

# Cross country heads to meet 'bigger than nationals'

## Gaffigan is up and coming star for cross country team

BY JILL ZEMAN

Four years ago, NU freshman cross country runner Ann Gaffigan was a soccer player at heart. Her athleticism was apparent. She lettered all four years in high school in soccer, track and cross country. But things change as the years passed by, and Gaffigan's running began to surpass her soccer skills. And when it came time to choose a college, the competitive athlete within her came out, and she passed up soccer to become a member of the Nebraska cross country team. Cross Country Coach Jay Dirksen couldn't be happier. "She's a terrific young lady, very intelligent, very talented," he said. "Any adjective you have, you can use on Ann."

Now, Gaffigan's life is balance, balance, balance. Along with running, Gaffigan handles the load of a J.D. Edwards Honors Program scholar and computer science major. For some students, it sounds like a nightmare. Run three or four miles at 6:30 in the morning, go to classes, run for a couple more hours and then study. Surprisingly, Gaffigan said it wasn't taking too much of a toll on her yet. "Actually, it's a ton easier than high school," she said. In high school, Gaffigan had the option of running at several different schools. But Notre Dame, Stanford, Cornell and North Carolina took a back seat to Nebraska for Gaffigan. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln stuck out to Gaffigan. She said it was unlike any of the other



David Clasen/DN

NU Freshman Ann Gaffigan is one of the most athletic members on the women's cross country team. Gaffigan turned down scholarship offers from Notre Dame, Stanford and Cornell to come to Nebraska.

colleges she'd been to. "Jay (Dirksen), for some reason, seemed different to me," she said. "He was personable, someone I could trust." Gaffigan's decision has paid off. She's got two top 10 finishes under her belt out of the three collegiate races she has run. At the Woody Greeno Invitational in Lincoln, Gaffigan was the first Cornhusker to cross the line. Gaffigan's contributions to the team extend beyond strong finishes and quick times. Senior captain Amie Jorgensen said Gaffigan was a hard worker and team player. "She's out there to run with

you, not against you," she said. Jorgensen said Gaffigan, who's often near the front of the pack in races, has given her more confidence as a runner. "It's a hard feeling when you're the senior, always carrying the load," she said. As the season progresses and training intensifies, Gaffigan is getting stronger and faster to prepare for the important, end-of-the-year meets. But this year, she's not focusing on just herself. Her goal for the season is for the women's team to qualify for the NCAA National Championships. As for her individual running,

she said she'd like to someday be a Big 12 Conference champion. And according to Dirksen, her goal isn't too lofty. "Sometime soon, I think she'll be one of the best runners in the conference," he said. Jorgensen agreed. "We haven't even seen the best of Ann yet," she said. "I think she can compete with the best." But she's still got this season to think about, and after that, it's up in the air. If she can stay involved in running, she will, but otherwise she'd like to pursue a career in computer programming. "I'll just play it by ear," she said.

## Runners trying to improve on last week's best effort

BY GABRIEL STOVALL

This weekend, Nebraska's Cross Country team is looking for more than just a repeat of what Coach Jay Dirksen called "the team's best performance this season." Dirksen's team, again, is looking to better that best performance when the Huskers travel to Ames, Iowa, to compete in the 26th annual Iowa State Memorial Classic. "Last week," said Dirksen, "those kids ran the best they've ever run. But there is not one that can't run even better this week."

But in all of the years Dirksen has been at the helm of the cross country team, he said, he has never experienced what he will witness this weekend.

"With 67 men's teams and 64 women's teams, this is the biggest event I've ever heard of," said Dirksen who is in his 18th year as coach. Even though Dirksen is optimistic about his team's performance this weekend, he said this meet has the potential to be the team's stiffest challenge it will see all year.

"I think this meet could be tougher than any other meet we've ever had," he said. "It may even be harder than nationals."

With one-fifth of the nation's cross-country teams competing at the same site, Dirksen said, it would take more of the team effort he saw at NU's last meet. "One thing I want our team to concentrate on is team unity, helping each other run through the race," Dirksen said. "We did a good job of running as a team and I think that's why we finished so well, especially the men's team." The men won their first title of the season last Saturday at the Murray Keatinge Invitational in Orono, Maine. In that meet, NU senior, Marcus Witter, led the Husker men to the title by finishing second, covering the 5-mile course in a time of 23:57.2. Dirksen said he hopes his standout runner from Kearney will continue to take huge strides in helping the team reach its full potential. "This meet will be perfect for Marcus," Dirksen said. "He's really getting into the top level. He's really becoming one of the best in the country." "He'll help our team, but he's also a person who can be an All American by the end of the year." NU's men grabbed enough votes to go into this weekend's meet as the 26th-ranked team in the nation.

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Jay Dirksen  
NU cross country head coach

## Collier may be coach to better NU

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Big 12 Conference, Nebraska has the resources to succeed. But there is a long way to go for NU, and it is not going to happen overnight, especially coming off an 11-18 season. Even if Collier creates a miracle and goes to the Big Dance

this season, consistency will become the main factor. Now, an act of God in the form of a win in the tourney would speed up the process greatly but could also cause widespread heart attacks among elderlies Husker fans who have been tortured for quite some time. All of this may be a dream and may or may not become a reality. But it could happen.

And it all starts at 12 a.m. Saturday morning - 9½ hours later if you're the Nebraska Cornhuskers.

## Tech's fast attack threat to defense

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is the only conference team better at the pass this year than the Red Raiders.

Tech, which will more than likely spread the field to try to expose young Blackshirt outside linebackers and make NU defensive backs go one-on-one, averages 303 yards in the air and throws three out of every four plays.

"They'll throw 50 balls in this game, so it will be a long game," NU Coach Frank Solich said. "If we decide to go into the passing game, it could last well into the night."

Stopping the run against Tech should seem fairly easy. Despite sporting a former Heisman Trophy candidate in Williams, Tech averages fewer than 80 yards on the ground, second-worst in the Big 12 Conference. Seems manageable, but Solich said it could be quite a task.

"You never want to let a team get two-dimensional," Solich said. "We are really concentrating hard on stopping or slowing down the running game. From there, we'll try to control what they do best. What they do best is throw the football and make big plays off of it."

It will be enough of a chal-

lenge to keep the upcoming, defensive nightmares and offensive explosions of No. 8 Oklahoma and No. 2 Kansas State off of the first-year Defensive Coordinator Craig Bohl's mind.

"Not going there. Don't even try," Bohl said when asked about OU and KSU. "We've got our hands full enough with Texas Tech."

**Husker Practice Notes**  
Nebraska worked out on the Memorial Stadium turf on Thursday, and according to Husker Coach Frank Solich, the team was in good spirits.

Not so good news came when Solich said final decisions will not be made until tomorrow regarding the status of starting Defensive Tackle Loran Kaiser and freshman Rush End Bernard Thomas.

Solich said both would be evaluated today, and their statuses on the travel roster would be decided then. If Thomas does not travel, NU would take four I-backs to Lubbock.

One Husker not making the trip is Wilson Thomas, who will miss his second straight game due to a sprained ankle.

Good news came in the form of a mostly healthy Eric Crouch and Matt Davison. Both practiced and will play on Saturday.

## Behrends left-side star for NU

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attack. When she struggles attack wise, that's what they see."

Cook said that Behrends plays the most difficult position on the court to notch a high hitting percentage, often receiving the "tough plays" that are handed to left-side hitters when an attack goes bad.

Cook said that Nebraska's rotation also favors right-side hitter Laura Pilakowski to Behrends. Behrends is usually in the front row with three hitters, which cuts down on the good swings she will receive compared with Pilakowski, who has a .376 hitting mark.

Still, Behrends' numbers do compare favorably with the .194 and .216 hitting percentage that Mandy Monson and Angie Oxley respectively hit from the left side last season.

Behrends said she is always concerned about her attacking and wants to improve her defense.

Sometimes, she said, she worries too much. "I want perfect play, but that doesn't happen, and I need to tell myself that," she said.

But playing on a team with a perfect record can make up for individual flaws. And three years of ups and downs are now in Behrends' rear-view mirror.

"Being out there with this team, a team of great girls who are all special to me. ... I kind of earned this I think. This is my reward."

## Tech hyped for upset attempt of No. 1 Huskers

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

Texas Tech students will dance around a giant bonfire during a pep rally Friday night, with upset dreams of No. 1 teams dancing in their heads.

The top-ranked Cornhusker volleyball and football teams will invade Lubbock on Saturday, and Nebraska Volleyball Coach John Cook knows his team will have to play well to not get burned.

Nebraska Coach John Cook expects it to be a hostile environment with first serve moved up to 1 p.m., in hopes of drawing a larger crowd before the football game.

"I expect quite a crowd and them to be pretty excited about their school taking on two top-ranked teams," Nebraska Coach John Cook said. "We're going to have to raise our mentality to take on a quality team."

Needless to say, Tech is pretty fired up about the prospects of knocking NU from the ranks of the unbeaten.

"We think this is a huge opportunity to have a great match and to have one of the best teams in the country in and take a good run at them," Texas Tech Coach Jeff Nelson said. "I

"I think we've been preparing for that all season long."

Jeff Nelson  
Texas Tech volleyball coach

think we've been preparing for that all season long."

Tech will try to recover from a bruised ego, after losing in straight sets to Texas A&M on Wednesday, who dropped the 20th-ranked Red Raiders to 16-3 overall, 5-3 in conference play.

Tech's chances will most likely hinge on the play of senior outside hitter Colleen Smith, who pounded down 18 kills in Wednesday night's loss.

Tech will attempt to be the first team in the conference to steal a game, let alone a match, from 16-0 Nebraska.

Despite such dominance, NU senior outside hitter Kim Behrends said the Huskers aren't at the point they want to be at yet.

"We can get better. Every one of us has something to get better at," Behrends said. "To be No. 1 on Christmas, we have to keep working. We're not good yet."

## No Midnight Madness for Huskers

BY LINCOLN ARNEAL

At midnight on Saturday morning, arenas around the nation will be filled with basketball players kicking the men's basketball season off with the traditional Midnight Madness practice.

However, when midnight rolls around, the Bob Devaney Sports Center will be silent. Most of the Nebraska's men basketball team will be sleeping instead of out on the court.

"We chose not to have to have a midnight practice because our department is spread pretty thin right now with all the events going on in the department," Coach Barry Collier said.

The team will start its season with two practices on Saturday with the first at 9:30 a.m.

"I am very excited to start practice. It will be a new experience," Senior Kimani Ffriend said.

This season has more anticipation than in years past with the beginning of the Collier era at Nebraska.

"We'll have to adjust to Coach Collier's style. It may be hard, but I think that we will adjust well," Ffriend said. "I am very excited about coach's whole new philosophy and with what he brings to the table, I think he can help us get better."

The team will focus its efforts on several areas with the beginning of practice.

Collier said establishing good work habits and attitude were key in the early weeks of practice.

Ffriend said: "The team will be working on defense and lowering our turnovers. With Coach having a defensive mindset, I think we will play better defense this year."

The team is planning to have something similar to Midnight Madness, just later in the season.

Collier said that he still wants to do something to create excitement, but it will probably be closer to the first game. The event may coincide with David Spade's Devaney Center appearance during Nebraska's Homecoming week, he said.

## Sanchez ousted from championships

Eight matches in seven days leave NU Tennis' Sanchez with little left for main draw.

BY VINCE KUPPIG

Jorge Abos Sanchez's winning streak at the ITA All-American Championships has finally come to an end.

Abos Sanchez, a senior, entered Thursday's main draw portion of the tournament with a 6-0 record in the pre-qualifying and qualifying sessions that began one week ago on Oct. 6 in Stone Mountain, Ga.

But he lost in the first round of the main draw to Amer Delic of Illinois, 6-1, 6-4, Thursday morning. In the afternoon at the consolations, Abos Sanchez was defeated by Washington's Matt Hanlin, 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7-5).

Abos Sanchez had two match points in the third set but was unable to put it away.

"(Abos Sanchez) played a

heck of a match," Coach Kerry McDermott said. "It could have gone either way, but it didn't go his way at the time. Hopefully, he'll learn from it."

Just for Abos Sanchez to be able to advance to the main draw was a great accomplishment, McDermott said.

"Now, he's realized that he's as good as any of the top players in the country," McDermott said.

Only four players who started in the 256-player pre-qualifying draw made it to the singles main draw of 64 players. Most of the players in the main draw received either an automatic bid through advancing to the doubles main draw, McDermott said.

In total, Abos Sanchez played eight matches in seven days. His first opponent of the main draw was playing in his first singles match at the tournament.

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Kerry McDermott  
dkfjdskljfsdkrlkjsd Coach

physically a little tired. He went as hard as he could," McDermott said. "I'm sure he probably would have played a little better if he wouldn't have had to play six matches in six days (going into Thursday) and not have any time off."

In other Husker men's tennis action, Husker senior Kai Rieke and freshman Jose Rivera will compete at the 2000 Sprint PCS Fall Tennis Classic at Drake University today through Sunday. Rieke is looking to repeat as singles champion.

