

## O-line depletes as Fonoti breaks hand



DN File Photo

The 2001 Nebraska offensive line won't look much like this one — tackle Jason Schwab and guard Ross Hochstein graduated, All-American center Dominic Raiola left school for the NFL draft and last year's top backup, Jon Rutherford, will miss spring football with a knee injury. To add to NU's line woes, junior-to-be guard Toniu Fonoti broke his hand Tuesday and will miss the rest of winter conditioning.

■ The Nebraska offensive line has some serious retooling to do in the eight months before they take the field.

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

Add another road block to the development of an already inexperienced 2001 Nebraska offensive line.

During a weight lifting accident yesterday morning junior-to-be left guard Toniu Fonoti broke his hand in two places.

Fonoti had surgery on the hand yesterday afternoon, and offensive line coach Milt Tenopir said he expects the school's regular season pancake record holder to miss winter conditioning but not any spring football.

While Fonoti will be back sooner rather than later, most of NU's offensive line from last year will not.

Graduated are guard Russ Hochstein and tackle Jason Schwab. Gone is All-American center Dominic Raiola, who declared early for the NFL draft. Injured is last year's top backup, Jon Rutherford. Rutherford will miss spring football but hopes to be full strength by the Huskers' opener against Troy State on Sept. 1.

Senior-to-be Dave Volk is the only offensive lineman with significant game experience who remains healthy.

The returning starter at left tackle said this is the most unsettled he's seen the offensive line.

"It's up for grabs right now," Volk said. "Earlier years there was open spots, but you pretty much knew who was going to step in."

"Right now on the right side it's pretty much wide open."

If healthy, Rutherford is expected to take Raiola's place at center, and Fonoti will man left-guard for the second year in a row. But the right guard and tackle spots are question marks.

At right guard Tenopir said sophomore (next season) Jon Dawson and junior Wes Cody look to be the top two candidates while senior Kyle Kollmorgen and juniors Nate Kolterman and Scott Koethe will battle it out for right tackle.

Kollmorgen was a back-up last season, while the other four linemen up for the two starting spots were listed third or lower on the depth chart for much of the 2000 season.

Despite his advantage in experience, Kollmorgen, who was suspended for NU's

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Milt Tenopir

Nebraska offensive line

Alamo Bowl win, doesn't expect the right guard job to be handed to him.

"I'd love to say that it's mine to lose, but I think it's anyone's to win, he said. "I don't think one person has that spot."

An advantage Tenopir has in cobbling next year's line together is the versatility of Rutherford. The injured lineman played center, guard and tackle last season.

"Jon Rutherford can play any position," Kollmorgen said. "He's probably the most versatile player on the line, if not on the team."

If centers Matt Shook or Jon Garrison are impressive during the spring,

Rutherford, last year's "swing" lineman may move to guard or tackle.

Next year's offensive line will have to fill some key holes if they expect the same success of the 2000 line, which helped the NU offense lead the nation in rushing. Tenopir, for one, believes it's entirely possible.

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"We'll be fine either way."

## NU's offensive woes look to end at KU

■ The Huskers will try to up their paltry points-per-game average at KU.

BY LINCOLN ARNEAL

The Nebraska women's basketball team has been good at identifying problems and correcting them so far this year. Problem is, a new one always seems to crop up.

First, the problem was playing intensely on defense. That's fixed — the Cornhuskers have depended on defense to carry them most of the year. Next it was rebounding, and NU (9-11, 1-6 Big 12) has outrebounded three of its last four opponents.

Now, a woeful offense has led to NU's current five-game losing streak. The Huskers have averaged a mere 54.2 points in those games.

Nebraska will get to try to improve on the latest problem tonight as they travel to Lawrence, Kan., to take on the Kansas Jayhawks (8-10, 2-5 Big 12).

During each game in the streak, the team has gone through extended periods where it was held scoreless.

Sanderford said the lack of consistency was because of the team's youth and the loose structure of the offense.

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*"(Scoring droughts) happen when kids know we need to score. Instead of setting a screen and getting (a teammate) open, they try to do it themselves. It is just a lack of patience."*

Paul Sanderford  
Women's basketball coach

pen when kids know we need to score," Sanderford said. "Instead of setting a screen and getting (a teammate) open, they try to do it themselves. It is just a lack of patience."

In due time, the Huskers' scoring problems could be helped by the return of K.C. Cowgill. The freshman guard, who averaged 10.1 points per game in the season's first eight contests, has watched the last 12 with an injury to her left foot.

Cowgill, the team's second leading scorer, said it was difficult to sit on the bench and watch the team struggle.

"When the team needs a big shot, I can make that and give the team a boost," she



DN File Photo

NU senior center Casey Leonhardt will try to lead Nebraska past Kansas and end the Huskers' five-game losing streak tonight at KU's Allen Fieldhouse.

said.

She probably won't be able to against KU. Although she is suiting up for the game, Cowgill likely will not play, Sanderford said.

"She is still in some pain," he said. "I don't see her as being a factor."

Kansas isn't shedding any tears for the Huskers' offen-

sive woes, as they've faced struggles of their own this season — most notably the graduation of All-Big 12 player Lynn Pride. The teams have combined for three conference wins, all against Kansas State.

"They've struggled for a win like we have," Sanderford said.

## Nebraska snaps road losing streak

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Nebraska seniors Cookie Belcher and Kimani Ffriend left Lincoln on Tuesday morning for Kansas State with a bad taste in their mouths.

Belcher hadn't won in Bramlage Coliseum in four trips, and Ffriend was winless in his only attempt last season. But that taste is gone now — the result of a 63-61 Husker victory that snapped an 18-game road losing streak and a six-game losing streak on the Wildcat's home floor.

"That bus ride home is going to be a lot better," said Belcher, who had two definitive steals in the final 86 seconds of the game that NU Coach Barry Collier called "game savers."

NU has come close all season long on the road and the two-point win marked the Huskers ninth four-point or less game. A 4-5 mark in those games and tough losses at Minnesota and Missouri had the team and its coach on the brink of desperation.

Collier became emotional at the end, hitting the ground on his knees and begging the officials to let a break go his team's way. Ffriend, who tied a career high with seven blocked shots, two of which came on KSU's final possession, wanted the win badly, too, and didn't hold those feelings back on the court.

They were good feelings after he blocked KSU's final two shot attempts and put the game away on a free throw. The senior could hardly hold back his tears afterward as he talked about the odds that have stacked against him this season.

"You just don't know," Ffriend said. "All that was going through my mind was Iowa State. I'm like, 'damn, can we get a break?'"

Unlike the heartbreaker against the Cyclones, NU did get a break and improved to 10-10 on the season. And a big monkey has been lifted off the NU's back.

"It's just a great relief," Ffriend said. "It's just been long and frustrating, but we stepped up."

## Huskers steal win at KSU

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

MANHATTAN, Kan. — The curse is over, but it wasn't easy.

Nebraska got back at the road demons that had haunted the Cornhuskers for 18 straight losses, rallying and then hanging on to beat Kansas State 63-61 on Wednesday night.

The Huskers (10-10, 3-4 Big 12) used senior guard Cookie Belcher's 15 points and senior center Kimani

Friend's 13 points to rally from as far behind as 10 points.

Belcher and Ffriend then made the plays on defense to secure the NU comeback. Belcher accounted for two key steals in the final two minutes, and Ffriend tied a career high with seven blocked shots, two coming in the final eight seconds with NU clinging to a one-point lead.

Much relief hung around the Husker locker room after the win.

"Finally we got one, and we stepped up," Ffriend said. "We made big plays in the second half and came together."

NU had to step up in the second stanza after watching KSU build a 17-7 lead just over five minutes into the game. Nebraska responded with a run of their own, taking a 21-20 lead on a Brian Conklin three-pointer.

From there, though, the Wildcats went on an 18-7 run and ultimately secured a eight-point halftime lead.

Belcher said Nebraska had a quiet, but intense meeting in the locker room.

"Coach said a little bit about having heart... Who had the most heart?" Belcher said. "If we were going to have heart, we weren't going to lie down. We showed we had heart by battling back."

Nebraska brought its locker room fire to the floor, charging ahead with 13- and eight-point runs to pull ahead.

But each time KSU came back, finally tying the game at 58 with 3:50 left on a three-point goal by guard Phineas Atchison, who then put the Wildcats up one with another three seconds later.

From there, Belcher went to work with some defensive thievery.

"Cookie's defense in the last three minutes was a game saver for us," Nebraska Coach Barry Collier said.

Belcher made the key play of the game when he swiped the ball from Atchison and then fed the ball off to junior guard John Robinson, who made a layup to give NU a 62-61 lead with 1:45 to go.

"I knew the ball was going to (Atchison), and I got those big monkey arms out there and stole it," Belcher said.

Belcher recorded another steal on the next possession, but then he was called for a charge on offense with 28.3 seconds left.

Nebraska seemed to have halted KSU on its next possession after a missed Wildcat shot, but Ffriend and Bradford were called for traveling with 13 seconds left when they both fought over the defensive board.

Ffriend would atone for the blunder moments later, swatting Reid's shot out of bounds with 7.2 seconds left.

Ffriend then blocked KSU sophomore guard Richie Terry's shot, and a jump ball was called with 2.8 seconds left after a mad scramble.

"It's about time I got some going my way," Ffriend said of his blocked shots. "There might have been one block that could have been called goaltending, but God gave this one to us tonight."

Ffriend then hit one free throw to give NU a two-point lead, missing the second one on purpose to force KSU into a 90-foot heave at the buzzer.

Husker notes: NU's home contest with Oklahoma State, scheduled for Feb. 6, has been moved to Wednesday, Feb. 7, to avoid a conflict with funeral services for some of the 10 OSU players and support staff killed in a plane crash on Saturday night.

Tip-off for the contest is scheduled for 6:00 p.m.

Following the men's game, the Husker women will take on Oklahoma. Tip-off is scheduled for 8:30 p.m., 90 minutes later than originally planned.