

Nebraska teams pull in bumper crop

Simms the gem of Collier's first signees

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

The time was July. In the middle of the summer heat, new Nebraska Coach Barry Collier was unsure about his prospects of delivering a good recruiting class in his first season at NU.

Collier said he had been well received around the country and in Nebraska as he sparred with top coaches and programs for the best talent he could find.

But Collier didn't know until Wednesday how good of a job he had done.

After receiving three letters of intent from players who "bought into everything we had to say," Collier felt a little better.

"Now we know that we have some kids signed up that can help us," Collier said. "We feel like we have established a baseline of where we can go for recruiting."

Collier received commitments from Lincoln native Jake Muhlheisen, Corey Simms of St. Louis and Dan Heimos of Waterloo, Ill.

A fourth recruit, Brennon Clemmons of Olney Central College in Illinois, has mailed his letter of intent, but Collier could not comment on Clemmons' signing until he receives the letter.

The new coach was proud of his first recruiting class, which filled a need at nearly every position.

Muhlheisen, who represents Collier's first in-state recruit, could play both guard positions and contend for playing time right away.

The Lincoln Southeast senior received second-team All-State honors in 2000, while averaging 16 points, 3.8 rebounds, 2.5 steals and 3.4 assists per game.

"Jake is a perfect fit for Nebraska, no matter where he is from," Collier said. "The fact that he is from Lincoln is a little bit of a

bonus."

Muhlheisen said Collier was the right coach for him.

"Coach Collier made it a lot easier for me to stay home," said Muhlheisen, who was first contacted by former NU Coach Danny Nee. "I wasn't too sure about (Nee)."

Heimos, a 6-foot-11 center, averaged 14 points, seven rebounds and four blocked shots per game in high school last year. Collier said Heimos, as many high-school post men must do, should bulk up.

"That is one of the reasons he chose Nebraska," said Collier of NU, known nationally for its performance buffet for athletes.

The prize of Collier's first class is Simms, a 6-5 swingman who drew late interest from Kansas and chose NU over Florida, Minnesota and Illinois among others.

Simms averaged 20 points, six rebounds and three steals per game while being named a Street and Smith All American.

"He is physically more developed than his counterparts across the nation," Collier said. "To average 20 points per game against good competition is a real feather in his cap."

Collier said all three will have the opportunity to play right away and their ability to pick up defensive schemes and avoid turning over the ball will play heavily into that happening.

With one scholarship left to fill, Collier said he is looking for a power forward or center, and that player will most likely not come from Nebraska.

Husker Notes: Collier announced that freshman forward Marques McCarty has decided to redshirt this season.

Sanderford nabs prized Robinette; Cook signs three for 2001 Husker volleyball

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

The Nebraska women's basketball team took a step forward, and the NU volleyball team tried to maintain its dominance with their recruiting classes announced Thursday.

By receiving an official letter of intent from South Sioux City standout Katie Robinette, Nebraska may be on the cusp of reaching another level, according to Coach Paul Sanderford.

Robinette, a high-school All American, chose Nebraska over Connecticut, Iowa State, Georgia, Tennessee and Houston.

The 6-foot-3 swing player averaged 19.3 points and 7.3 rebounds per game as a junior, leading the Cardinals to a No. 6 ranking nationally.

Along with Robinette, the Cornhuskers received letters of intent from Centura native Jina Johnson and Penn Valley Community College standout Keasha Cannon.

After landing the talented trio, Sanderford said this recruiting class ranks as one of his best.

"We felt like we needed a go-to player offensively, and I think in Keasha Cannon and Katie Robinette we got those kind of players," Sanderford said.

Johnson, a 5-foot-6 point guard, was an All-Nebraska selection, leading Centura to a 25-1 record. As a junior she averaged 26.2 points, 8.8 assists and 5.6 steals per game.

Cannon, a 5-foot-10 guard, originally committed to NU two years ago but had to go the junior-college route before becom-

"We felt like we needed a go-to player offensively, and I think in Keasha Cannon and Katie Robinette we got those kind of players."

Paul Sanderford
women's basketball coach

ing a Husker.

At Penn Valley, she was an All American, averaging 20.7 points and 7.9 assists per game.

Along with Sanderford, NU Volleyball Coach John Cook had a huge day Wednesday.

Cook added three new players to his already loaded roster.

Melissa Elmer, a 6-foot-2 middle blocker from Fort Wayne, Ind., Michelle Lynch, a 5-foot-11 setter from Jacksonville, Ill., and Elizabeth Allyne Rebholz, a 6-foot-1 middle blocker from Indianapolis all gave Cook word on Wednesday they plan to join the Huskers for the 2001 season.

The main concern for Cook this year was extending the borders outside of Nebraska. With this class, the first-year coach feels he did that.

"We feel the three people we signed fit the Nebraska goals," Cook said. "The class is deep, athletic, and they are all great students."

Exhibition tackled as 'real game'

Women's basketball will try to bounce back after last week's loss against Hungary.

BY JASON MERRIHEW

After a week of practice to improve on its near collapse to Hungary, the Nebraska women's basketball team will face the Australian Institute of Sports on Sunday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center in its final exhibition game.

The coaching staff has emphasized the importance of ball control and better movement around the court to cut down on the ungodly number of turnovers the Huskers had during the Hungarian exhibition game.

Nebraska's coaches and players attributed their 30 turnovers to the unexpected 1-3-1 trap defense played by the Hungarians.

"We worked on throwing out of traps this week," NU Coach Paul Sanderford said. "I would like to see us cut the turnovers in half."

Unlike last week, the Cornhuskers were able to watch game film of the Australians.

"They are a very good team," Sanderford said. "The Institute of Sports is made up of the top players in Australia."

Despite a near disaster against Hungary, the Huskers showed some promise.

One of those bright spots was the play of senior forward Monique Whitfield. Whitfield posted a double-double against the Hungarian team, tallying 13 points while grabbing 10 rebounds.

Freshman guard Shannon Howell lived up to the hype during her debut at the Devaney Center. Howell tied Whitfield for a team-high 13 points and added three boards.

The main purpose of last week's game was to get everyone a valuable playing time.

"We're going to treat this more like a real game," Sanderford said. "We will play eight or nine players unless the game gets out of hand."

Tip-off for Nebraska's final exhibition game is slated for 2:05 p.m. Sunday.

Wildcats in Nebraska's path to the Big 12 title



Containing Nebraska's Eric Crouch is a top priority for Kansas State, according to Wildcat Coach Bill Snyder. DN File Photo

KSU from page 10

"Eric Crouch is twice as fast as Michael (Bishop) was," Snyder said. "He makes those athletic, quick moves and then accelerates. If you get just a little bit out of position, he makes you look like a fourth-grader."

KSU junior free safety Jon McGraw said the Wildcats' defense must execute perfectly to prevent Crouch and the Husker attack from breaking lose.

"Against athletes like Nebraska, if one guy gets out through a gap, then it could be to the house just like that in one play," McGraw said. "That's the biggest thing playing Nebraska is there is no room for error."

If both defenses are able to

cancel out the others' offenses, the game could come down to special teams play. The Wildcats feature dangerous return men led by senior David Allen, who sits as the second most successful punt returner in NCAA history.

"I think the one thing that has helped Kansas State over the years has been outstanding special teams play," Solich said. "So you want to make sure you're ready to do things very well in the special teams part of the game."

Solich said his team has been focused this week and knows what is at stake in Saturday's contest.

"We won't try to overplay it, but they understand the importance of this game and what it

GAMEDAY	
Nebraska vs. Kansas State	
When:	Saturday @ 6 p.m.
Where:	Jack Wagner Stadium Manhattan, KS
T.V.:	Fox Sports network (57)
Radio:	Pinnacle Sports Network (1400-AM KLIN)

means in the context of the Big 12," Solich said.

Huskers enter regionals looking for NCAA bid

An uphill battle waits for cross country, which stumbled at the Big 12 Championships.

BY TOBY BURGER

If the men's and women's cross country teams hope to make the NCAA Championships, they will need to improve on last week's performances - at the Big 12 Championships - when they travel to Waterloo, Iowa, Saturday

for the Midwest Regional Championships.

Last weekend the men finished fifth, while the women placed seventh. Coach Jim Dirksen was disappointed with where the teams placed.

"I really thought we should have been a place or two higher on the women's side," Dirksen said, "and at least a place higher on the men's side."

Improving won't be easy because the men will face some stiff competition, but it will be

necessary if they are to make it to nationals.

Only the top two teams in each region earn automatic bids. And with regional favorite Oklahoma State, as well as top-notch Missouri and Minnesota, the road to nationals may prove to be difficult.

"We have the same chance or maybe a better chance than most teams do (to make nationals)," Dirksen said.

Even if the Huskers fail to qualify, the team may still be rep-

resented at nationals. The top three individuals not on a qualifying team advance to nationals. For Marcus Witter that may be the case.

"Based on what Witter has done against good people at all the meets this year, he is the most likely to do well," Dirksen said. "I think his chances are excellent to go to the national meet."

As for the women's team, youth and lack of depth may prove to be the Achilles' heel in attempting to qualify. Dirksen

said that with a strong field of eight to nine teams, qualifying will be difficult.

"We're going to have to run the race of the year by far," Dirksen said. "To be one of the top two teams, we're going to have to run way better than we have so far. I don't know if we are that good or not."

Northern Iowa is playing host to the regionals in Waterloo. The women's 6,000-meter race begins at 11 a.m., and the men's 10,000-meter run follows at 12:15 p.m.

KSU's Snyder keeps his game plans, humor close to vest

SNYDER from page 10

what prevents KSU from going to the ultimate top. After the NU win, the Wildcats suffered a crushing double overtime defeat in the Big 12 Championship to Texas A&M and a crushing loss to Purdue in the second-rate Alamo Bowl.

In nearly 20 games against Top 10 foes, Snyder has won once. His 41-31 home loss to now-No. 1 Oklahoma and brutal 26-10 loss at A&M in three weeks has raised questions about his big-game ability.

Last year, with KSU ranked in the Top 5 and undefeated going into the NU game in Lincoln, the Wildcats froze like deer in headlights. The result was a 41-15 smacking.

Jim Rose, a drive-time sports talk-show host at Kansas City's KMBZ, a veteran Nebraska and Kansas college sports broadcaster, thinks it's partly Snyder's preciseness that gets in the way.

"Bill Snyder is the most obsessive, compulsive, perfectionist, manipulating control freak of a football coach there is," Rose said.

"And I think that hurts him in big games. He tries to be perfect. He tries to run the perfect game plan. The problem with that is,

when the going gets tough, and he has to adjust, he freezes."

It is that kind of criticism that Snyder, although he claims he doesn't mind people's opinions, uses for his reasons to fend off microscopic coverage of his team.

Closed practices and muzzled mouths are the standard in Manhattan. When Snyder's best player ever, '98 Heisman hopeful quarterback Michael Bishop, was in the middle of his brilliant run that year, Snyder kept him away from all media in fear that Bishop would trash-talk to the point of bulletin-board material for any team.

Snyder, as he is the leader of everything, leads the tight-lips' charge at his press conferences.

Snyder's conference begins with a couple of smiles and laughs with Pulliam, which loosens up everyone else. But when he gets down to business, everything freezes.

Snyder gives no opening statement, just looks down at the table, sitting in the same position he'd probably been sitting at his desk for the first six hours of his 18-hour workday. Blank looks and silence fill the room.

Series of questions about KSU's attack and Nebraska's

attack are answered with succinct, quiet, unrevealing answers, some one word. Sometimes Snyder cares to look up; most of the time he doesn't. The longest answer he gives is about the disadvantages of being a road team playing an early game. *Real insightful.*

In fact, at one point, Snyder gives such a vague answer, he says: "I know that sounds vague, but..." he pauses, the entire room hinging on his straight face, "... but I guess that's the way it is."

Everyone laughs. Laughs are good. Laughs are rare.

"Bill does not lack a sense of humor," Pulliam said. "You just have to try and needle him, and it will come out. But it won't come out unless you try."

So, Snyder, unlike most coaches in this modern era of slick, pretty-boy, please-me-type coaches, isn't a media darling.

But to K-State insiders, he's a lot more compassionate than his image portrays. Ask Jonathan Beasley, KSU's up-and-down quarterback who gets hit harder than Snyder does by the media for his big-game performances. Although a quarterback controversy brewed in the press between iffy Beasley and

Wrestlers pummel first foe

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The Nebraska wrestling season, and Mark Manning's NU coaching career, got off to a commanding start as the NU wrestlers downed Drexel 35-12 in their first match of the season.

Manning, who came to Nebraska this season after three years as Northern Iowa's coach, saw his Cornhuskers hold a commanding lead over the Dragons as they won five of the first six matches and seven of the first 10.

"We were aggressive," said Manning, whose team will remain on the East Coast to square off against Rider on Saturday at 1 p.m. "A lot of our guys were super-aggressive and just out-fought and out-toughed their guys."

Rider will be up against some individuals who started the year on a roll by putting their opponents on their backs.

Nebraska picked up three pins in the match as Bryan Snyder, Jason Powell and Todd Beckerman pinned Drexel wrestlers. Beckerman, who is ranked No. 2 at 133 pounds, was the quickest at 2:26.

Brad Vering, the nation's No. 1 197-pounder and defending national champion, picked up a technical fall 20-4 and so did Ati Conner, the nation's No. 14 174-pounder.

The win never was really in doubt as NU built a 15-3 lead over Drexel in the first four matches. The Dragons placed just one wrestler on the mat, Dave Dietrich, who was ranked in the Top 20, while NU showed up with six.

Said Manning: "We put a lot of guys on their backs and really dominated those weights."