

# Experience gives NU golfers hope in 2001

BY DOUGLAS SHEPPERD

The Nebraska men's golf team has come to find out it takes time for things to develop.

Despite finishing dead last at the Big 12 championship a year ago, a more experienced Nebraska men's golf team looks to improve their game now that every golfer from the 2000 squad is returning.

Things looked good during NU's first tournament as the Huskers finished sixth at the Rice Invitational two weeks ago. However, they followed that up with a last-place performance at the USTA Invitational in San Antonio on Tuesday.

"Everything is a matter of time," junior Seth Porter said. "We all have to step up and get it done."

Porter, who tied for seventh



place in the Huskers' first tournament, didn't quite put it all together during the USTA, as he fired a 225, just good enough for 34th place.

The Huskers shot an overall score of 896 at the Rice Invitational and a 908 at the USTA Invitational, while shooting an 875 their last fall tournament.

Coach Larry Romjue said despite having a more experienced team, there are still areas that need improvement.

"Our short game, especially our wedge play, isn't where it should be," said Romjue, who is

entering his 30th year at Nebraska.

The Cornhuskers are also looking to do some work with their mental game, too. Sophomore Jim Troy said confidence and focus are the two primary aspects the Cornhuskers are trying to develop in their mental game.

"When someone has a good round," Troy said, "they gain confidence within themselves, and that is what it takes to be successful."

After the completion of the fall season, in which the Huskers finished 11th in their final tournament, the golf team gets very little outdoor practice.

Practice rounds have been hard to come by with the stiff Nebraska winter. Once the weather cooperates the Huskers are looking to get out on the

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Jim Troy  
NU golfer

course and practice consistently, Romjue said.

NU has been relegated to indoor hitting and traveling to Omaha for an indoor driving range, something that doesn't let a game blossom, Troy said.

"Hitting balls in the Devaney Center and traveling to the dome in Omaha once a week really doesn't compensate for on-course playing time," Troy said.

Romjue said that his players' scores will become more consistent once they can get outdoors

and practice.

"Our golf game will improve from the beginning of spring to the end of spring, as a result of getting out on the course," Romjue said.

By developing their game over the course of the season the Huskers said their goal is to qualify for an NCAA regional this year.

"If we can put everything together and beat the teams that we need to beat," Porter said, "then our goal can be reached."

# Rivalry coming to close

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But Vering hasn't been completely blown out of the water when squaring off against his primary foe. His last four losses against Munoz came by a total of five points, the latest coming Jan. 29 at the NWCA All-Star dual. Vering avenged the loss two weeks later by handing Munoz a hard-fought 5-4 double overtime defeat.

Still, any loss is unacceptable to Vering, and he's suffered more than enough to Munoz.

"It bugs me every night," Vering said. "There's guys I've lost to once in my career, and I go to bed thinking about it. But there isn't anything you can do about it except get up the next day and work hard."

With two more possible shots at Munoz, Vering has an opportunity to square the series at 6-6. However, if seedings, released Friday afternoon, go as expected at the Big 12 meet, Munoz may have to wrestle Thompson before he does Vering. Munoz hasn't beaten Thompson in his last three tries.

Whoever he faces, Vering said, it doesn't matter to him. Plus, he still has to win his opening match before he can begin thinking about the finals.

"I'm wrestling whoever is on the mat," Vering said. "Zach and Munoz have been a one-point match each time so I think that is a tossup right there."

"There's guys I've lost to once in my career, and I go to bed thinking about it."

Brad Vering  
NU wrestler

Vering-Munoz rivalry lies an ironic twist. Mark Cody, a 12-year assistant with Nebraska until this year, was hired at Oklahoma St. after a new coaching staff was brought in at Nebraska. Cody specializes in the heavier weights and now stands in Munoz's corner.

It's an odd situation that would be on the same plane as Billy Martin becoming skipper of the Red Sox or college basketball legend Dean Smith manning the sidelines at Duke.

Cody admitted it was awkward the first time he had to coach against his former pupil. There was a sense of anxiousness before that first match at the All-Star dual, he said.

"Working with Brad for so many years, I didn't know how it would be," Cody said. "Really, feelings don't surface until the match really starts."

The first match, Vering said, was odd because the voice that had been instructing him over the past three years was now instructing his opponent.

Cody said the awkward anxious feeling isn't there anymore.

"Now that they've wrestled a couple of times, I'm a little more relaxed with the situation," he said.

Now in opposite corners, the athletic relationship between Cody and Vering has changed, both admitted. At their first meeting, the only communication exchanged between the two was a polite "hello" as the two were passing by each other on the mat.

But both said that is just the nature of wrestling. Buddying up with the opponents at one's weight isn't exactly standard operating procedure.

"You feel kind of bad - you're forced into the situation," Cody said.

"This sport is 99 percent mental, and you want to be at the top of everything, especially mentally. I don't want Mark Munoz looking over at me and Brad and wondering what we're talking about."

Once the season is over, things will be back to normal, both said. On a personal level, things haven't changed between he and Cody, Vering said.

"I'm going out there and I'm wrestling Munoz," Vering said. "I'm not wrestling Cody, I'm not wrestling the Oklahoma State fans, I'm not wrestling the pressure or any of the other things that go into each match."

# Van Horn: Big 12 race to be tight

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to win 40 games this season, and they're all going to finish around five games above .500.

"I don't think anybody's going to run away with this thing because I don't think any one or two teams are much better than anybody else."

Texas Tech, while a notch below the conference's top crust, is a perfect example of this increasing Big 12 parity.

The Red Raiders finished fifth in the Big 12 a year ago, and, at 12-6, are off to a fast start this season.

Beating them, especially in Lubbock, will be a task, Stern said. Tech is a speedy, scrappy bunch that relies on good pitching to keep scores low then tries to manufacture enough runs with its legs (43 stolen bases in 18 games) to eke out wins.

This strategy plays especially well in front of Tech's home crowd, which Stern said was one of the three toughest places to play in

the Big 12.

"Their fans are on you from the first pitch," he said. "They show up, they're loud ... it's not going to be easy. We'll have to play good baseball to win."

Luckily for NU, Stern said, the Huskers started to hit on all cylinders at Louisiana-Lafayette's tournament last weekend.

Staff ace Shane Komine, slated to start against Tech Friday, and No. 2 starter Jamie Rodrigue, the Saturday starter, both broke out of early-season slumps in Louisiana. Improved pitching combined with timely NU hits propelled the team to a sweep over a slate of opponents Van Horn compared to the Big 12's best teams - 2000 CWS participant Louisiana-Lafayette, Ohio State and Wichita State.

"We started to play Nebraska baseball last weekend, and we got the results," Stern said. "It'll give us a lot of confidence against Tech."

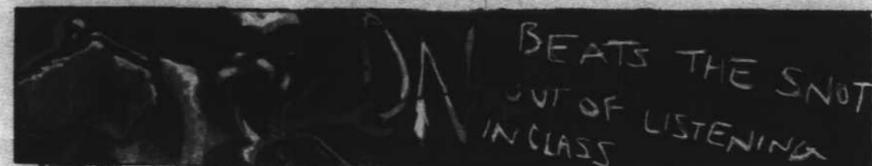
Not confident enough to promise a sweep, though - Van Horn and Stern said winning two

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Dave Van Horn  
NU baseball coach

games of the three-game series would be a more than an acceptable step on the road to the Big 12 title.

"That's what we have to do if we want to win the (regular season) title," Van Horn said. "If we start off strong, unlike last year when we dug ourselves a hole, and we concentrate on winning series, we'll be right there at the end."



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