

Knight's image real draw

And you thought sports was about teaching integrity and sportsmanship with some grand hope of teaching young people how to become a winner off the court through their athletic experiences.



Brian Christopherson

Nobody told you that at some point, sports becomes more about the money and less about the game. Nobody told you that integrity really doesn't mean a rat's backside if you're neither a winner nor a money-maker.

James Dickey is neither. Of the most recent times, Dickey is a loser, and to most people he is a boring, aging man with the classified ads now in his hand.

Dickey used to be the basketball coach at Texas Tech, but he's suffered four straight losing seasons in Lubbock.

Despite the losing, Dickey might still have a job if he were Bobby Knight.

After all, Dickey wasn't a money maker. He doesn't have that Knight personality that seems to flicker interest within people.

Y o u r e m e m b e r B o b b y . Bobby's a loser, too. Almost stupid to say, it seems, for The General has won his three national championships compared to Dickey's none, but his last title with Indiana was in 1987.

Things changed. Bobby began to lose, and winning no longer covered up the dark side of Knight. Bobby's late Indiana teams would qualify for the Big Dance, maybe sometimes just off of name only, but they were an easy bracket pick. One and done.

With the increased losing, Bobby's past was pushed into the spotlight. He was relieved of his coaching duties at Indiana one year ago for such "minor" incidents as choking players and throwing vases at secretaries.

Now, it appears he has James Dickey's job.

The rumor mill started the week of the Big 12 Conference tournament, and on Thursday of the tournament, even before Tech took the floor for its first round contest, radio shows were already taking calls from Big 12 fans about what life in the conference would be like with Coach Knight.

You half expected the silver-haired Knight to walk onto the Kemper Arena floor in his red sweatshirt, tap Dickey on the shoulder and say, "What are you doing, son? Haven't you heard who's general of these parts now?"

"I was ready to box out for my seat. That's for sure," Dickey joked after his team's Big 12 tournament loss to Oklahoma State.

But Dickey was closer to tears than laughter. Not that you need to cry for him - Dickey knew he would be fine, and he will be. There will be other jobs for him. He even seemed to realize that his firing was fair, with the team struggling in recent years.

He'll be fine despite the fact that Tech's athletic director, Gerald Myers, had basically sold him out, telling Dickey for weeks that his job was safe, then meeting behind his back with the legend Knight.

Despite such treatment, there stood Dickey, a man who would be fired the next day, graciously answering every question about the situation following his team's first-round Big 12 loss.

Then some reporter gathered the courage and asked Dickey if he thought that Knight would bring more fans into their new 15,000-seat

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Holes loom as spring practice opens

BY JEFF SHELDON

Forgive Nebraska football Coach Frank Solich if he looks a bit rushed during the next three weeks.

Solich heads into his fourth spring at the helm of the Big Red with a limited amount of time to find the needed answers to several personnel questions on both sides of the ball.

"You only have 15 practices, and you want to make sure you are taking advantage of every opportunity you have on the football field," Solich said. "Fifteen practices is not a lot of practices to make yourself better as an individual and make yourself better as a team."

Because of time constraints, Solich explained that the coaches try to instill a sense of urgency in the players. He was encouraged by what he saw on opening day.

"I was real pleased with the attitude and the effort out here today," Solich said. "(The players) were getting places on the football field good, and we're off to a good start. We'll see how it goes as we get into it a little more."

Husker Defensive Coordinator Craig Bohl was also pleased by his squad's first-day efforts.

"It's always difficult on the first day, but I was really encouraged by the enthusiasm," he said. "We had guys flying around, and even though we were not in pads, it was pretty impressive."

Perhaps the biggest news coming into spring camp for the Huskers is who will not be participating.

Nebraska will be without two Millard natives during spring workouts. Starting quarterback Eric Crouch will miss his second consecutive spring session while recovering from shoulder surgery, and Judd Davies, projected to be the successor to Willie Miller at the fullback spot, is out of action indefinitely with a back injury.

In addition, Nebraska must replace seven offensive and five defensive starters from last season's 10-2 squad.

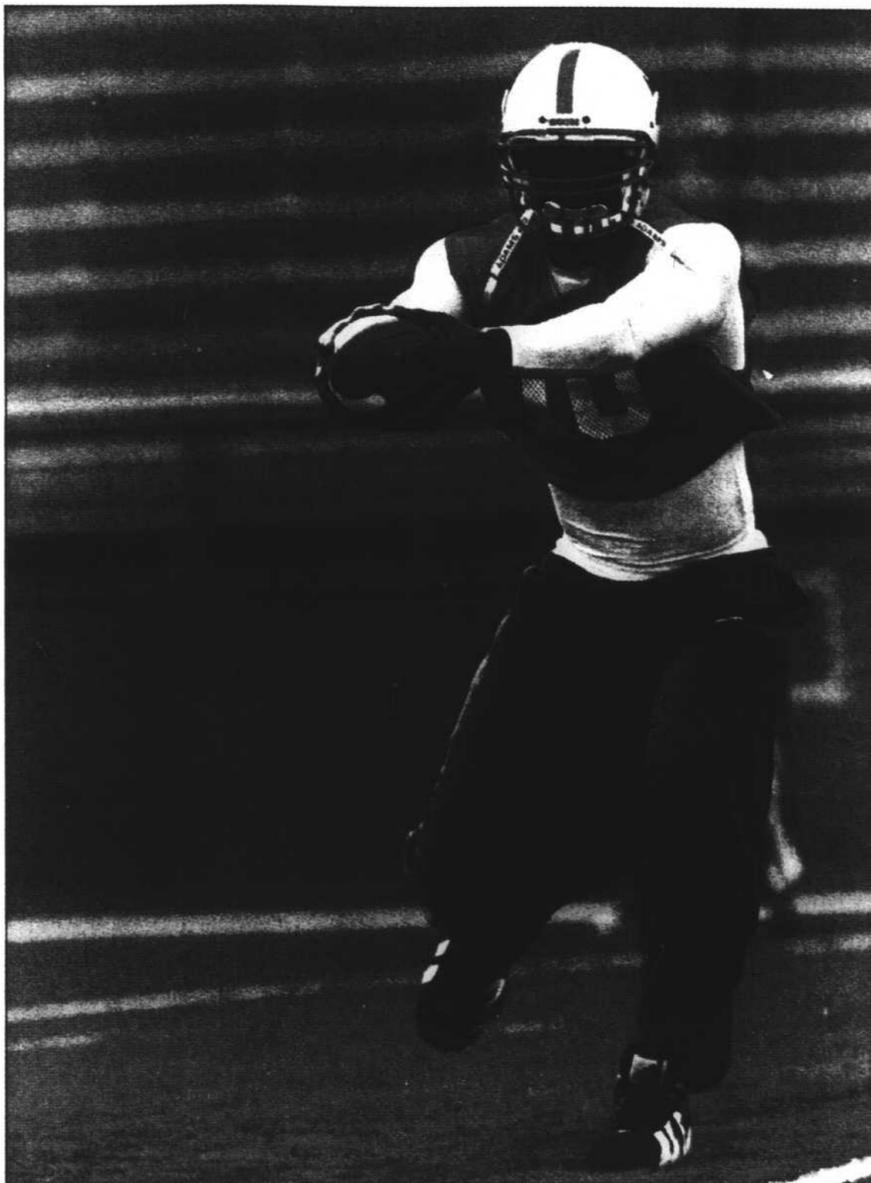
Solich said that with so many holes to fill, examining every player was a must.

"What we need to do is make sure we do get an evaluation on every player that is out here," he said. "Everyone that is out here is running our offense and our defense. They are all getting reps on our system, so that is how you can evaluate who's one, who's two and who's three on the depth chart."

With only a limited time to make an impression with the coaching staff, Solich knows that the younger players will go all out to climb the NU depth chart.

"This is an important time of the year for these guys," he said. "You're only allowed to have three total

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Derek Lippincott/DN

Nebraska quarterback Jamal Lord runs through drills in the Huskers' first spring practice on Monday at Memorial Stadium. Lord will be handling the first team quarterback duties this spring while Eric Crouch recovers from shoulder surgery.

Crouch injured, Lord spring starter again

BY DAVID DIEHL

The feeling Eric Crouch has this time of year is one he's reluctantly getting used to.

Crouch, who will be starting for the second-straight year under center for NU in the fall, is again taking in spring practice from the sidelines, relegated there as a result of shoulder surgery for the second-straight off-season.

"It's something you don't ever want to get used to," Crouch said, "but sometimes life doesn't always go the way you planned. You just have to adapt to it, and that's what I've done."

Crouch said he may suit up in pads by the end of this week and run some non-contact drills. He won't be doing any throwing, however, until at least May 1.

quarterback spring breakdown

The senior-to-be from Millard North said his health wouldn't be in question come fall. Even with the recovering shoulder, he will be penciled in as NU's top quarterback come Aug. 25 and Nebraska's first game.

Quarterbacks Coach Turner Gill said while Crouch may be missing some growing time this spring, his absence would help both the quarterback and his team this fall.

"The priority is to get Eric healthy as possible for our football team," Gill said. "So yes, we'd like to have him out here, but we know the best situation is get him

healthy."

Keeping backup Jammal Lord healthy will also be a priority. Gill said, as he will be sporting the non-contact green jersey during scrimmages and other contact situations. Lord tore a posterior cruciate ligament in his knee during last year's spring sessions.

Barring further injury, Crouch will head a quarterback corps that is the only position on the offense not going through a transition of starters. Both Crouch and Lord return as NU's top-two quarterbacks, providing, if nothing else, a little sense of stability at one position where others, namely the receiver and offensive line spots, may not see it.

That's good because Crouch provided NU with 2,072 yards of

"If I just be myself and be a leader out there a lot of those things will fall into place,"

Eric Crouch
NU quarterback

total offense in 2000 - about 40 percent of the Cornhuskers' output. Considering that departed running backs Dan Alexander, Correll Buckhalter and fullback Willie Miller accounted for 2,129 yards of their own, Crouch may need to pick up that slack and rush for more than the 971 yards he did in 2000 if NU wants to win its 15th NCAA rushing title.

With that, Gill said NU was not forcing its entire game plan on Crouch, who could become the first player since at least 1946 to lead NU four straight years in

total offense. "It's not going to change anything we do in our offense quarterback-wise," Gill said. "At the University of Nebraska, there's already enough pressure as it is, so I constantly tell them not to put any more pressure on them than there is already there. I want him to play within our offense, and everything else will take care of itself."

Crouch, Nebraska's all-time

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Jayhawks lone Big 12 team standing

■ The first two rounds of the NCAA Tournament leaves KU as the only team left to wave the conference flag.

BY DIRK CHATELAIN

And then, depressingly, there was one. After a weekend full of first-round upsets in the NCAA tournament, the Big 12 will turn to its traditional power to save the conference from postseason embarrassment.

Kansas, 26-6 on the season, is the lone Big 12 school to advance into the second weekend of the tournament. The Jayhawks, who handily defeated Cal-State Northridge and Syracuse, are the fourth seed in the Midwest Region and will tangle with top-seeded Illinois on Friday night in San Antonio.

"We are ecstatic at the way we played," said Kansas Coach Roy Williams, speaking of the 87-58 win over Syracuse. "We played really well, and they didn't make shots."

While KU appears to be playing its best basketball, its conference rivals made an attempt to single-handedly ruin every office pool from here to Minneapolis - the site of the 2001 Final Four.

Among the casualties was second-seeded Iowa State. The Cyclones, coming off of a Big 12 tournament loss to Baylor, fell victim to 15th-seeded Hampton 58-57 in Boise on Thursday.

ISU held a double-digit lead for part of the second half before stumbling down the stretch with missed free throws and turnovers.

Cyclone All-American Jamaal Tinsley missed a lay-up at the buzzer, securing



DN File Photo

After two rounds, the Kansas Jayhawks are the only Big 12 team left in the NCAA Tournament. The Jayhawks next face top-seeded Illinois in the Sweet 16.

Hampton's improbable comeback.

From a seeding standpoint, the upset was the largest in the NCAA tournament since 1997.

Thursday night was simply a sign of things to come for the conference that received six bids, the second highest number of any league.

On Friday, 11th-seeded Temple blew out sixth-seeded Texas and 13th-seeded Indiana State, shocking Big 12 tournament champion Oklahoma.

"When you get here, you better play well," Sooners Coach Kelvin Sampson said.

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Midweek matchup big one

■ The Nebraska baseball team faces perennial Midwest power Wichita State today.

BY VINCE KUPPIG

The statement came as a definite shock.

"It's one of the biggest games this season," Nebraska designated hitter Matt Hopper said about today's matchup with Wichita State.

Shocking because Hopper was affixing the "biggest game" tag to a team with a 10-8 record, not to mention a midweek game, usually a chance to rest some starters.

But Wichita State isn't your normal 10-8 team, and NU's game against the Shockers sure isn't your normal midweek game.

Despite a small slip from national prominence, the Shockers are still one of the premier college baseball programs in

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