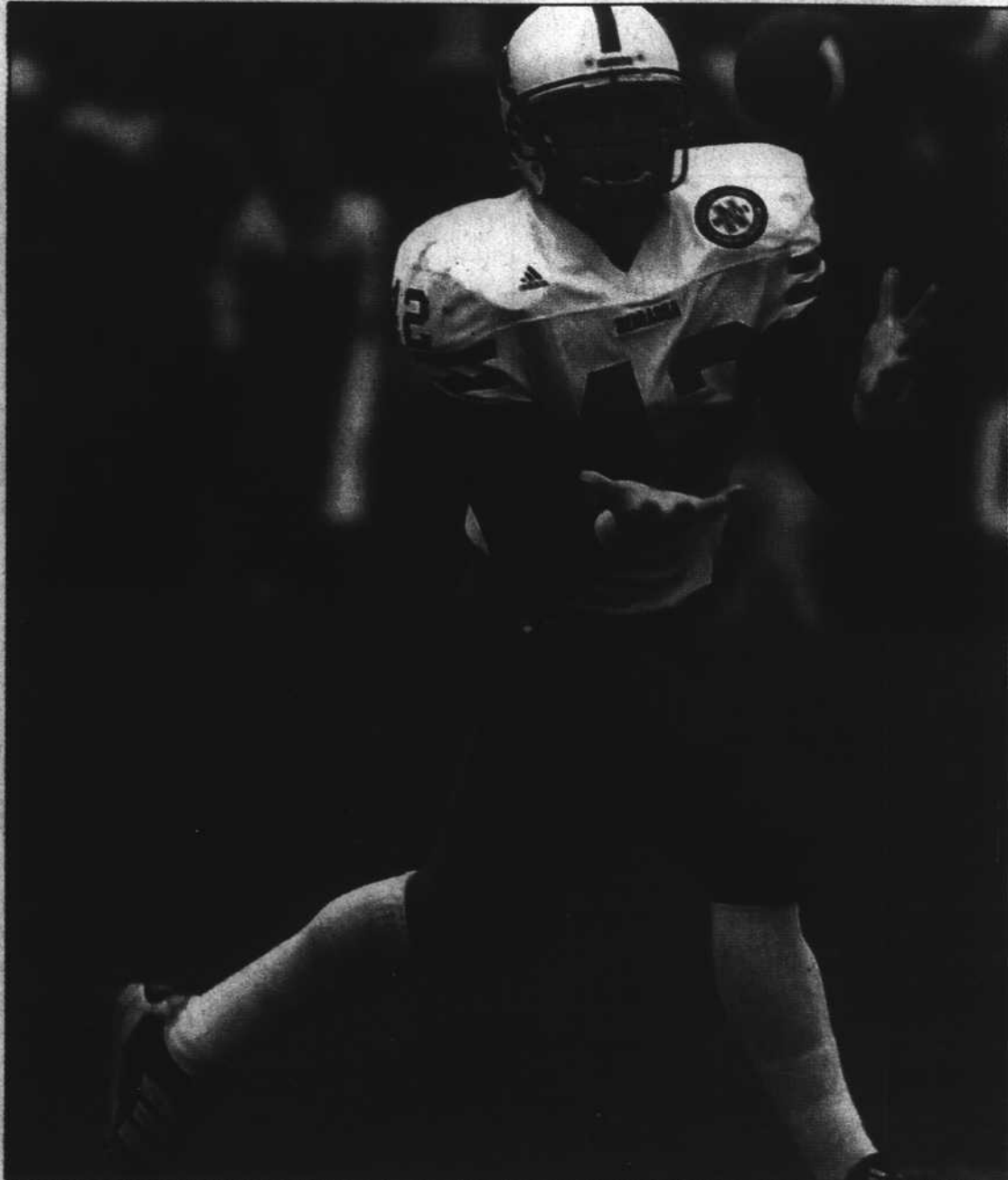


Gibson, Watchorn may get sixth year

NU safety Troy Watchorn may be granted a sixth year of eligibility by the NCAA. Husker wingback John Gibson also is applying for a medical red-shirt.



DN File Photo

■ Gibson may get another chance to play because of an ACL tear, while Watchorn sat out after his father's death.

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

Nebraska football players Troy Watchorn and John Gibson have two completely different stories, but both hope to come up with the same ending—a rare sixth year of eligibility.

Odds are Gibson, who tore his anterior cruciate ligament in the Alamo Bowl, will be granted a sixth year of eligibility for missing all but one game in 1997 with another torn ACL.

During the season, Gibson said talk of the sixth year didn't even cross his mind.

"It was after school got out, and I was joking around with Coach Solich about it," Gibson said. "The next day he came up to me and told me I could really look into it to see if I qualify."

Gibson did some research and said he felt pretty good about his chances.

"The Big 12 granted me my first and second year as a hardship and now it's petitioned to the NCAA, and they have to finalize it," Gibson said.

For Watchorn, the situation looks a little more sketchy.

After playing in the first game of the season in 1997, he left the team for psychological reasons when his father passed away.

What Watchorn now needs is some kind of documentation on why he sat out 1997 and that his redshirt season (1996) was medically related to torn hamstrings.

"I've got to prove one year of psychological stress in '97 when my dad passed away," Watchorn said. "I don't think they've had too many cases like mine before, so quite honestly, I don't know

"I showed what I could do when given the chance. I love to play the game of football, and being in the funk I was in for three years didn't allow me to show my full potential. With another year, I think bigger and better things could happen to me."

Troy Watchorn
NU safety

what kind of answer I'll get."

Watchorn said NU director of compliance Gary Borgen, as well as university psychologist Jack Stark and the training staff were taking care of all the necessary paper work the NCAA needed.

Stark has already written the NCAA a letter on the matter, and the Husker training staff is currently digging up files of Watchorn's medical status in 1996.

"You have to have unbelievable documented evidence to prove it," Watchorn said. "It has to be laid out perfectly so whoever reads can understand it."

If anything, Watchorn said he just wanted another chance.

After a breakthrough year in 2000, Watchorn wants to cap off his career on even a higher note.

"I showed what I could do when given the chance," he said. "I love to play the game of football, and being in the funk I was in for three years didn't allow me to show my full potential."

"With another year, I think bigger and better things could happen to me."

Big 12 mourns loss of OSU players, staff

■ The death of two Cowboy players and eight others hangs over usual conference business.

BY DIRK CHATELAIN

The tragedy of a plane crash that killed 10 people involved with the Oklahoma State basketball program hit home with teams throughout the Big 12 this weekend.

Most conference coaches met with their players on Sunday to discuss how to cope with the shock.

"I don't know if life prepares you for something like this," said Oklahoma Coach Kelvin Sampson. "This isn't like losing a ball game."

The type of plane that went down east of Denver, a turbo-prop that normally holds 11 passengers, is one commonly used by other Big 12 teams. While some programs fly on the same plane, many take two or more smaller planes. Oklahoma State was split into three different flights coming out of Boulder.

The main reason teams fly on chartered flights, said Baylor Coach Dave Bliss, is the lack of large cities in the Big 12. Flying commercial planes into smaller airports isn't practical in most cases.

"The Big 12 is basically a small-city league, so you need charters," said Bliss.

Please see FLIGHT on 9



Brody Schmidt/NewsMakers

Oklahoma State University's Sports Information Director Steve Buzzard, left, and Harry Birdwell, V.P. of Business and External Relations, answer questions from reporters during a press conference Sunday, Jan. 28, 2001 at Gallagher-Iba arena in Stillwater, Okla. Buzzard and Birdwell announced a memorial service for the victims of Saturday night's air crash involving members of the Oklahoma State University athletics program. The memorial will take place January 31 at 3:00 p.m. in Gallagher-Iba arena.

Munoz nips NU's Vering again, 3-2

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Somebody should check Mark Munoz's singlet for kryptonite.

Each of the last four times he has faced Nebraska's No. 1-ranked Brad Vering, Oklahoma State's 197-pounder has taken Vering down. The four wins have come by a combined five points.

Vering's latest loss came 3-2 last night at the NWCA All-Star Duals in Lancaster, Pa. The annual dual pits the top two wrestlers at each weight class in all-star format. This year's match between Vering and Munoz was the seventh time in 10 matches that Vering has lost to Munoz in his career.

Also at the All-Star Dual, Nebraska 133-pounder Todd Beckerman fell by major decision, 10-2, to top-ranked Eric Juergens of Iowa.

It was Beckerman's first appearance at the all-star meet, while it was Vering's second. The Howells native defeated Michigan State's Nick Musashvili 17-4 in last year's dual.

Vering was attempting to win his second straight start in the all-star meet and also end a four match losing streak to Munoz.

Munoz scored the match's only take down late in the third period to take a commanding 3-1 lead and seal the match. Vering couldn't score any points after an escape and the match ended 3-2.

Last year, Vering lost to Munoz 3-2 in the Reno Challenge, 6-5 on Feb. 6, and 3-1 in double overtime in the Big 12 Conference finals.

Beckerman's loss was to Juergens was the second in his career after he fell 6-1 at the 1999 National Duals. Beckerman was taken down three times by Juergens in the third period in his 10-2 loss.

The two grapplers will return to competition Feb. 2 at Coach Mark Manning's former school, Northern Iowa.

Robinson starting to find groove as Huskers head to KSU

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

Like a good mind, a comfort zone is a terrible thing to waste.

If that's true, Nebraska Coach Barry Collier might want to get John Robinson II a little more time on the hardwood tonight at Kansas State as well as the rest of this season.

Robinson, a junior who started as a freshman at New Mexico and transferred to NU during the middle of his sophomore year, struggled after becoming eligible in the final game of the San Juan Shootout.

But as of late, Robinson has begun to find his groove.

"I don't think I can get much more comfortable than I am right now," he said.

Robinson's first few games pro-

duced his season highs in points (7) and minutes (19), but also in turnovers (4).

The point guard was frustrated by his early play, which he said was the result of a year off from the game and the transition from Robinson's style to Collier's way.

Fun and gun is Robinson's style, and a 3-pointer from the wing on the fast break is his shot of choice in practice.

"I've always played an up and down game," he said. "I've never, ever slowed down."

But Robinson knows following Collier's advice is the way to go if he wants to play.

Be a leader on the floor, play great defense and play loose were all words of advice Robinson has heeded in the past few games.

—Robinson's numbers don't amaze,

but Collier said Robinson has improved both his ball handling and defensive pressure.

The 6-foot-1, 185-pounder's backcourt mate and current Husker starter Kevin Augustine said he expected Robinson to come on strong after a rough beginning.

"There are some guys on this team that were, for 13 or 14 years, used to playing a certain style of basketball," Augustine said. "When you do something for so long, it takes some time to get used to something different."

Robinson's contributions as of late haven't been limited to the court. His influence has been felt in the locker room as well.

During halftime of Saturday's loss to Oklahoma, Robinson lit into his teammates over their uninspired play in the

"There are some guys on this team that were, for 13 or 14 years, used to playing a certain style of basketball. When you do something for so long, it takes some time to get used to something different."

Kevin Augustine
NU point guard

opening 20 minutes. What ensued was a late rally that almost resulted in a win.

"I just told them that we needed to come together and we weren't playing hard enough," he said.

NU might want to have Robinson address the team in pregame warm-ups considering the Husker's performance in Manhattan, Kan., the past six seasons.

Nebraska (9-10) hasn't won at KSU

(8-9) since 1993-94, and both teams enter the 8 p.m. game with identical 2-4 conference records.

Collier said new Wildcat Coach Jim Wooldridge, formerly an assistant of the Chicago Bulls, had his team of fresh faces playing hard and running the triangle offense.

K-State's top two scorers, Travis Reynolds and Tony Atchison, both come off the bench.