

ISU stuns skeptics

At the beginning of this season, Iowa State was not expected to do great things in the Big 12 Conference.

And rightfully so. The boys from Ames, Iowa, had just lost All-American Marcus Fizer to the pros after his junior year and Michael Nurse, who proved to be a significant cog in their NCAA Tournament run the year before, to graduation.

Preseason polls picked ISU to finish anywhere from third to sixth in the conference.

We here at the DN penciled them in fourth, thinking that selection was a no-brainer.

Oh, how we were wrong. The Cyclones have bolted to a 25-4 record and a No. 8 ranking in a season where an NCAA bid alone would have seemed sufficient.

Starting Friday, Iowa State, which has already won its second straight regular-season conference title, will go in search of its second straight Big 12 tournament. The Cyclones also may be looking for that elusive No. 1 seed in the Big Dance.

In the name of Tim Floyd, how did this happen?

How did a team with the likes of Paul Shirley, Jake Sullivan and Shane Power among its top contributors reach these heights?

Many are high on Sullivan and Power as solid players in ISU's freshman class, but Division II basketball seems a likelier home for this pair.

Sullivan's windup on his 3-point shot is reminiscent to that of Dennis Eckersley, and Power, well, didn't he model in last month's Gap catalog?

And for the heckler-friendly Shirley, his true destination surely must have been Kansas to play alongside his twin, Eric Chenoweth. Both are expert whiners and have soft games to boot.

Iowa State's roster rounds out with solid contributors Kantril Horton and Martin Rancik, but even those two are limited.

To find the answer to the Cyclone's success, one must look no farther than two names—Larry Eustachy and Jamaal Tinsley.

Eustachy, the 2000 national coach of the year, is a coaching genius.

He knows this team is not that good on paper. But miraculously, he has them playing like a Final Four contender. Eustachy has maintained all year long he hasn't been happy with his team's performances—even after wins.

Eustachy has called 6 a.m. practices to iron out fundamentals after a win the night before.

A recent 94-78 pounding at the hands of Texas may be just what the doctor ordered for Eustachy's club as he has guarded all season long against that type of performance.

But as good a coach as Eustachy has been, the key has been Tinsley—a lock for first-team All-American and soon-to-be lottery pick in the NBA draft.

ISU's offense runs through Tinsley, and the New York City playground prodigy single-handedly wins ball games—more so than any player in the history of the Big 12.

Nebraska's Kevin Augustine says Tinsley is the third-best player he's ever guarded. The first two? Kobe Bryant and Stephon Marbury.

NU has two of the best perimeter defenders in the country in Cookie Belcher and Rodney Fields, yet Tinsley still managed a career-high 29 points in ISU's 86-73 victory.

How far Iowa State goes this weekend at the Big 12 tournament and next weekend in the NCAA's depends solely on Tinsley. Stop Tinsley, stop ISU.

Iowa State can and will be beaten by a team willing to match the Cyclones' aggressiveness. Nebraska had its chance on Saturday but faltered because it settled for jumpers instead of driving to the front of the rim every single play.

The Cyclones allowed NU to shoot 54 percent, and Eustachy expects that type of effort to catch up with this team.

When will that happen? That's the million-dollar question, but my guess is it will be sooner rather than later.

Then again, ISU has proven me and all the other skeptics wrong before.



Joshua Camenzind

Miserable season ends miserably for NU

BY JOHN GASKINS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — After her three-point attempt with six minutes left clanked off the side of the rim, Nebraska forward Paige Sutton banged her shin on one of the Huskers' bench chairs while unsuccessfully diving for the ball after it sailed out of bounds.

Seconds later, Sutton sat on the bench with a painful look on her face, crying and holding her leg.

Fitting.

"We just wanted so badly to beat the team we weren't supposed to beat."

Paige Sutton
Husker forward

Once again, and for the final time in 2000-2001, the Huskers fought for their dear lives but came up miserably short. Once again, it hurt.

Sutton painfully watched the end of her teammates' slow death to a morbid 12-18 season,

a 77-60 loss to No. 22 Texas in the first round of the Big 12 tournament at the Municipal Auditorium.

"I think some of us were pressing a bit," said Sutton, who finished with just two points. "When your season resides on one game, there's going to be a lot of nerves involved. We just wanted so badly to beat the team we weren't supposed to beat."

Coach Paul Sanderford's first losing season in his 23-year college career came to an official end. But really, the season had been over for quite some time, and so had NU's final

game. The Longhorns rattled off runs of 14-0 and 18-2 in the first half to take a 39-23 halftime lead and never looked back.

"We went through about a six-minute stretch in the first half and kind of dug ourselves a grave," Sanderford said. "Texas hit some good shots, and they shot the ball well early in the game."

While the Huskers missed 17 of their first 21 shots—including their first five shots from point-blank range—UT freshman guard Kaira White made four of her first five shots, including three early three-pointers.

White and teammate Tracy Cook scored all of the Horns' first 19 points as Cook's basket with 13:54 left capped a 14-0 run to give UT a 19-7 lead.

NU tried to strike back. Senior Amanda Went and freshman Shannon Howell, who led NU with 17 points, hit back-to-back threes to cut the lead to six.

That's when Texas put NU to bed. The Longhorns went on an 18-2 run and had their biggest lead at 37-15 with four minutes left until halftime.

During that eight-minute stretch, NU failed to score on 13

Please see **BIG 12** on 9

Omaha, Lincoln pipeline for Husker recruits

BY JEFF SHELDON

Travel experts say the stretch of I-80 running from Lincoln to Omaha is the backbone of travel in the state.

It just may also be the backbone of the Nebraska football team.

Despite scouring the nation in pursuit of high school football's elite, the NU coaching staff has managed to build its program on the backs of players from the state's two largest cities.

"We always try to recruit the best athletes regardless of where they are from," said Nebraska Offensive Line/Kickers Coach Dan Young, who has been in charge of in-state recruiting since 1987. "But it turns out that the same local schools just keep turning out good players."

Traditionally, Nebraska has found a pool of talent at I-back at Omaha Central, Young said, referring to former Huskers Calvin Jones and Ahman Green. Lincoln Southeast has produced some quality linemen, while Millard West has also recently become a source of talent.

The Huskers' 2000 roster shows that, if anything, the Omaha/Lincoln pipeline is only getting stronger.

Of the 145 players on last season's depth chart, over a quarter (38) graduated from high schools in either the Lincoln or Omaha area, including starting quarterback Eric Crouch (Millard North), fullback Willie Miller (Bellevue West), linebacker

Randy Stella (Omaha Benson), defensive back Erwin Swiney (Lincoln Northeast) and defensive tackle Jeremy Slechta (Papillion-LaVista), who started after Loran Kaiser was injured.

The trend looks to continue next season as both Lincoln and Omaha each produced two players in the 2001 recruiting class. Barret Rudd from Lincoln Southeast, Titus Adams of Omaha Creighton Prep and Millard North's Mike McLaughlin have all signed letters of intent with Nebraska. Clifford Brye, a 1997 Lincoln Northeast graduate, has also signed with NU and will transfer from Hutchinson Community College in Kansas.

According to Young, Husker coaches play no favorite schools, and the numbers seem to back him up. Perennial powers Lincoln Southeast, Millard North and Millard West each had four players on last year's roster, but Omaha Westside, Papillion-LaVista, Omaha Gross and Elkhorn each could boast three players.

In all, 18 schools in the Lincoln or Omaha area could claim alumni on the team.

Young was quick to point out that it is not always automatic that the Metro elite will sign with the Huskers.

"It's not a given," Young said. "(NU coaches) have to show interest just like any other player."

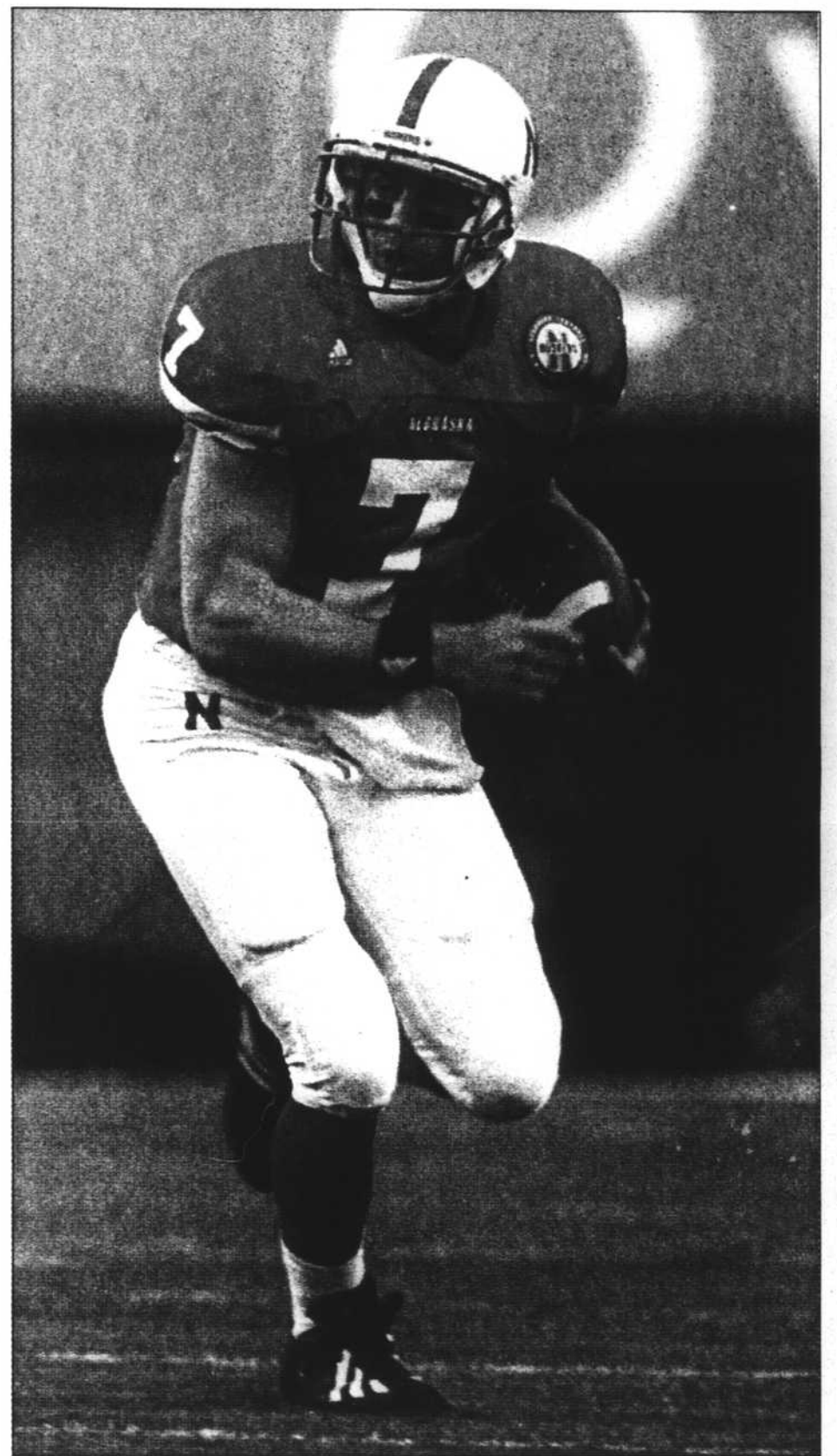
Recent examples of high-profile prep stars that left Nebraska include Lincoln Northeast graduate Ty Goode, who signed with Notre Dame, and Brandon Williams of Omaha Central, who now attends the University of Michigan.

But for former Millard West star Chris Septak, playing for anyone else was not an option.

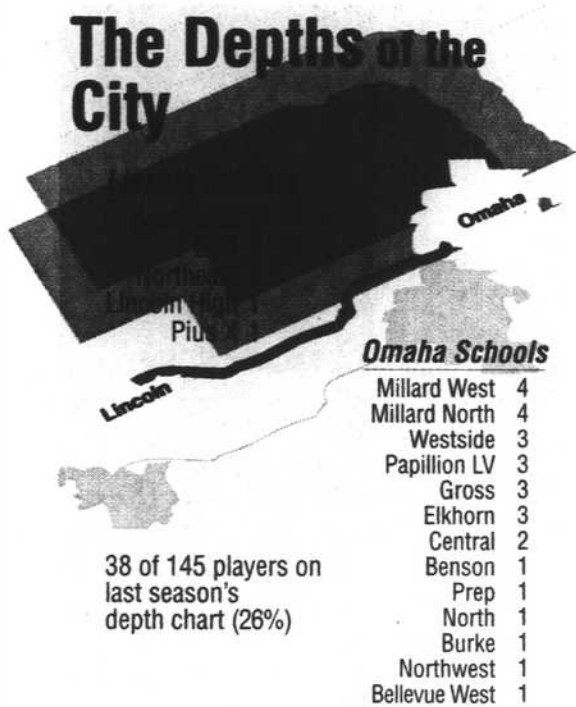
"For me, it was a matter of having the best coaching staff in the country and the best program in the country 40 minutes from my house," Septak said. "From my point of view, I couldn't imagine leaving."

Using current Huskers from Omaha and Lincoln in the recruiting process is common practice, according to both Young and Septak.

"When we bring a kid in (on a recruiting visit), we try to use players from their high schools to host them," Young



DN File Photo
Eric Crouch is one of many Lincoln- and Omaha-area athletes that make up over a quarter of the Nebraska football team.



Please see **FOUNDATION** on 9

Rifle team shoots for winning

BY LINCOLN ARNEAL

Rifle teams beware — after shooting a school-record 1,560 in air rifle at the NCAA qualifying meet, the Nebraska women's rifle team says there is room for improvement at this weekend's NCAA championships.

"Two members had a fair day ... and another shot four below her average," sophomore Amanda Trujillo said. "So if everyone puts it together, we will shoot phenomenal."

If the Cornhuskers put the pieces together at the championships this weekend in Columbus, Ohio, they will have an excellent chance of bringing home some hardware.

But to do so, they will have to knock off two-time defending champion Alaska-Fairbanks. The Nanooks are in position to take another title as they enter with the No. 1 seed in both air rifle and small bore.

Nebraska is seeded second in air rifle and eighth in small bore.



Josh Wolfe/DN
The Nebraska rifle team enters the NCAA championships with a shot at bringing home the title, especially in the air-rifle competition, in which NU is ranked second in the country.

The Huskers have the same air rifle qualifying score as Alaska with 1,560, but the Nanooks hit 96 center shots, and NU hit 92.

NU Coach Karen Anthony said the reason for the team's success is the depth they have in air rifle. Six of the seven women have shot above 390 (out of 400).

Even though knocking off Alaska will be a tough task, Anthony said it is possible.

"If Alaska shoots up to its potential, it will be tough," she said. "But I believe we have as good a chance as anyone catching them. In a match like this, a team

can have an off day."

Last year, the Huskers witnessed Alaska-Fairbanks take the team title in their first trip to the championships. Although NU finished third, Anthony said the team gained valuable experience that they can use this year.

"It helps a great deal," she said. "It increases your ability to handle pressure, and there will be fewer surprises this year."

While NU is able to match Alaska-Fairbanks in air rifle, small

Please see **RIFLE** on 9

Johnson breaks slump with four home runs

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Dan Johnson started his way out of a hitting slump earlier this weekend for the No. 9 Nebraska baseball team. He busted loose of it Tuesday.

In helping the Cornhuskers to an 18-6, 12-9 sweep of Southern Utah, the first baseman tied a Big 12 record with three home runs in one game, which occurred in the first half of the twin bill. He hit another in the nightcap, a 12-9 come-from-behind win that raised NU's record to 11-3 for 2001.

In game one, Johnson hit his first in the fifth, another in the seventh and again in the eighth. Brandon Eymann, Jed Morris and Matt Hopper each added homers of their own while R.D. Spiels moved to 2-1 with the win.

After an easy win in the opener, the second game of the twin bill was a struggle. NU had to rally with four runs in the top of the ninth inning after falling behind

9-8. Nebraska had blown an 8-5 lead of its own by giving up four in the bottom of the eighth. In the same inning, NU Coach Dave Van Horn was thrown out of a game for the second time in his career with the Cornhuskers for arguing with the umpire.

Down to its last out in the ninth with no runners on, NU seemed squarely positioned to be upset by the lowly Thunderbirds, who came into the doubleheader 1-10.

But the Huskers rallied fittingly behind Johnson, who was intentionally walked to prevent yet another home run.

Jeff Blevins and Justin Seely were then walked conventionally. With the bases loaded, Willie Jones, pinch running for Johnson, scored on a wild pitch.

One batter later, the tie was broken as second baseman Will Bolt hit a three-run homer to left.

Southern Utah went harmlessly in the ninth and the sweep was complete.

The Huskers return for their home-opening weekend series against Kansas State starting Friday.

Nebraska	18
So. Utah	6

Nebraska	12
So. Utah	9