

Solich and staff hit recruiting trail

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

With eight solid and two soft commitments and two soft commitments, the Nebraska football team has already filled some of its primary needs in the 2001 recruiting class.

Probably the biggest concern coming into recruiting was finding a quarterback.

Last year, the Cornhuskers lost out on San Antonio Roosevelt signal caller Carlyle Holiday.

Holiday opted to play for Notre Dame despite the fact the Irish already had commitments from three other top-ranked quarterbacks.

Currently Holiday finds himself second on the depth charts behind freshman standout Matt LoVecchio.

After missing out on Holiday, the Huskers wasted no time finding a pair

of talented local quarterbacks.

Quarterbacks

Mike McLaughlin, out of Millard North—a.k.a. "quarterback high"—committed to NU back in April. The 6-foot 175-pound option play caller is ranked No. 22 by Rivals.com and has a 40-yard dash time of 4.5 seconds.

McLaughlin carries the torch as being the next great quarterback to come from Fred Petito's quarterback-rich Mustang program.

Comparisons are already being made to former Millard North quarterbacks Eric Crouch and Todd Doxson.

"The similarities are incredible," Petito said. "Eric comes back and has taught Mike a lot. They take snaps together all the time."

A couple of months after getting McLaughlin, NU crossed the Missouri

River and received a commitment from Council Bluffs St. Albert quarterback Mike Stuntz.

At 6-foot-2 and 180 pounds, Stuntz is ranked No. 31 as a quarterback, but many experts say he also could play safety.

Stuntz also has 4.5-second speed in the 40 and chose Nebraska over Iowa State, Iowa and Texas A&M.

"I fit the system," Stuntz said. "They have always been up there at the top, so it made the decision that much easier."

The one other quarterback the Huskers are in the running for is Sacramento (Calif.) City College's Seneca Wallace.

Wallace is ranked as the top junior-college quarterback in the nation. Many compare him to Virginia Tech's Michael Vick.

Wallace passed for 1,300 yards and

nine touchdowns in four games and also has blazing 4.3 speed to go with his arm. He is receiving attention from Nebraska, Arizona and Washington.

Nebraska Commitment List

Pos.	Name	High School
QB	Mike McLaughlin	Millard North, Omaha
OL	Gary Pike	Centennial, Pueblo, Colo.
QB	Mike Stuntz	St. Albert, Council Bluffs, Iowa
LB	Barrett Ruud	Southeast, Lincoln
DT	Jared Helming	Kickapoo, Springfield, Mo.
OL	Seppo Ewvaraye	Laurel, Laurel
OL	Richie Incognito	Mountain View, Glendale, Ariz.
WR	Cliff Brye	Hutchinson CC, Hutchinson, Kan.

Delan Lonowski/DN

Running Backs/Receivers
Right now, this is an area of concern for the Huskers.

NU loses wingbacks Bobby Newcombe and John Gibson, split end Matt Davison, fullback Willie Miller and I-Backs Correll Buckhalter and Dan Alexander to graduation this season.

So far, the Huskers are in the running for two highly regarded running backs.

Clarendon, Ark., running back Cedric Houston and East St. Louis, Ill., tailback Damien Nash list Nebraska as

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Huskers too quick for visiting Eagles

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

Nebraska used a suffocating defense along with a highlight reel, dunk-filled offensive attack to beat Winthrop 65-44 Monday night before 7,191 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The Cornhuskers relied on inside senior center Kimani Ffriend, who led scorers with 19 points and nine rebounds. Ffriend also blocked seven shots and intimidated countless other Eagle attempts into misses.

Ffriend didn't seem to care about those statistics.

"This is terrible," Ffriend said as he looked over the statistic sheet. "I had four turnovers (and) went three out of 10 at the line. That's something I need to go to the gym and work on. It's back to the drawing board on that one."

However, Ffriend was hardly the lone culprit in NU's free-throw shooting adventure. The basket seemed to be moving for all Huskers who toed the stripe. NU went seven for 22 for the game.

"We're going to fire the free-throw coach tomorrow," Collier said. "That's me."

Eventually, Ffriend did look past his few bad moments and gave himself some credit.

"There were some plusses," Ffriend said. "I blocked shots. I changed a lot of shots."

The rest of the Huskers also turned up the defensive pressure, knowing that Ffriend had a strong guard on the net. NU held the Eagles to 28 percent shooting.

Winthrop scored just 23 points in the first half. The Eagles were lucky to be down by only 10 at the half with nine of the first-half points coming from the free-throw line.

Nebraska ran away with the game in the second half, holding Winthrop to only 21 points and ending the game on a 12-2 run.

"We're trying to find that fine

Nebraska	65
Winthrop	44

line between being real aggressive without fouling," Collier said of his defense.

Equally as impressive as Nebraska's defense is the Husker offense, which shot 56 percent from the field, led by Ffriend and senior guard Cookie Belcher's 15 points.

"It sure bails out a lot of things, including the free throw line," Collier said of the Huskers' high shooting percentage. "It's going to be hard to contain this team if that continues."

Nebraska claimed such a high shooting percentage thanks in large part to a 44-16 scoring advantage in the paint with many Nebraska points coming off dunks.

"To dunk on somebody is one of the greatest feelings," Belcher said. "You get out there and see the bench going crazy for a play that did, and it just motivates you to play harder and get another one."

The Cornhuskers are now 2-1 for the season. Winthrop, a team that fell just five points short to No. 7 North Carolina in its opener, dropped to 3-3.

Husker Notes:

NU's Kevin Augustine, expected to handle point guard duties for the Huskers this season, saw his first action of the season.

It wasn't a good debut. Augustine, hobbled by a back injury in the preseason, played only two minutes before pulling a groin muscle.

NU Coach Barry Collier said the point guard will be evaluated on a day-to-day basis.



Nebraska center Kimani Ffriend dunks on a fast break against Winthrop on Monday night at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Ffriend led the Huskers in points with 19 and had 7 of the team's blocked shots. Scott McClurg/DN

Hitter Pilakowski may miss NCAA opener

NU left-side hitter Laura Pilakowski is questionable for Friday's NCAA Tournament opener against Princeton because she's recovering from an emergency appendectomy performed Nov. 21.



DN File Photo

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

Laura Pilakowski virtually came out of nowhere onto the college volleyball scene.

Now the sophomore from Columbus and Coach John Cook are left uncertain on the All-American candidate's status for Friday's 7:30 p.m. match with Princeton.

Pilakowski, who leads the top-ranked Cornhuskers in kills, was rushed to the hospital eight days ago and underwent emergency appendectomy surgery Nov. 21.

The left-side hitter has missed the Huskers' last two matches, and Cook said he hasn't decided if she will see action this weekend.

"Today, Laura jogged around the gym real light," Cook said. "We'll see how she's doing tomorrow. Our plan each day is to increase her workouts."

Pilakowski's surgery was performed by Dr. Michael Norris. Earlier this year, he performed the same surgery on NU defensive tackle Loran Kaiser.

Kaiser played in the Husker's season opener 10 days later against San Jose State.

Cook said Norris gave Pilakowski a one- to two-week window. "He didn't give a specific definition of when she'd be back," Cook said. "He just said one or two weeks."

Last season, Pilakowski didn't even suit up for the tournament because teams were only allowed to dress 12 players.

Cook said that ruling has changed to 15 this year, but it is a concern to him because Pilakowski doesn't have any NCAA tournament experience.

"It would be real nice to get her in this weekend," Cook said. "As far as starting her, we'll just have to see how she practices the next couple of days."

Pilakowski was unable to comment on her situation as Cook has barred underclassmen from talking to the media during the week.

Cepero wins Big 12 player of the year

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

There was little doubt that a Nebraska player would receive the Big 12 Player of the Year honors. The question was which one. The answer: Greichaly Cepero.

"To me, it was a very difficult decision on who should have been player of the year, and I think it could have gone to four or five of our players," Coach John Cook said.

Cepero is the only setter to rank in the top 20 in four different Big 12 categories. She ranks in the top 20 in hitting percentage, assists per game, blocks per game and service aces.

"I feel honored," she said. "It is a big accomplishment; there are so many great players in the conference."

Cepero also is the only setter to lead her team in kills in a match (11 vs. Texas Tech). She also was the first setter to win Player of the Week honors in the

"I am happy for Greichaly. But anytime your setter wins player of the year, it is really a team award."

John Cook
NU volleyball coach

conference.

Despite her statistics and the recognition she has received this year, the award still caught Cepero off guard.

"It did (surprise me)," Cepero said. "With me being a sophomore, I didn't think that it would happen."

The Husker setter won the honor while helping Nebraska to a perfect record, which the

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