

Questions aplenty for Sanderford

I wish I never woke up last Saturday.

For one, fellow writer Lincoln Arneal and I had the pure pleasure

of driving on I-80 west through an western Iowa at night - an experience that normally rates just below watching an N'Sync marathon on my "things I'm dying to do in life" list. To make things worse, we drove through a blizzard that almost left us dead or camping out at Wings' Truck Stop near Harlan for the night.

And, believe it or not, the trip was the high point of the day.

It paled in comparison to the misery of watching the young Nebraska women's basketball team run around like chickens with their heads cut off while No. 7 Iowa State put on a basketball clinic and handing NU its worst loss in NU history. It was like watching the shower scene from Psycho - you just wanted to turn your head or cover your eyes.

For Head Coach Paul Sanderford, it was one of his most trying days in his 19-year head coaching career. The 89-46 setback was a true reminder of how far his team has to go to party with the cool kids like ISU, Texas Tech and Texas.

Sanderford is a man who so badly wants a national-caliber program like Iowa State. A man who has been to the Final Four. Who almost shamelessly promotes himself to provoke interest in his team and pack the Devaney Center like Cyclone fans pack Hilton Coliseum.

And a man who has a ton of work cut out for him if the Huskers (9-7) are going to make a fourth straight trip to the NCAA Tournament.

We'll figure it out in the coming weeks: is this just a rebuilding team that will be great next year with Katie Robinette coming in? Or a team whose overflowing talent can be put to good use now? Can Sanderford pull the same down-the-stretch magic he did with last year's late-blooming team?

You don't want to panic just yet. ISU is a well-oiled machine that came out and hit on every single possible cylinder in the opening 10 minutes, behind 12,798 fans who smelled blood from tip-off.

But the Huskers also can't hide from some glaring problems.

Youth is still their biggest liability. Twelve of 15 players are freshmen or sophomores, and it still shows in their confused, sloppy offense. Team after team has used a full-court press that NU's guards can't break. Saturday, the Huskers couldn't get or make an open shot if their life depended on it.

The lineup is a mess. The NU bench is a revolving door. Sanderford used every player suited up on Saturday. Depth is good. Having absolutely zero rhythm, consistency or chemistry because of it is suicide.

Sanderford said Monday that he's narrowing NU's playing rotation to 8 or 9 players. Good start. Rather late, but good.

While he's changing this, let's call some plays for volleyball transfer Greichaly Cepero. The last two opposing coaches have called her the most gifted athlete they have ever seen. Sure, some of her passes look like jump serves (according to Sanderford), but get her in scoring position, and you're golden.

The good thing about this team is it has the talent and stingy defense to be dancing in March. There's no question the future looks bright.

The bad thing is the ISU game showed the future could be far, far away and the offense needs a band-aid.

Sanderford - who's coached 15 teams to the NCAA Tournament teams and three to the Final Four - might have to do the coaching of his life to save this season from being more than just an asterisk on his way to making Nebraska the next Iowa State.

Hey, he gets No. 7 Texas Tech Wednesday and No. 11 Texas Saturday, and ISU visits Lincoln Feb. 3. Three more chances to party with the cool kids.

Let's hope they don't spill the punch all over themselves like they did in Ames.



John Gaskins

Husker defense key in UT upset

Nebraska ended a four-game losing skid and Texas' seven-game winning streak by holding UT to 33 percent field goal shooting.

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

A week's worth of practice proved to be the right medicine on Saturday afternoon for the Nebraska basketball team, which looked like anything but a team that had lost four straight games.

The Cornhuskers gave a sterling defensive performance to go along with a deadly assault from their senior leaders to beat No. 22 Texas 80-67 before 8,640 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The win raised NU's record to 8-7 overall and 1-1 in Big 12 play. Texas fell to 12-3 and 2-1 in the conference.

Although it was NU's first win against a ranked opponent since a victory over Kansas two years ago, the win came as no surprise to Husker players.

"We had five good practices (last) week, and we knew this was a winnable game," Nebraska senior center Kimani Ffriend said. "After coming off the Missouri loss by two points, we knew we were better than what we were five games ago. We knew if we played well, we would win."

It was Ffriend and his fellow seniors who led by example. NU senior forward Steffon Bradford and guard Cookie Belcher had 20 and 18 points respectively

Nebraska	80
Texas	67

to go along with Ffriend's 18 points on five of six shooting.

Nebraska shot a solid 51 percent from the floor for the game, while the Longhorns struggled offensively, producing only a mark of 33 percent from the floor.

UT's offense was especially stagnant in the first half, scoring only seven field goals and a season-equaling low 20 points. The Longhorns trailed NU by eight at the intermission bell.

"I think this is probably our best defensive effort against a good basketball team," Collier said. "It will take this kind of effort every night. That is something we haven't learned how to do yet, but once you do it the first time, you can certainly learn how to do it again."

Nobody in burnt orange appeared more frustrated than UT's Maurice Evans. The junior forward, who came into the game averaging 17 points per contest, scored only three points on one of nine shooting. Evans was hounded by several Huskers throughout the game, including Belcher.

"I was trying to be physical with him," Belcher said. "He started out physical with me, but I wanted to switch that around. We got him taking off-balance shots. He was-

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David Clasen/DN
Cookie Belcher finishes a lay-up after stealing the ball against Texas Saturday. Nebraska ended UT's 6-game win streak by defeating the No. 23 Longhorns 80-67.

Near-perfect floor routines propel NU

Nebraska women's gym team dug deep in its final rotation to narrowly defeat Oregon State.

BY KRISTEN WATERS

The Nebraska women's gymnastics team squeezed by a visiting Oregon State team at the first home meet of the season on Sunday.

In front of a home crowd of 1,104, the sixth-ranked Huskers improved to 2-1 on the season with a 195.225-194.90 win over the 12th-ranked Beavers.

"It was a lot of fun performing in front of a home crowd," freshman Tami Harris said.

NU opened the day strong with a record-breaking performance on the vault by freshman Gina Bruce. Bruce scored a 9.90, which tied NU's freshman record in the event, and walked away with her first event title. Freshman Alecia Ingram tied with OSU's Karina Severin for second with a score of 9.875.

On beam, sophomore Julie Houk also won her first event title of the season with a score of 9.95, tying her career-high score. With the help of sophomore Jess Wertz and Ingram's 9.90 tie for second, the Huskers extended their lead against OSU.

But the momentum came to an end on the beam exercise, where three Cornhuskers fell, giving the team its lowest score in the event since 1999 at 47.50. This left NU trailing the Beavers by a half point heading into the last rotation.

"It's the beginning of the season, and we're a young team," Ingram said of NU's poor per-



Nebraska gymnasts and coaches watch senior Amy Ringo compete in the floor exercise Sunday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Ringo set a new personal best in the floor exercise with a score of 9.95 and helped the Huskers edge Oregon State 195.225-194.90.

formance on the beam. "We just got nervous, and it had kind of a snowball effect on the team."

The Huskers needed to stay focused in the floor exercise, the final event of the night, Ingram said.

"We had a group talk before the floor event, and we focused on doing a perfect routine," she

said. Led by senior Amy Ringo, that is nearly what the team got.

Ringo stepped up by tying a school record with a score of 9.95 to place first in the event. Wertz, Ingram and Harris tied for third place with a score of 9.875. The performances were enough for a close NU victory.

In the all-around competition, Ingram placed second with a score of 38.825 behind OSU's Annie Campbell who scored 39.075. Harris finished second on the team and fourth in the all-around with a score of 38.450.

The Huskers continue to compete without sophomores A.J. Lamb and Bree Dority

O'Callaghan because of injuries. Both may compete in NU's next competition, a matchup with the defending Big 12 champion Iowa State Cyclones in Ames, Iowa, on Friday.

"Our only weak point right now is beam," Ingram said. "And if we improve that, we should do pretty well this weekend."

ISU clobbers NU Women

BY LINCOLN ARNEAL

AMES, Iowa - Nebraska Coach Paul Sanderford was looking for all the help he could get during an 89-46 loss, the worst in school history, to No. 7 Iowa State.

All 14 players saw action in the first half, and when that didn't seem to work, he looked to other areas of the bench.

"I was looking for anybody who had some fire," Sanderford said. "I tried to put in (Assistant Coach) Michelle Clark twice because she rebounds pretty good."

The lone bright spot for NU - a 6-2 lead over the Cyclones (13-1, 4-0 in the Big 12) - came on three pointers from Greichaly Cepero and Shannon Howell.

After that, things quickly got ugly. The Cyclones went on a 30-3 run, including 21 unanswered points. ISU held NU without a point for six minutes and without a field goal for 11 minutes.

"We just went into the tank and couldn't dig ourselves out," sophomore guard Margaret Richards said.

No matter what NU did, it could not stop Iowa State, which couldn't do anything wrong.

"In the first 12 to 14 minutes, they executed as well today offensively as any team that I have ever coached against," Sanderford said.

Iowa State	89
Nebraska	46

The three pointer buried NU and took them out of the game. The Cyclones were seven for eight from behind the arc in the first half and 11 of 16 overall. During ISU's big first-half run, each of ISU's starters hit a three.

While the Cyclones were dismantling the Husker defense with jumpers, the Nebraska offense managed a mere 18 points in the first half, turning the ball over 14 times and shooting just 20 percent from the field in the half.

The Huskers did not have a player score double digits as Steph Jones and Casey Leonhardt led NU with 9 points apiece.

Angie Welle led Iowa State with 22 points. There were a number of problems for NU throughout the game, but Sanderford said he was disappointed that no one took charge on the court.

"No one stepped up for us today," he said. "The leadership wasn't there."

Nebraska will now have to bounce back quickly as the Huskers will face No. 9 Texas Tech at home on Wednesday.

"We can't forget about this loss," Leonhardt said. "We need to learn from our mistakes and get better."

Athletic cornerback says NU's the place

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

The theme for the 2001 Nebraska football recruiting class has been speed and athleticism.

With the addition of Corsicana, Texas, standout Danielle Manning, the Cornhuskers are continuing that trend of recruiting versatile players that can be used anywhere on the field.

Manning, a 5-foot-11, 186-pound cornerback with a 40-yard dash time of 4.4 seconds, now gives the Huskers 15 verbal commitments in their class of 2001.

Of the 15 commitments, nine of the players fit the "athlete mold," meaning they can be used at more than one position.

According to Manning, who is ranked the 16th-best cornerback in the nation by Rivals100.com, it

was almost a no-brainer for him to come to Nebraska after his official visit this weekend.

"When it was all said and done, Nebraska was just right," Manning said.

Manning's commitment to the Huskers undoubtedly surprised Texas A&M coaches and fans. It was just Oct. 26 when Manning gave his commitment to the Aggies.

Going into this weekend, Manning said he still considered himself a commitment to the Aggies but wanted to check out NU with his own eyes.

"Just talking to the players and listening to them tell me how it is there gave me a good idea what to expect," Manning said. "They are

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