

# Lancers Ready To Put Disappointment Behind Them

BY JEREMY HOECK  
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Eight wins over two seasons did not sit well with the Mount Marty College volleyball team.

Especially disconcerting was the most telling number: Zero Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) victories since 2008.

In an effort to prevent another sub-par season, the nine returning MMC players from last season made it their off-season goal to improve in all facets of the game, according to second-year head coach Candice Climer.

"They all knew how it felt having two years of disappointment," said Climer, whose team opens its season Aug. 30 in Omaha, Neb.

"At some point, the upperclassmen said, 'That's it, we're tired of it.'"

The Lancers, coming off a 4-26 (0-17 GPAC) record last fall, began their preparations for 2011, literally, right after their

2011 Schedule	
Aug. 27 — Alumni Scrimmage, 3 p.m.	Sept. 13 — At Briar Cliff, 7:30 p.m.
Aug. 30 — vs. Union, Grace at Omaha, 6/6 p.m.	Sept. 16 — At York, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 2 — vs. St. Francis (Ind.), Huntington at Milwaukee, 10 a.m./3:30 p.m.	Sept. 17 — At Doane, 10 a.m.
Sept. 3 — vs. Aquinas, Cardinal Stritch at Milwaukee, 10 a.m./7 p.m.	Sept. 20 — Dakota State, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 7 — At Dakota State, 7:30 p.m.	Sept. 21 — Dordt, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 9 — vs. Mayville State, UM-Morris at Morris, Minn., 6/7:30 p.m.	Sept. 24 — Midland, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 10 — vs. Mayville State, Presentation at Aberdeen	Sept. 27 — Dakota Wesleyan, 7:30 p.m.
	Oct. 1 — At Nebraska Wesleyan, 3 p.m.
	Oct. 5 — At Northwestern, 7:30 p.m.
	Oct. 8 — Concordia, 4:30 p.m.
	Oct. 10 — At Sioux Falls, 7 p.m.
	Oct. 12 — Morningside, 7:30 p.m.
	Oct. 15 — At Hastings, 3 p.m.
	Oct. 18 — At Dordt, 7:30 p.m.
	Oct. 21 — College of St. Mary's, 7 p.m.
	Oct. 22 — Grace, 1 p.m.
	Oct. 25 — Briar Cliff, 7:30 p.m.
	Oct. 29 — At Midland, 1:30 p.m.
	Nov. 1 — Northwestern, 7:30 p.m.
	Nov. 3 — At Dakota Wesleyan, 7:30 p.m.
	Nov. 5 — Doane, 3 p.m.
	GPAC Tourney — Quarterfinals, Nov. 8; Semifinals, Nov. 10; Final, Nov. 12

season ended a year ago.

"In our final match last year (at Sioux Falls), I brought it up to them and said, 'This is where our season begins. Right now, through the off-season,'" Climer said. "We took a week off, but came back and started working our butts off."

Among the nine returning players are Kristen Grassa (Sr., DS), Carlie Lambert (Sr., OH), Jen Jerdee (Sr., DS/S), Tina

Rowbotham (Jr., S), Amanda Dirksen (Jr., OH), Kate Lingscheit (Jr., MH), Haley Logan (So., OH), Jena Peters (So., MH/RH) and Emily Schreur (So., MH).

The hard work and slight modifications in position paid immediate dividends during spring scrimmages against conference foes, Climer said.

"We moved Carlie to the outside, and she has just grown leaps and bounds,"

Climer said. "A couple GPAC coaches asked me over the spring if we got a new hitter. And the same is true with Kate. Her attacks have gotten so much stronger."

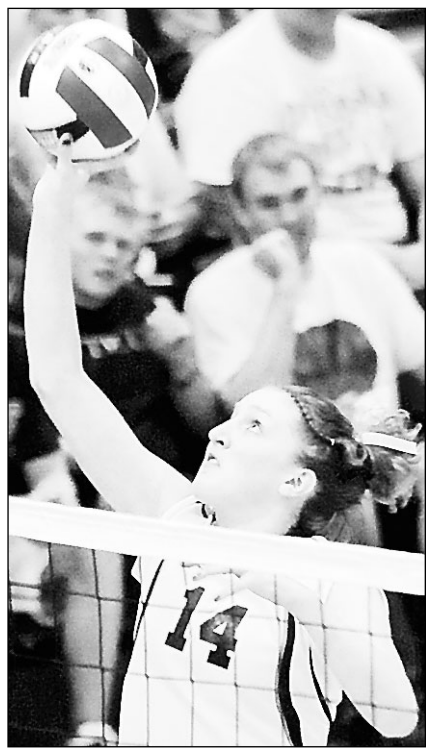
"I'm excited for these girls who have been through a lot of downs in their career."

With a veteran group back, there doesn't figure to be the same type of learning curve as last season, Climer said.

"There's definitely some leadership this year," she said. "Last year everything took a while, because they had to get a feel for what I wanted. Now we're all on the same page, and they know what I expect."

"Everyone feels so much better this year."

Adding to the mix are 11 freshmen to the program, including former Yankton



LANCERS: Kate Lingscheit

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HUSKERS: Nebraska Football Pregame

# Huskers A Trendy Big Ten Pick In Inaugural Year

BY ERIC OLSON  
AP Sports Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska hasn't played a down of football in the Big Ten, yet the Cornhuskers are favored by many to win the championship in their first year in the conference.

Nebraska offensive lineman Jeremiah Sirles imagines that doesn't sit well in locker rooms around the league.

If Sirles were on one of those other teams, he said, "I'd want to take 'em out. I'd want to show them this is my conference, this is how we do things."

Off the field, the Huskers have felt nothing but love from their 11 new conference mates and commissioner Jim Delany. With its five national championships and 837 all-time wins, Nebraska has been called a perfect fit in the tradition-rich Big Ten.

But on Saturdays starting in October, all the niceties go away.

If the Huskers do, in fact, win the title, they'll have earned it against one of the toughest schedules in the nation. Conference play begins with a night game at defending co-champion Wisconsin on Oct. 1 and a home date with Ohio State the next week.

"They're going to try to come after us," Sirles said, "but we're going to come right after them, too."

Fourth-year coach Bo Pelini has encouraged his players to embrace the challenge of taking on eight new conference opponents.

"It's going to be a hard schedule," cornerback Alfonzo Dennard

said. "But like coach Bo says, they have to play us, too."

Nebraska has posted back-to-back 10-win seasons and made it to the Big 12 championship game the last two years, losing both by a combined four points.

The Huskers, however, lost three of four games to end last season, including an embarrassing Holiday Bowl loss to a Washington team they clobbered in the regular season. Sirles said last season — including a Big 12 farewell tour and plenty of ill will from the fans — prepared him and his teammates for what awaits in Nebraska's inaugural Big Ten campaign.

"Last year was an incredibly tough challenge in the Big 12," he said. "You have the target on your back. A lot of people were saying we were ruining the conference, so everyone would give us their best shot. This year we're coming into a new conference and everyone's saying, 'Oh, you think you can come into a new conference (and dominate?)'"

Defense has been, and remains, the Huskers' strength. They ranked in the top 12 nationally in four major statistical categories last season, and they return all-conference performers on the line, at linebacker and in the secondary.

"We feel like we can line up and play against anybody in the country," Pelini said. "We're going to do our thing. We're going to play our way. Obviously, you have to make some adjustments according to who you're playing in a particular week. But we feel like our style, the type of kids we recruit, the type of football team we put on the field can fit into any conference."

The offense, which underperformed in the biggest games, is the biggest question mark. Pelini fired Shawn Watson as offensive coordinator and promoted Tim Beck from running backs coach.

Beck and his charges have been vague about what the new offense will look like. To a man, the players say the system is simpler than Watson's offense, which was an amalgamation of the quarterback run and short passing game with a hint of the wildcat.

The ability to go with no huddle figures to be a big part of the plan.

"We have a lot of different tempos," center Mike Caputo said. "Being set and being ready to go, we might go like that, or we might be sitting there checking. The defense isn't going to know."

"It's a little more cardio than the offensive line is used to. We did more running in June than we used to. I think we're prepared."

Everything offensively depends on second-year starting quarterback Taylor Martinez, who was one of the nation's top freshmen before leg and ankle injuries hampered him in November and December. Now that two-year backup Cody Green has transferred, the Huskers have no other quarterbacks who have taken a snap in a college game.

Multitalented running back Rex Burkhead returns after running for 951 yards and seven touchdowns and passing for three more TDs out of the wildcat formation. Promising newcomers Aaron Green, Braylon Heard and Ameer Abdulah are in line to be Burkhead's backup.

Wideout Brandon Kinnie and tight end Kyler Reed are the top returning receivers, but the Huskers

are high on youngsters Stanley Jean-Baptiste, Kenny Bell and converted quarterback Jamal Turner.

Caputo and Sirles are the returning starters on the offensive line, but there will be new starters at right tackle and both guard spots.

The defense will have to contend with more physical offenses than the spread systems common in the Big 12.

The Huskers have plenty of heft up front. Jared Crick is a national honors candidate and on track to become Nebraska's first three-time all-conference pick since 1997-99. Baker Steinkuhler and Cameron Meredith are back, and converted linebacker Eric Martin is being counted on to be a big playmaker at end.

The linebacker corps is led by Lavonte David, who set a school record with 152 tackles last season. Sean Fisher returns from a broken leg, and Will Compton figures to get more playing time as the Huskers return to using more three-linebacker alignments.

Dennard, who intercepted four passes and broke up another 15, steps out of the shadow of New York Giants first-round pick Prince Amukamara. Ciente Evans probably will take Amukamara's spot, and the Huskers have three experienced safeties.

Maybe the biggest hole is at place-kicker. Alex Henery was Nebraska's all-time leading scorer and the most accurate field-goal kicker in NCAA history. He also was one of the nation's top punters the past two seasons.

Brett Maher looks to be the new punter, but he'll have to beat out freshman Mauro Bondi for the kicking job.

# Revamped Vikings Have Nowhere To Go But Up

BY DAVE CAMPBELL  
AP Sports Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The repaired stadium has a new roof, and the old quarterback is gone. So is almost all of the drama, tension and dysfunction that framed the colossal collapse last year by the Minnesota Vikings.

This season, their profile is considerably lower — along with the expectations.

"We're positioning ourselves to sneak up on some people this year," linebacker Chad Greenway said.

He added: "That's OK. I think we'll be just fine."

The Vikings were humbled as they stumbled to a 6-10 finish. That one-of-a-kind season featured, among other true stories, the firing of head coach Brad Childress, a trade for Randy Moss that imploded with his hasty release a month later, and a battering for Brett Favre in what the NFL's all-time leading passer has insisted was his last year.

Oh, the ceiling at the Metrodome caved in during an epic snowstorm, too. But the stadium wasn't all that was rebuilt in Minnesota this summer.

After guiding that shaky Viking ship for the final six games as an interim fill-in for Childress, new head coach Leslie Frazier has helped foster an upbeat outlook for a team that still has several stars from the 2009 squad that missed the Super Bowl by four points.

"Just the way the guys have responded here at the very start has been so positive," Frazier said. "That just gives me the impression that we've moved on past 2010 and we have opened up a new era."

Many of the players were pleased when Frazier was picked as the replacement for Childress, respectful of his own experience as a player on the dominant defense of the Chicago Bears in the 1980s. He hasn't been afraid to flex his authoritative muscle, cutting mainstay left tackle Bryant McKinnie after the 10-year veteran reported overage.

He even scrapped the traditional rookie talent show at training camp. Hazing doesn't have a place on Frazier's team.

"I just think it's better for our football team as we try to develop chemistry," he said.

Frazier, a close friend of former NFL coach Tony Dungy, carries himself with the same calm, careflessness and class that Dungy is heralded for. His fortitude and focus have already been tested through dozens of off-field distractions.

Now his challenge will be getting

the most out of a team in an awkward transition from championship contender to afterthought in its own division.

The Green Bay Packers are the reigning champions, and they didn't even win the NFC North last year. The Chicago Bears did, and even the normally low-end Detroit Lions improved. Finishing with a winning record, let alone reclaiming the division title they won in 2008 and 2009, will be difficult.

The offensive line and defensive backfield are positions of concern, with key players such as right guard Anthony Herrera and cornerback Cedric Griffin coming back from reconstructive knee surgeries.

Favre has been replaced, for at least this season, by Donovan McNabb, who was benched last year by the Washington Redskins and has played in all 16 games only once in the last seven seasons. He'll need protection to be productive at age 34, and running back Adrian Peterson will need some holes to show off his elite skills.

Left guard Steve Hutchinson and defensive tackle Kevin Williams are a pair of former All-Pro pros whose performance has been in decline. None of the candidates for the starting safety spots is proven after the jettisoning of veteran Madiou Williams, and the backups behind Griffin and stalwart Antoine Winfield haven't shown they're ready for roles in the nickel and dime defenses or as emergency injury replacements.

But attitude can go a long way in this league. There are plenty of proud, proven players such as McNabb, Hutchinson, Williams, defensive end Jared Allen and wide receiver Bernard Berrian coming off down seasons who could have their production boosted by the proverbial chip on the shoulder.

The zone blocking scheme used under Childress in the West Coast system has been phased out. New offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave has brought a simpler, man-to-man blocking scheme and a fresh set of ideas and plans from his days on staff at Atlanta. Wide receiver Percy Harvin, if he can shake those debilitating migraine headaches, has Pro Bowl and game-changing potential. Greenway has blossomed. Peterson, just 26, is in a contract year.

There aren't any rules against the Vikings returning to contention, just some big roadblocks for Frazier and his players to try to clear.

"This is an exciting year for me," McNabb said. "I'm looking forward to it, and good things will happen."

## NE GIRLS' GOLF

**Crofton**  
COACH: Barb Bowers (1st year)  
LAST YEAR: The Warrior Girls' Golf Team claimed the NENAC team title, but lose three of those golfers who will not return to the Crofton links this year.  
RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: Gina Dendinger (Sr., Academic All-State, State Qualifier as an individual and with team, 2nd place finish at NENAC Meet, Member of 1st place team at NENAC Meet)  
TOP PROSPECTS: Breanna Loecker

(So.), Mariah Zavadih (Fr.), Kurtrina Parsons (Fr.)  
**Hartington Cedar Catholic**  
COACH: Sheila Jueden (2nd year)  
VITALS: Mid-State Conference  
RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: Katlyn Arens (So.), Kelsey Christensen (Jr.), Maddie Schulte (Jr.)  
TOP PROSPECTS: Brittany Kramer (Jr.), Molly Berker (So.), Shayna Hoelsing (So.)

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