

## 'A-Dub' gains from tough year

Former President Calvin Coolidge (unfortunately a Republican) once said, "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence." Not talent. Not genius. Not education. "The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

Easy for him to say, he of the Roaring '20s. But the depression hit the nation soon after he left, and people could really live by that slogan. They had to.

Quite a far out reference to this year's Nebraska women's basketball team, and in particular its relentless senior guard Amanda Went. But an appropriate one, I think.

After being a role player in the Kubik/Schwartz/Rogers era, this was supposed to be "A-Dub's" year, "A-Dub's" team. She wanted it and accepted it that way, and really, she had no choice. She's the only one of the three seniors who have been here for four years, and the 11 freshmen and sophomores need the wisdom.

She has led admirably and by example. On the court, no one tries harder. The board crashing, the ball diving, the floor burns. When you watch Went play, you'd think her heart would explode any minute. She operates only in fourth gear.

She's a coach's dream, even though she's inconsistent and averages just 7.7 points per game. If she had the talent to match her effort, she'd easily be All-Big 12.

Off the court, she's bar none the most polite, cordial and understanding athlete I've talked to. It's not easy to get asked over and over again why your team lost. She always answers honestly, without hesitation, and she'll always send you off with a smile and hand shake.

And what does Went get in reward for all this after paying her dues and licking her wounds? What does she get for being the glue that holds a crop of several talented blue-chippers together? A 10-15 season. Loss after loss.

In her final year of major competitive basketball, she's playing on her first losing team, ever, and it's nothing like what she expected. Quite a reward.

Ah, but she has gotten so much more. She was asked the old, corny, what have you learned question.

"It's not corny," Went said. "I think I've learned a lot about myself. I feel like I'm a stronger person. When you deal with something like this, it's nothing you expect. Through all the frustrations we've had, we've still come in with a good attitude. We haven't given up. I've learned how to not give up."

She's learned persistence. And with only four games left, Sanderford has called on her to strap the cape on and rally the team behind her – not necessarily with points and shots – with control and emotion. Sanderford said she's the strongest player on the team. They need her.

Now, it's up to her. She admitted she's tried too hard sometimes – so hard it affected her play. Sanderford said she needs to have more fun.

Fun? It's hard when you lose, but she knows they'll win ... next year. In fact, she thinks they'll win a lot next year when she's not around. If they do, she'll get some measure of satisfaction from the success.

"It will be hard, but I'll be very proud," she said. "I can see it. I know this team. They are going to be great."

No, it hasn't been a storybook ending, but Went can take this home: She was exactly the kind of person a team like this needed this year. It will win in the future partly because of her.

That's her reward.



John Gaskins

# NU still looking for leader to stand up

BY JOHN GASKINS

She's out there. Somewhere. A go-to player for the Nebraska women's basketball team. Someone who can strap the team on her back and take over a game when NU gets in a bind.

On this talent-filled squad, she's out there, but with four regular season games left in this "what can possibly go wrong next?" 2000-2001 season, the Huskers haven't found her.

They'll search again and try to snap a four-game losing skid in a Saturday night tilt at Kansas State – the only Big 12 team they beat at home this year. It will be the first game of the easiest four-game stretch NU (10-15, 2-10) has had in conference all year.

KSU (11-12, 1-11) is the only team with a worse league record than NU and presents as good of chance as any for the real go-to Husker to please stand up and lead a late-season charge.

"It's been a frustrating year, but it's not over," senior guard Amanda Went said. "It's not over until they tell us to take our uniforms off and hang them up for the summer. We have no choice but to go out strong."

The unfortunate thing is no Husker besides 6-foot-5 senior center Casey Leonhardt – NU's only scorer averaging in double figures at 13 points a game – has consistently given strong performances. The center's production alone isn't enough for NU, especially when Leonhardt is on the bench with foul trouble, which is too often for the Huskers.

Only four other players have scored in double figures two games in a row in Big 12 play. None have done so in three. In fact, only three times in that stretch have more than two Huskers scored 10 or more points, and twice none of them did.

The result? NU is third to last in league play in scoring (61.2) and dead last in scoring margin (-12.7). It's enough to make Coach Paul Sanderford go back to game films of his first three NU teams – all of which went to the NCAA Tournament – to find what can possibly work.

Last year, he had seniors Nicole Kubik,



DN File Photo

Brooke Schwartz or Charlie Rogers to save the day. When those three were sophomores and messing up, it was Anna DeForge.

"When I needed a basket, I called DeForge's number," Sanderford said. "We'd run about four sets for her, and we'd get a shot. She'd push people around and get people to match up with the right person."

"I don't have that luxury now."

He's tried everything and everybody. Sophomores Paige Sutton, Stephanie Jones and Shahidrah Roberts and freshman Shannon Howell have all emerged at times but withered back into ambiguity. Sophomore Greichaly Cepero has been consistent but hasn't had a break-out game.

Anyone else? Sanderford said if there is anyone now who should take the reigns, it's

Went.

"She's by far the best chance to get people to rally behind her," Sanderford said. "She's probably the strongest player on our team. She's helped the young kids along, and she understands people think it's her team."

"She just has to go for broke from here on out."

## Tough ISU greets departing seniors

■ The No. 4 Cyclones bring six top-10 wrestlers to NU's final home match of the season.

BY VINCE KUPPIG

When defending national champion Brad Vering steps onto the mat this afternoon, he'll be wrestling in his last dual as a Husker.

Vering and the rest of the ninth-ranked Nebraska wrestling team (11-5) will have their hands full when they take on No. 4 Iowa State (17-4) today at 4 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center to finish out the regular season.

ISU features nine wrestlers in the top 20, six of which are ranked in the top 10, and are led by 184-pound Cael Sanderson, a two-time national champion who has yet to lose in 110 collegiate matches.

"(Iowa State) is a tough team," NU Coach Mark Manning said. "They have an unbelievable

wrestling tradition. We're definitely probably not favored, but that's okay with us. We're going to be ready to wrestle."

Manning said the Huskers will need to win the close matches and pick up bonus points where they can, something that didn't happen last weekend when the Huskers dropped five one-point matches in duals against Oklahoma State and Oklahoma.

Vering, who dropped to second place in one of the major polls with a loss against OSU, will have a chance to go out with a bang when he takes on 197-pound Zach Thompson. The new top-ranked Thompson is 0-3 in his career against the two-time All-American.

Vering and Thompson have not met since the finals of the 2000 NCAA championships, when Vering came out victorious with a 2-1 decision.

"This one's not for all the marbles, but it's important," Vering said. "I need this one to get good



DN File Photo

The Nebraska wrestling team faces Cael Sanderson and a tough Iowa State squad today during the intermission of the Nebraska High School State Wrestling Tournament.

seeds at nationals and at the Big 12s. It's going to be huge just because it's at home."

Vering will join five other Huskers to be honored today for Senior Day.

One of those is 133-pound All-American Todd Beckerman who knocked off the second and 17th-ranked wrestlers last weekend to move up to third. Beckerman will have another challenge when he takes on seventh-ranked Matt Azevedo.

## Husker pitchers get respite

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Nebraska stumbled out of the gate last week, opening the season with a 1-2 record. The Huskers gave up 16 runs to then-No. 7 Rice, 15 to top-ranked Georgia Tech and lost both games – not what NU fans have come to expect from a pitching staff who posted a 3.13 ERA last season.

Luckily for the NU hurlers, the road gets much easier this weekend at the Applebee's Baseball Fiesta in Albuquerque, N.M.

The Huskers will face New Mexico, Utah and UNLV at the tournament. All three teams are unranked, and none have a

winning record.

Sunday's matchup against UNLV (3-4) should be especially soothing for the NU pitching staff after last weekend's debacle. As a team UNLV bats .239, almost a hundred points lower than the Huskers and has only 14 extra base hits on the season.

Utah is the most intimidating of the teams at 5-5. The Utes have won five consecutive games, three of those against lowly Cal-Riverside.

Nebraska also faces New Mexico (2-6). The Lobos are led by sophomore second baseman Troy Cairns, who leads the team in batting average (.487), doubles (five) and stolen bases (four).

## Long layoff finally over for gymnasts

BY KRISTEN WATERS

After four weeks with no competition, the 1-1 Nebraska men's gymnastics team is excited to finally get its season underway again at today's triangle with No. 15 Air Force and No. 20 University of California-Santa Barbara.

"We're excited about getting going," Coach Francis Allen said.

With no action in four weeks, this weekend will be a test for the Huskers to determine where they stand in comparison to opponents who have more meets under their belts.

If NU performs as it did in the Rocky

Mountain Open on Jan. 19, the layoff may be a nonfactor. The team finished second behind No. 3 Oklahoma with a score of 200.050. Air Force also competed at the open where they finished in third place with a score of 194.100.

The freshmen lineup consisting of David Hansen and Steven Friedman displayed an impressive performance in the season opener.

Hansen qualified for two event finals and finished second in the parallel bar with a score of 8.550, while Friedman qualified in

Please see GYMNASTICS on 9

## Softball heads for Vegas to face top-ranked UCLA

STAFF REPORTS

The Nebraska softball team is headed to Sin City and the 2001 UNLV Classic this weekend, but the Huskers won't have much time to live it up – their five-game slate includes three top-25 teams.

Easily the toughest test is a matchup with No. 1 UCLA on Saturday. The Bruins have lived up to their top ranking so far this season, posting a 9-0 record and outscoring their opponents 82-5.

UCLA is 6-1 against Nebraska all time and haven't dropped a game to NU since 1987.

Earlier on Saturday, Nebraska faces another top-10 opponent Saturday in seventh-ranked California.

Cal (2-0) features eight players batting .333 or above. Cal and NU played twice last season, each team winning a game.

The tournament opens Friday with Nebraska facing unranked Fordham.

The late game Friday pits NU against No. 20 Oregon. It will be the second meeting between the teams this season. Nebraska won 2-1 in the first matchup at the Fiesta Bowl Tournament.

The Ducks lost two upsets at the hands of Texas and Massachusetts and are 6-5 for the season.

Nebraska plays its last game against unranked Cal Poly. The Mustangs are 1-3, including two losses to UCLA.

## Yo-yo NU looks for next win

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

An impressive 26-point win over Kansas State could, beginning with Saturday's game at Colorado, be the start of a late-season run for the Nebraska basketball team.

Then again, judging on recent history, maybe not.

The Huskers haven't won back-to-back games since a five-game streak that included wins against Alaska-Fairbanks and Miami and a San Juan Shootout championship.

After an impressive win against Texas, NU got blown out by Kansas. A quality win over Missouri was followed by a defeat at Oklahoma.

And even breaking its road losing streak at Kansas State two weeks ago couldn't propel NU to a win against Colorado (15-10, 5-7) at home.

So much for momentum. NU Coach Barry Collier thinks that overconfidence following a win plays a role in the Huskers' subsequent losses.

"That is always a challenge for teams that are still trying to learn how to win," Collier said. "It is just human nature to be satisfied with an accomplishment."

Overconfidence is something the Huskers, now 12-12 and 5-6 in the Big 12, can't afford to have, especially considering their performance last year at CU. In that game, the Buffs jumped on top of NU 17-3 and held on for a 70-58 win.

And the two teams' most recent matchup won't bring back many fond memories for Kimani Ffriend and the Huskers.

Colorado stole one on NU's home floor back on Feb. 4 when it managed to hold Ffriend scoreless.

CU's Jamahl Mosley dominated his last matchup with Nebraska's post players, totaling 17 points and eight rebounds, prompting Collier to say Ffriend "got outplayed by a better player."

But Ffriend, who held his own against the Wildcats with 17 points and 11 rebounds, isn't focused on the rematch.

"I'm ready, but I'm not even

Please see STREAK on 9

Husker guard Margaret Richards is one of a bevy of freshman and sophomores who haven't emerged as go-to players from Coach Paul Sanderford's rotation this season.