goes to show that even though basketball was non-existent at these schools at one time or another, they have cemented themselves right next to, or close to, their fall counterparts.

As part of an ever-improving

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NU, Tech enter game with things to prove

■ The Red Raiders want national respect, while the NU defense wants to get better.

BY JOHN GASKINS

When night falls and the lights shine bright Saturday on one of the biggest football parties SBC Stadium in Lubbock, Texas, has ever seen, the two teams in the spotlight will have plenty to prove.

The host, unranked Texas Tech, want to show a Fox Sports Net national television audience that its 5-1 record, highly-touted pass-happy offense, and second-ranked defense is for real.

The Red Raiders are also out to show there is another football school in Texas the Cornhuskers have to reckon with.

The Huskers came to hostile environments at No. 2 Texas

A&M in 1998 and No. 3 Texas in 1999. NU was not able to escape victorious in either game. Now, the Red Raiders want it to be their turn.

"This is the biggest game I've been a part of since I've been here," Tech running back Ricky Williams said.

"It's going to be real exciting to get the chance to play the No. 1 team in the country at home. We're looking to make our own identity and show people we can play right up there with Texas and Texas A&M. It's a great chance to show what we got."

The guest, top-ranked Nebraska, wants to stack its No. 1 ranked rushing attack (averaging a national best 351.4 yards per game) against the country's second-best defense.

It should be a mouth-watering match-up between Husker speedster and Heisman candi-

date Eric Crouch, fresh off a 302-total-yard performance against Iowa State, and a swarming, laser-quick Red Raider defensive attack that will go after him.

Meanwhile, Blackshirt defenders want to show they can play solid enough defense to make a run at the national championship. This, after floundering frequently in their first five games and making stars out of lesser-known offensive attacks.

After finishing the 1999 season ranked fourth in total defense, this year's Husker squad is 55th, giving up 349 yards a game. The Blackshirts also allowed Missouri quarterback Kirk Farmer (214 total yards) and Iowa State's Sage Rosenfels (346 passing yards) to accomplish career days in each of the last two weeks.

For co-captain senior middle linebacker Carlos Polk, there's no

better time than Saturday, the midpoint game of the season, to emerge from the ashes.

"The Blackshirts go out there to prove a point," Polk said. "We've showed glimpses of it, but we haven't played a complete game yet - from the run game to the pass game. This game will hopefully show that we're getting better and better each day."

"Everyday, I just see a little more improvement, and I think eventually we'll be back at the level we're used to playing at."

But the Blackshirts did shut down the run and threaten the quarterback much better against ISU, surrendering 37 yards on the ground and eventually throwing the pass attack out of rhythm.

But it's the passing attack of Tech that should concern NU. Red Raider sophomore Quarterback Kliff Kingsbury is on

GAMEDAY

Nebraska vs. Texas Tech

When: Saturday, Oct. 12 @ 6 p.m.

Where: SBC Stadium, Lubbock, Texas

T.V.: Fox Sports Network (57)

Radio: Pinnacle Sports Network (1400 AM KLIN)

track to break records in first-year Coach Mike Leach's system. Oklahoma, Leach's former team.

Please see TECH on 9

Behrends finally finds way at NU

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

Senior Kim Behrends has taken the long and winding road in her Nebraska volleyball career.

There were some bright spots along the way, like last year's Texas Tech game, when she knocked senseless, in Behrends' words, "some tall, skinny blonde" who was in the "wrong place at the wrong time" with an overpowering kill.

But for the most part, the Chappell native was a spot player through her junior season, occasionally being thrown into the fire of big games knowing she needed to make a play.

Now the road has straightened for Behrends, and she's loving starting for the No. 1 team in the nation. But she still remembers those pressure-filled days trying to earn respect off the bench.

"There was more pressure in a way," Behrends said. "I knew I would come in during a pressure situation. The score would be 12-12 or something, and I was put in there to get a kill."

She couldn't always land the kill, hitting a .203 percentage as a junior, way down from her .282 percentage during her sophomore year.

Nebraska Head Coach John Cook said .200 to .250 is a solid range for most left-side hitters, but .203 wasn't about to land her more playing time over senior leader Mandy Monson.

"Sometimes, we would think we're doing good," Behrends said of herself and the fellow bench players. "But at that time other people needed to be out there, so we accepted our role."

Now, Behrends needs to be out there. The loss of graduating senior Monson and the redshirt season of Nancy Meendering has cast the limelight on her.

"It's her maturity. Last year she was so up and down," Cook said. "It was hard to have confi-

"I'm in more of a flow out there. You kind of get the rust off those first few points and then you just go."

Kim Behrends
NU left-side hitter

dence in her play to have her out there all the time."

Cook no longer lacks confidence.

Look no further than an early-season match against Colorado State when Cook pulled a struggling Behrends out of the third game of a tight match in favor of true freshman Anna Schrad.

"I had to settle down. I was a little too excited. I sat there on the bench and saw what Colorado State was doing," Behrends said. "I saw what needed to be done. I calmed down and went out and played."

She played, all right. Cook confidently put the veteran Behrends in game four. Five kills on five attempts was the result, and Nebraska took the match.

"That's a senior. That's experience. That's having confidence in yourself," Cook said.

The starting gig has grown on her.

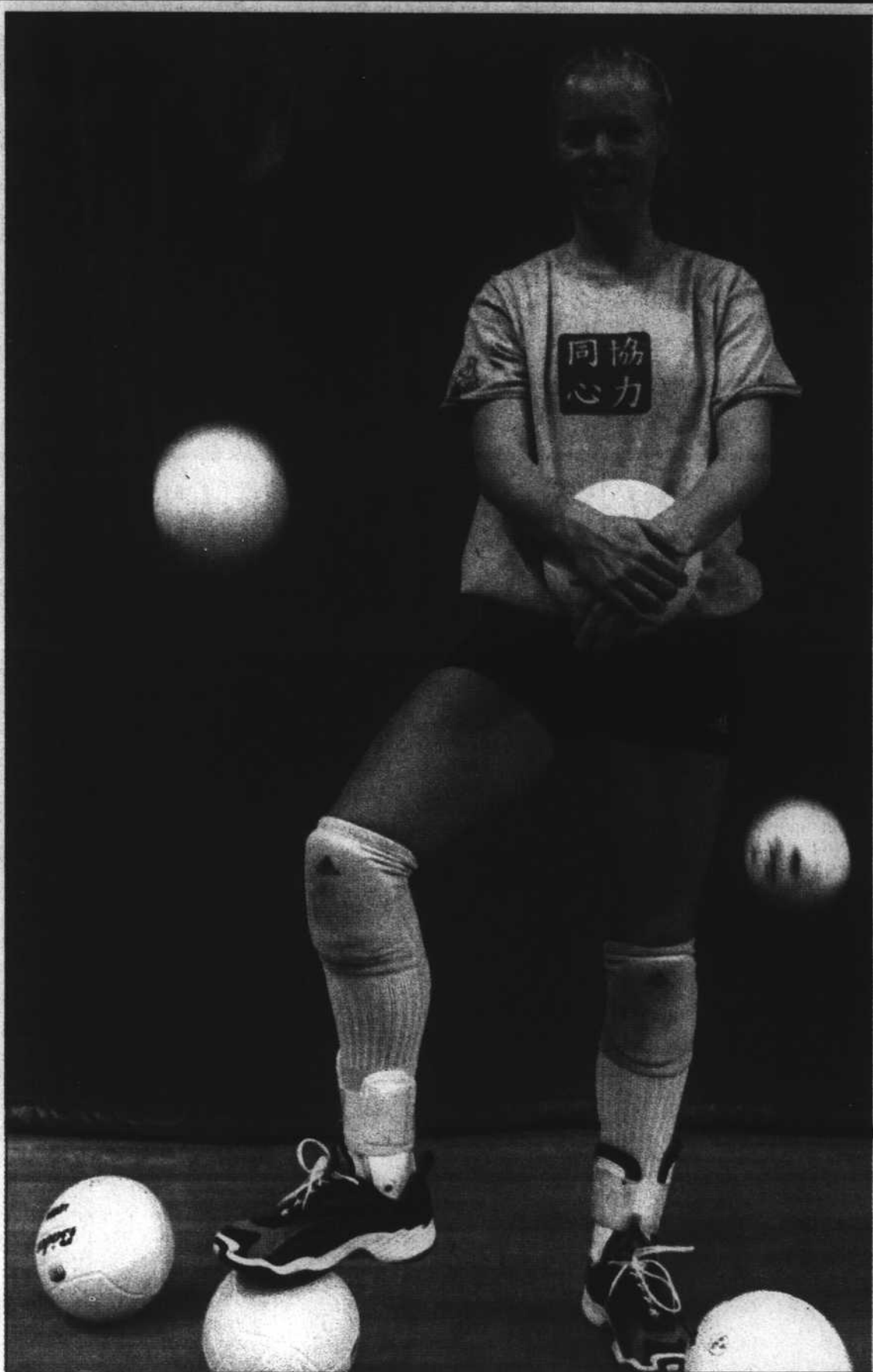
"I'm in more of a flow out there. You kind of get the rust off those first few points and then you just go," she said.

However, Behrends is the only one of the starters to be hitting under .300, sitting at .222 for the season as of the Iowa State match.

That number doesn't overly concern Cook.

"She's been a consistent server and passer. She's been one of our team leaders in those

Please see BEHREND on 9



Nebraska junior outside hitter Kim Behrends has seen action in 42 games this season. Before Wednesday's game against Baylor, Behrends had played 42 games and recorded 88 kills.

Oklahoma schools different challenge for NU

BY JAMIE SUHR

Coming off the high of a come-from-behind 2-1 victory over Texas A&M, the Nebraska soccer team will try to avoid a let-down in this weekend's matches against Oklahoma State and Oklahoma.

NU Coach John Walker said getting up for the Big 12 foes from the Sooner State shouldn't be a problem.

"Our motivation is that we're far from a perfect team," Walker said. "We were trailing against A&M for 87 minutes so obviously we're not doing everything right."

It's doubtful the Huskers will have to do much of anything right Friday against OSU at the Abbott Sports Complex.

Oklahoma State enters the match-up with an 0-5 conference record and a 3-11 record overall.

Despite Walker's pleas that "(the Cowboys) have played us well in the past," the numbers point to another Husker blowout. The combined score of the last four NU-OSU games is 24-1.

In comparison to the Huskers, OSU's all-time leading scorer is

Senior Andi Lute with 46 points. NU Forward Christine Latham has 33 points - this season.

While the Cowgirls are severely overmatched, Sunday's game against the other Oklahoma team will find the Huskers against one of the Big 12's more athletic teams.

Walker said the consensus among Big 12 coaches was that OU is the most improved team in the conference.

NU's offense is carrying a 4.5 goals-per-game average but may find the Sooner defense a little stingy.

OU's 11 goals allowed ranks them second in the conference but don't stack up when compared to the Huskers, who have allowed just four.

The Nebraska defense, however, may have its hands full against the Sooners' Jonette Coquat and Shannon Wing.

"They'll be a good challenge," Walker said.

NU won't have freshman Kelly Haxton on hand for the rest of the season. The forward tore her anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee.



NU sophomore Brooke Jones (seen beating the goalkeeper to score earlier this season) and the Cornhusker soccer team look to sweep the Big 12 schools from the Sooner State, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, this weekend.

DN File Photo