

You're a missed one Danny Nee

I miss Danny. Barry Collier may be a better coach. He'll probably be a better recruiter. He's undoubtedly a better man.

Still, I miss Danny. Not in the way you miss the smell of mom's casserole. More the way you miss a chili cheese dog — you know it ain't right, and boy, a part of you is disgusted by it, but every so often you just get the urge to embrace its utter badness.

That was Danny Nee. You felt like washing your hands twice after interviewing the guy.

And yet, I'll be watching for Nee's new team, Robert Morris, late-night on ESPN 2. In Dannelspeak, with an East Coast smartass accent, "Lemme try to make you understand, you pricks."

Matthew Hansen

Oct. 14, 1999

Preseason press conference

Nee walks into the press room, the smile of an alligator frozen on his face.

He looks downright joyful. You half expect him to break out in a jig, big feet and bony elbows flying, at any second.

He has reason to be radiant, he tells the reporters assembled. The recruiting class he signed in the offseason — junior college transfers Kimani Pfriend, Steffon Bradford and Danny Walker and high schoolers Kenny Booker and Brian Conklin, slated to redshirt — is his best ever.

Pfriend is potential largely untapped, Nee says. He compares Steffon Bradford to Charles Barkley. He claims Danny Walker will be a star at the point guard spot. He even gives Booker a plug as an athletic talent.

Time proves Nee to be right about Pfriend. It also proves him to be wrong about Bradford, very wrong about Walker and amazingly wrong about Booker, arguably one of the worst players ever to be granted a Nebraska basketball scholarship under Nee.

Strange thing is, Nee knows basketball. He knows, as he raves about Walker's jumper, that the point guard doesn't have the speed or desire to back the sometimes-sweet shot up.

He knows that Bradford, a junior college All American, is vastly overrated, a solid, dependable rebounder, yes. But a budding star? Noooooo.

Thing is, Danny doesn't care. This is a show. Truth is little more than a nuisance to the showman.

Jan. 20, 2000

The infamous Danny Nee/horse's ass cartoon

It takes several months for that other side of Nee to rear its ugly head. It was the side you heard by word-of-mouth, the side that occasionally got reported when he turned into Naughty Danny at a post-game press conference.

Once, in response to questions about the Huskers' weak non-conference schedule, he called Nebraska's non-conference opponents "a bunch of cocksuckers." Understand that Danny enjoyed their, er, cocksuckerishness, which resulted in 30-point wins for his team. He just didn't enjoy reporters asking about the relative weakness of teams like Delaware St.

This was the conundrum that Danny faced — he liked reporters. He loved reporters. He needed reporters, for they were his audience. Yet, when faced with negative press from those same reporters, diplomacy often wasn't Nee's strong suit. The guy simply couldn't hold his tongue.

Which brings us to the first time yours truly had to interview Nee after a Daily Nebraskan cartoon depicted him, quite literally, as a horse's ass. Honestly — Danny Nee on the left, a picture of a horse's posterior on the right, the text "Coincidence?" at the bottom.

Thanks, Neal. When I approached Nee that day, and quietly, very quietly, asked to talk to him about NU's coming game, Mount Danny

Please see NEE on 11

Cornhusker athletes nab All-American awards

NU's Benson joins midfielder Anderson on soccer first team

BY JASON MERRIHEW

NU senior defender Jenny Benson wasn't expecting any phone calls from reporters three weeks after the team's season ended in the third round of the NCAA Tournament.

Then again, she didn't expect to be named an All American. Benson hadn't received the news that she and her teammate Meghan Anderson were named to the National Soccer Coaches Association of America first

team until the phone call came in.

"This is crazy," Benson said. "It's a total honor altogether."

Benson leaves Nebraska with the school's career assists record with 47. During the course of the season, she was a finalist for the Missouri Athletic Club National Player of the Year award.

Anderson, a junior midfielder, finished the season with 39 points on 12 goals and 15 assists, helping her to be selected first-team All Big 12.

Sophomore forward Christine Latham was named a second-team All American.

Latham led the Huskers through the Big 12 tournament and was named the MVP of the tourney.

In further postseason awards, senior goalkeeper Karina LeBlanc along with sophomore defender Breanna Boyd, joined Benson, Anderson and Latham on the NSCAA Central Regional Team.

Polk, Raiola land on coaches' top squad

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The postseason awards kept rolling in Thursday for a select few Cornhuskers.

Center Dominic Raiola and middle linebacker Carlos Polk were named to the American Football Coaches Association All-American first team. Raiola was chosen as an Outland and Lombardi award finalist, while Polk also was named as a second team All American by the Walter Camp Football Foundation.

Polk, a senior co-captain from Rockford, Ill., and two-time All-Big 12 pick, led NU's defense this year with 90 tackles and ranks 14th in NU history with 227 career stops.

Raiola, who was the only junior up for the Lombardi award, anchored an NU offense that led the nation in rushing for the 14th time in school history. The 6-foot-2 junior from Honolulu broke his own school record with 145 pancake blocks in 2000.



The Nebraska volleyball team will again take the Coliseum court this weekend for the third and fourth rounds of the NCAA Volleyball Tournament. With wins against Ohio State on Friday and in the regional finals Saturday against Arizona or BYU, the Huskers would advance to the Final Four.

NU seeks Classic trophy

Huskers don't want to lose the home tournament again.

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

It just isn't a pleasant thing to lose a tournament played in your own back yard.

Just ask any Nebraska basketball player about it, and he can tell you the sad tale.

"We had a disappointment in last year's tournament, and I think a lot of people have that in the back of their mind," Nebraska junior guard Cary Cochran said.

Last year's tournament, previously known as the Ameritas Classic, found the Cornhuskers' playing in the consolation game on Saturday after being knocked off by Western Carolina in the opener.

This year the tournament sports a new title — the Husker Team Classic — and the Cornhuskers are sporting their most serious game faces.

"I expect nothing less than to come out and play well two nights in a row," Cochran said.

The 2-2 Huskers begin the two-day, four-team clash with a 6:30 tip-off tonight against 3-4 Missouri-Kansas City.

Alaska-Fairbanks takes on Pacific immediately after Nebraska plays, and the consolation and championship games follow on Saturday.

Nebraska Coach Barry Collier wants to make sure his team doesn't get whisked into Saturday's consolation game again this year.

"Our focus has been on UMKC and preparing for them rather than looking at this thing as a two-day affair," Collier said.

UMKC's defense, Collier said, will present his team an interesting challenge.

Kangaroos first-year Coach Dean Demopoulos are formerly an assistant at Temple University, and he has installed the same zone package that has brought the Owls success.

"That's where all my attention has been this week," Collier said.

However, if things do work out, a Nebraska-Pacific showdown could be in the works for Saturday. The California school features four players from Nebraska.

Please see CLASSIC on 11

Stretch run for title upon NU

The volleyball team is two wins from the Final Four

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

The top-ranked Nebraska (30-0) volleyball team will have a pretty good idea of what they're going to see from No. 15 Ohio State (26-6) in tonight's regional semifinal match.

NU Coach John Cook saw the Buckeyes' play plenty of times during his seven-year tenure at Wisconsin.

The Huskers also faced OSU during the spring exhibition period, and Cook said he likes to compare OSU to another team he's grown pretty familiar with.

"They're similar to Kansas State," Cook said. "They have a setter that is very active and fast. They set a very fast system. We call them the K-State of the Big Ten. That's the analogy we've used for our players."

Like K-State and South Carolina, who both took Nebraska to five games, Ohio State possesses a setter that may create problems for the Husker block.

Sophomore setter Katie Virtue already has an impressive resume built up in her young

career.

In high school, Virtue led the USA national team to a gold medal and also was a two-time All American.

After her freshman year at Ohio State she was named to the Volleyball Magazine All-Freshman Team.

Cook said he is well aware of the challenge Virtue presents.

"They use a good system that's hard to defend," Cook said. "The setter makes it happen. She'll fire the ball all over the court, and they'll come extremely fast with their tempo."

"They have smaller players than we do."

"So they're going to try to out-quick our block and out-quick our defensive tempo with their attack."

On the outside it would be easy to think Virtue has been the heart and soul of the Buckeyes this season.

But OSU Coach Jim Stone said it's been a struggle just to keep his star setter healthy.

"She's been nursing a stress fracture since the middle of October, so she hasn't gone

There can be only one

A comparison of the four teams that will battle this weekend for a spot in the Final Four.

	Kills*	Hit%*	Blocks*
No. 1 Nebraska (30-0)	16.41	.316	4.09
No. 5 Arizona (27-4)	17.69	.323	3.17
No. 12 BYU (26-6)	16.73	.280	3.84
No. 15 Ohio State (26-6)	17.85	.260	2.46

*All statistics are from NCAA Tournament. Hits and kills are per-game averages.

Melanie Falk/DN

through a practice since October," Stone said.

"She'll play matches on weekends and then sit and rest. We've also held her out of three matches, and we lost all three. You don't want your setter not practicing, but that's the situation we've been dealing with."

Nebraska is still dealing with nearly being upset by underdog South Carolina in the second round of the tournament.

Cook said the Huskers know they're in for more of the same this weekend.

"When you get to this point everybody's balanced, everybody's got great hitters, everybody's got a great setter, and they're obviously going to be physical enough to match up," Cook said. "You've got to bring your A game if you want to come out."

All-American Meendering sits while No. 1 NU soars

"To come back into that, to get a starting position, someone would have to lose one, and that twists the chemistry a little more, because now you've got some players on edge going 'am I going to lose my spot.' That would've harmed our team."

Nancy Meendering

Nebraska volleyball player on her decision to redshirt in 2000

BY JOHN GASKINS

It was a defining moment of this so-far-perfect Nebraska volleyball season.

Oct. 17: United Spirit Arena in Lubbock, Texas. The Huskers came into their match at Texas Tech 16-0, ranked No. 1 in the nation. Until that day, NU hadn't lost a game in over a month.

But Tech, behind a raucous crowd, slammed home a statement-making 15-12 defeat of NU in game two to tie the match up. The Red Raiders headed to the locker room acting like assassins. In the Huskers' locker room, the mood was frustration.

Coach John Cook gave a fiery speech, begging his players to start playing Nebraska volleyball again.

The team charged out of the locker room and onto the court together, chanting "Go Big Red" in unison. They looked like a team on a mission.

Far, far behind their inspired, galloping charge followed their best player, Nancy

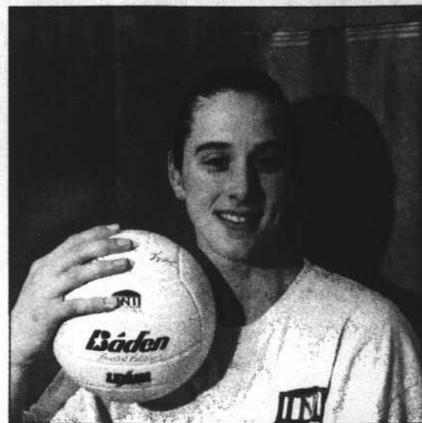
Meendering, nonchalantly walking onto the court ... in street clothes ... acting perfectly subdued ... like a bystander.

And that's what Meendering was. She sat on the bench, did some cheering and watched her team storm back to win. That's all she's been able to do all year in matches — watch (or listen to the road games she doesn't travel to on the radio). She's done it 30 times.

What irony. One of the elite players in the history of an elite program, in the prime of her career, just watching as her team charges to the national championship. If they pull off that perfect season, she will have recorded zero attacks, zero kills, zero blocks and zero plays for one of the program's best teams.

"I'll be really excited for them, but it will be really hard to watch," Meendering said.

"With any athlete, you want to be in the



Sharon Kolbet/DN

Nancy Meendering, the 1999 Big 12 volleyball Player of the Year, hasn't seen the floor for NU in 2000. She redshirted this season, and the Huskers have responded with a 30-0 record.

Please see MEENDERING on 11