

## NU stung by Yellow Jackets, end tourney at 1-2

BY SAMUEL MCKEON

As its pitchers went in the Holiday Inn-Crowne Plaza/Rice Invitational, so did the No. 5 Nebraska baseball team - likely right out of the top 10.

Though rankings won't be released until today, it's probable that NU's 1-2 record over the weekend, which included book-end losses to No. 12 Rice (16-2) and No. 1 Georgia Tech (15-8), won't entice voters to keep the Cornhuskers near their preseason position, especially after yielding 35 runs and 41 hits in three games, nowhere close to the stellar 3.14 earned run average NU showed

off in 2000.

Still, Nebraska, which has none of the warm weather practice time Rice and Tech enjoyed, finished 1-2 in this tournament last season and still fared well. And Coach Dave Van Horn had praise for the defense and hitting output in the last two games - th GT loss and a 10-4 win over Lamar on Saturday.

"We found out a lot about ourselves this weekend," Van Horn said. "I was pleased with the way our position players played and the character our team showed in fighting back after Friday.

"We're not ready to beat the caliber of Rice and Georgia Tech this early in the season. We will be

there soon."

The weekend started sourly for the Huskers, as Shane Komine missed his scheduled start after hurting his back in a game of ping-pong last Wednesday.

Sophomore Jamie Rodrigues started instead and lasted only one and one-third innings, giving up three runs and five hits through 10 batters. Rice led 3-0 after two, but NU scored one in the third when Will Bolt reached second on an error and Josh Hesse singled him in. But Owls' pitcher Jon Skaggs handcuffed Nebraska most of the afternoon, striking out 10 batters in six and two-thirds innings.

"Skaggs pitched well, but it

was not anything we hadn't seen before," Nebraska Coach Van Horn said Friday. "I was disappointed in our play tonight because our pitchers kept falling behind in the counts, and they jammed our hitters all evening."

Rice didn't blow the game open until the eighth, when, holding a 5-2 lead, Hunter Brown hit a grand slam off of NU freshman Jason Burch to increase the lead to 9-2. By the game's merciful end, the Huskers had given up seven more.

Saturday in a 10-4 win over Lamar, Nebraska wasted no time in mounting a 4-0 lead in the first, as Nebraska took advantage of two balks from Cardinal starter

Christopher Norris. Van Horn praised R.D. Spiehs, who threw six innings and gave up four runs, and freshman reliever Justin Pekarek, who struck out four in retiring nine consecutive batters for the save.

Nebraska pounded out 20 hits, led by third baseman Jeff Blevins, who drove in five in his first collegiate game, including a three-run triple in the eighth after Lamar had closed the lead to 7-4.

"We came out and hit the ball well today," Blevins said. "Last night, we were almost timid at the plate, and we came out and got some hits early."

Sunday, Nebraska jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the bottom of the

fourth on the top-ranked Yellow Jackets, who lost 4-3 to Rice on Saturday night. But GT exploded for 14 runs in the fifth and sixth innings - 10 in the fifth - to blow a close game wide open. Komine gave up five runs on five hits after holding Tech without a run through four innings.

The only strong performance from the six pitchers NU used in the game came from freshman Mike Sillman, who gave up one run through three innings of work, well after the game had been decided. Though NU had fallen behind 14-3, it did rally for five more runs to make the final score look more respectable - a little bit, anyway.



DN File Photo

Isha Kelley says she was asked to leave the Nebraska basketball team.

## Kelley no longer a Husker

BY LINCOLN ARNEAL

Sophomore guard Isha Kelley said she was asked to leave the Nebraska women's basketball team by Coach Paul Sanderford last week.

A press release distributed before the NU's game against Colorado Saturday announced Kelley was no longer on the team, not elaborating on details.

Reached at home on Sunday night, Kelley said that Sanderford forced her out.

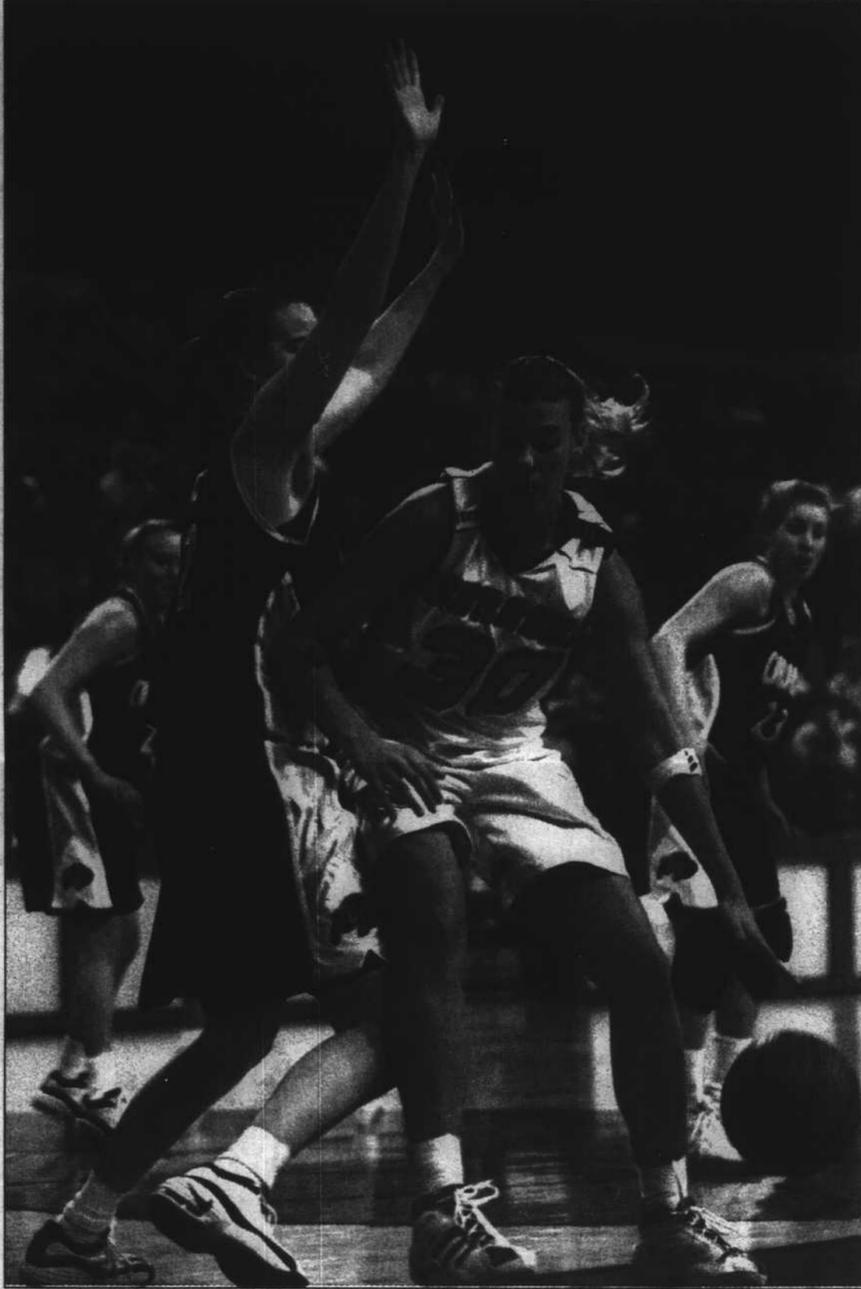
"It wasn't my decision (to leave)," Kelley said. "(Coach Paul Sanderford) had his reasons. ... I am really disappointed.

"I know when I am cared for, when I am being liked, and I wasn't feeling that vibe."

Sanderford, reached at home Sunday, refused further comment. Neither gave specific reasons for the departure.

The Lincoln Southeast graduate started seven games this season, including the first three, averaging just more than 15 minutes per game during the non-conference schedule. That number

Please see KELLEY on 11



Steven Bender/DN

Nebraska forward Paige Sutton takes on a Colorado defender during Saturday's game at the Devaney Sports Center. The No. 19-ranked Buffaloes defeated the Huskers 81-65.

## NU again beaten by own formula

BY JOHN GASKINS

The shoe was on the other foot Saturday, and it wasn't a comfy fit for the Nebraska women's basketball team.

When Colorado visited the Bob Devaney Sports Center last year, the veteran-led Huskers gave the young and restless Buffaloes a ball-handling clinic, sending CU's guards into a turnover tailspin in a 13-point win.

Oh, how the tables have turned. A year older and wiser, the same Buffaloes were the ones doing the schooling, beating the young and restless Huskers 81-65 before a crowd of 3,552 people.

While 19<sup>th</sup>-ranked CU (17-5, 8-3) snapped its four-game losing streak in Lincoln, NU (10-14, 2-9) lost its fifth-straight home contest for the first time in school history and finished its three-game homestand with three losses to top-20 opponents by an average of 20 points.

"This year, since we're so young, we're gaining a lot of experience," said NU sophomore guard Shahidrah Roberts, who led the Huskers with 14 points.

"Watching what Colorado has done with their team, it's positive."

Like their 87-69 win over NU in Boulder Jan. 24, four Buffaloes scored in double figures led by Sabrina Scott's 16 points. CU committed 15 fewer turnovers than it did in its loss to NU last year.

Junior guards Mandy Nightengale and Jenny Roulier, who combined for 18 of the Buffaloes' 26 turnovers in that loss, combined for 25 points and just four turnovers while helping to force 18 NU cough-ups.

Eleven of those turnovers came from six of the Huskers' 11

freshmen and sophomores. "I can definitely understand (Nebraska's) situation," said Colorado Coach Ceal Berry, whose squad went 10-19 and 4-12 in the Big 12 last year.

"When you play a lot of young players in the Big 12, it's baptism by fire. It's not a pleasant experience."

Although the Huskers kept the Buffs on the ropes for the first 25 minutes, experience outlasted youth in the final 15. Down just 46-40 at halftime and 55-47 with 14 minutes left, NU failed to score on its next six possessions as the Buffs reeled off 11 straight points to go up by 19.

NU committed four fouls in that near-three-minute stretch, the most devastating one at the 13:27 mark when center Casey Leonhardt picked up her fourth foul. That sent NU's leading scorer - who finished with 13 points and 12 rebounds - to the bench.

"That was fairly big because it took her out of the game," Roberts said. "She didn't have any leeway to do what she wanted to do and get the shots because she was worried about fouling out and not being able to finish the game."

While the Huskers took another blow to their egos, Coach Paul Sanderford, who suffered his 14<sup>th</sup> loss of the year, the most in his 19-year career, took the worst blow of the day from an official who accidentally elbowed him in the jaw while signaling a time out in the second half.

As if things needed to get worse for Nebraska.

"I took the charge, though; I hung in there," Sanderford said to reporters' laughter after the game. "I didn't say anything bad. I smiled.

"I'm glad I can laugh. I want to cry."

## Mixed weekend for Vering

FROM STAFF REPORTS

It had been quite a while since Nebraska's top-ranked Brad Vering had his hand raised in victory after a match with Oklahoma State's Mark Munoz. It also had been almost two years since he had lost to anybody but Munoz.

In a weekend that saw ninth-ranked Nebraska (11-5) lose big to No. 2 Oklahoma State and eighth-ranked Oklahoma, both of those trends came to a halt.

Vering, the defending national champion at 197-pounds, put a stop to his four-match losing streak to fourth-ranked Munoz by earning a 5-4 double overtime victory over his main rival. Oklahoma State, however, won the dual 29-12, taking seven of 10 matches on Saturday.

Vering then suffered a controversial 3-2 loss to Oklahoma's No. 11 Waymon May in NU's 33-7 loss to the Sooners on Sunday.

Vering, down 3-2 in the third period, had May on his back and was in position to score three near fall points when the referee stopped action with a dangerous hold call.

Not being able to score another point, Vering eventually lost his first match to anybody other than Munoz since he lost to West Virginia's Vertus Jones in the 184-pound third place match at the 1999 NCAA Championships.

Against Munoz, Vering avenged a 3-2 loss at the Jan. 29 NWCA All-Star Dual.

Both earned an escape at the beginning of the second and third periods respectively, but Vering took a 3-1 lead with a third-

period takedown. Munoz earned an escape and then a takedown to take a 4-3 lead, but Vering got out of it, tying the match at four and sending it into what would be a scoreless first overtime.

Vering got to choose which position he wanted to start in at the beginning of the second overtime because he scored the match's first offensive point. Vering chose down and earned a match-winning escape in the 30-second extra session.

Nebraska has now lost four of its last five duals and five out of its last seven, although they have seen five consecutive top-20 opponents since the National Duals on Jan. 20.

The weekend did have its bright spots as Nebraska's 133-pounder Todd Beckerman went 2-0 and, in what may have been his biggest win of the year, pinned Oklahoma State's second-ranked Johnny Thompson, a freshman, in 1:31. Beckerman trailed 2-1 in the first period when he put Thompson on his back, earning the fall.

157-pounder Bryan Snyder, ranked second, also went undefeated in both duals. All but claiming his spot as the No. 1 seed for the conference tournament, Snyder scored an 11-5 decision over OSU's 16<sup>th</sup>-ranked Shane Roller and a 28-13 technical fall over Oklahoma's No. 19 Witt Durden.

The Huskers will close out their home season on Friday against Iowa State at 4 p.m. in the track pavilion of the Devaney Center between sessions of the Nebraska state wrestling tournament.

## Variety of combinations working for tennis

BY VINCE KUPPIG

The doubles teams led the undefeated Nebraska women's tennis team, and NU swept through its competition this weekend.

For the fourth consecutive match, NU (5-0) did not allow its opponent to get on the board by defeating Indiana State, 7-0, Saturday and Montana State, 7-0, Sunday.

"I think (Sunday's) match was far and away the best team performance that we've had all spring," NU Coach Scott Jacobson said. "Everyone came to play. It was just a great team effort."

The effort started off with wins from the three Huskers' doubles teams, a feat NU has accomplished at every dual this season.

For the first time, Jacobson used different combinations at No. 1 and 2 doubles on Sunday. Freshmen Leslie Harvey and Elissa Kinard, who usually play together at No. 2, had little trouble moving up to No. 1 as they defeated MSU's duo, 8-3.

Juniors Katarina Balan and Amy Frisch played together for the first time at the No. 2 spot on Sunday, winning 8-3. At No. 3, NU's duo of Stacy Tomkiewicz and Rebecca Harvey, also playing together for the first time, shut out the opponents, 8-0.

"We mixed a few doubles combinations," Jacobson said. "Both (No. 1 and



Derek Lippincott/DN

No. 2) really responded. (Rebecca and Stacy) played awesome together.

"It seems like the kids are influenced positively by the changes that we make. It's a really healthy situation to have a team that is really comfortable playing with different people."

Playing in her third consecutive match at No. 1 singles, Leslie Harvey once again demolished her opponent, defeating MSU's Stacy Voelker, 6-2, 6-2. In her five matches this spring, Harvey has yet to give up more than two games in a set.

In men's tennis action, NU dropped a close match to 67<sup>th</sup>-ranked Rice, 4-3, on Saturday after winning its first two matches this weekend in Houston against Lamar, 6-0, and the University of

NU freshman Rebecca Harvey returns a serve against Indiana State on Saturday. Harvey's victory helped the undefeated Huskers beat Indiana State 7-0.

Texas-San Antonio, 6-1, on Friday.

Against Rice, NU started off down a point, losing its three doubles matches, and could never catch up. The Huskers picked up wins at No. 2, 3, and 5 singles but lost two tough three-setters.

Junior Lance Mills improved his record to 4-0 at No. 2 singles while Big 12 Preseason All-Conference selection Jorge Abos Sanchez dropped to 2-2 on the year at the No. 1 spot.

The NU men and women each return to action with three matches next weekend. The women are at home on Friday and Saturday, while the men travel to Des Moines, Iowa, on Saturday and Sunday.