

HUSKER SPORTS RECAP

Living and Dying by Portal Husker Heroics

By: Jack Poppe

The college football transfer portal has become one of the sport's most polarizing changes, changing the line between college athletics and a feeder for the big leagues. Designed to give players freedom, money and opportunities, the portal has instead backfired and turned the college athletics landscape into a free-for-all.

From afar, the transfer portal makes sense. Coaches can leave for better jobs with little notice, and players, who have been tied by strict NCAA rules, now have the freedom to seek better opportunities. In theory, it levels the playing field. In practice, it has turned the offseason into a constant cycle of entrances and exits.

At Nebraska, the Huskers have had no choice but to embrace it. Under head coach Matt Rhule, the Huskers have used the portal as a rebuilding accelerator. After years of roster instability, recruiting misses, and unsuccessful seasons. Nebraska has long needed experienced players who could contribute at a high level immediately. But that's where Nebraska has struggled to take the next step; they have struggled to find Transfer Portal Gems at all positions. Last season, we saw this at the Offensive Line, where they struggled, which led to the firing of OL Coach Donovan Raiola. The offensive line was among the worst of Power 4 schools and was a key contributor in many of the Huskers' losses.

And the Portal Pickups come with a price. Nebraska has also watched a lot of promising prospects walk out the door, often just as they seemed poised to break through. Such as QB Dyan Raiola, DB Malcolm Hartzog and RB Kenneth Williams. Some departures were expected, others more surprising, but together they reinforce a growing reality: rosters are never settled, and money can always buy a new one. What once felt like a multi-year

rebuild now feels temporary, and that instability makes it harder to build chemistry, leadership, and trust, the invisible traits that winning programs depend on.

For a fan base deep in tradition, this change can feel especially painful. Getting a new team every year and still not having much success isn't cutting it for Husker Nation. Fans want something new. Nebraska football has long sold itself on development, toughness, and loyalty. The transfer portal doesn't eliminate those values, but it puts them under constant strain.

When players can leave after one season, the emotional investment fans make in individual careers feels like it's for nothing. Every breakout performance now comes with a question: Will he still be here next year? For the Huskers, success in the portal era won't come from nostalgia or resistance.

It will come from mastering the balance, using transfers to supplement recruiting, not replace it; Development and Recruiting HS prospects are still a common denominator successful programs have, while the Huskers are going away from it. They need to create a program, not just a team. The programs that thrive will be the ones that combine opportunity with stability.

The transfer portal isn't ruining college football, but it is reshaping it. Nebraska's challenge now is to prove that recruitment, development, and continuity can still exist in a sport defined increasingly by transfers. The portal may dominate the headlines, but how Nebraska adapts to it will determine whether the program's future is built on success or failure.

By: Taylon Bennett

It's a great time to be a Husker fan as they continue their stretch of success into the winter season! A handful of programs, ranging from Volleyball to Men's Wrestling, have been standing out amongst teams across the country, and continue to represent the Big Red



Starting back in the fall, the Nebaska volleyball team was tearing through their schedule, dominating every opponent who obstructed their view of that National Championship trophy. Led by standout junior hitter Harper Murray and touch maestro Bergen Reilly, the Huskers cruised through the regular season, finding themselves on a 45-set win streak,

spanning from September 20th to November 14th. Though they broke said streak in a third set against UCLA, this winning mojo carried them throughout conference play, leading to a spotless 30-0 record for the regular season, as well as the #1 seed in the national tournament. They swept their way through the first three rounds before being toppled in a five-set thriller against Texas A&M. The 'Skers are gearing up for yet another strong season under second-year-to-be Head Coach Dani Busboom Kelly, and bringing back multiple core pieces such as Laney Choboy and Andi Jackson to their scheme, and have their goals set to end in gold!

This momentum carried well into the winter season, as both the men's and women's basketball teams have been ranked within the top 25! With Reink Mast as the anchor of the Men's offense, paired with the heartbeat and motor of senior Sam Hoiberg, newly donned 'Nebrasketball' took off on a scorching hot 18-0 start to the season, landing them a projected #1 seed in the upcoming

March Madness Tournament. The staple of seniority leadership from players like Jamarques Lawrence and Pryce Sandfordt set a strong example for the rising underclassmen, most notably, Redshirt Freshman Braden Frager. The Huskers are led in scoring by senior pair Sanfordt and Mast, while Hoiberg and Turkish Center Berke Buyuktencil hold down the defensive end. Though the undefeated season came to a halt with a three-point loss to the then #2-ranked Michigan Wolverines, these Huskers continue to persevere with their minds set on March, hoping to replace the memory of their first-round exit last season.

As for the women, they've been wrestling for a spot in the Top 25 AP Poll, bouncing in and out all season. Standout Nebraska-native Britt Prince has been leading the way as the Lady Cornhuskers continue to battle through a tough conference, in hopes of a March Madness appearance! The rather paradoxical team is based around the freshman phenom and leans heavily on upperclassmen for support, rather than the

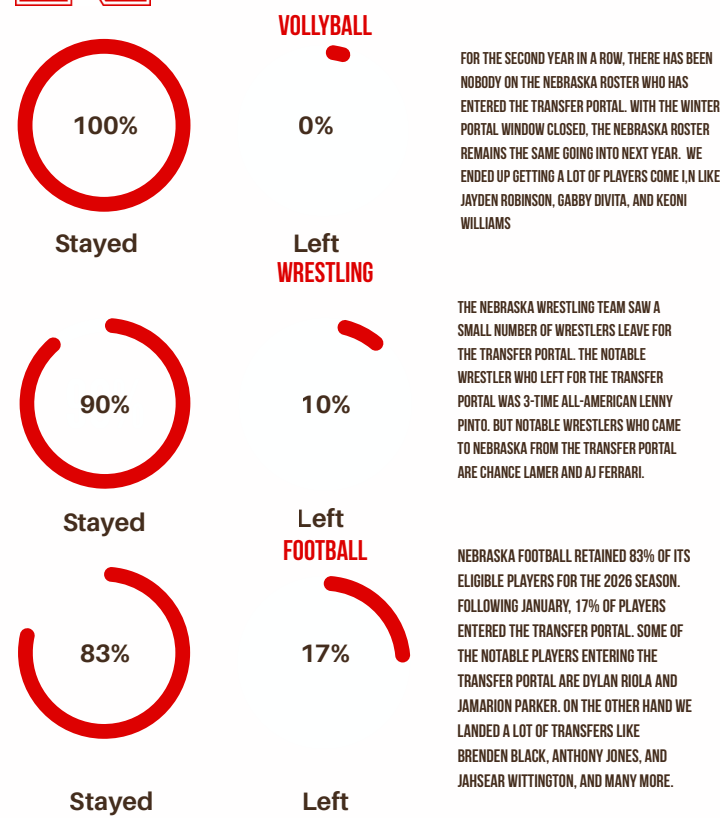
more common opposite. With dominant inside forces, Amiah Hargrove and Jessica Petrie, the 'Skers are efficient inside and out, and look to be built for a good run into the National Tournament come this spring!

And concludingly, we take it to the mats! Renowned Husker team makes a return at a spot they're not-so-uncomfortable in: The top. Being ranked top-five in many preseason polls, these men have lived up to the expectations, keeping their high rank, with many wrestlers being listed at the top as well. Antrell Taylor, a returning National Champion, is the head of the multi-cranial snake, with Jacob Van Dee and Brock Hardy as members of the supporting cast. The Huskers have had to make some adjustments, as new faces join the program and find their fit, this team hasn't skipped a beat. AJ Ferarri, former National Champion (2021), comes into Nebraska boasting a 55-3 overall record, looking for another opportunity to be at the top of the podium. As the season continues, fans are eager to see who else arises for this Husker

team. Upcoming star and Omaha Skutt Catholic graduate Cade Zaiola shows signs of promise as his freshman year goes on, and Senior Silas Allred gears up and aims to hear his name called far past the quarterfinals, where his season took a turn a season ago. All these names add up to one collective dominant unit, and as Husker fans and supporters continue to cheer on this wrestling team, they focus their eyes on the National Championships, set for late March.

Whether it's something in Lancaster County's water or reimbursement for repetitive football let-downs, Husker fans are here for it and are rooting for the Big Red to take it the distance in each respective sport. Join me in wishing every athlete the best of luck in the pursuit of a successful and healthy season!

COMPARING NEBRASKA VB, FB, WR TRANSFERS IN AND OUT (2025)



Show Me the Money

By: Xander Foster

The Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policy has significantly impacted the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's athletic arena. In the past, the student-athletes were not allowed to make money from endorsements or image-building, despite the fact that they contributed significantly to the revenue generated by the university. However, with the introduction of the NIL policy, which began on July 1, 2021, UNL student-athletes and those across the nation are now able to make money from their images, which has greatly modernized the athletic landscape. Overall, NIL is a good thing because it gives student-athletes fair opportunities to earn money from their own name and image, even though it has introduced some new challenges.

One of the major ways that NIL has impacted UNL is through recruitment and athlete retention. The loyal fan base and support that Nebraska receives have helped to fuel a growth spurt in NIL collectives, a unique phenomenon in college sports where Nebraska's massive, loyal fan base has been converted into a powerful financial engine, which allows athletes to receive endorsements that they might not receive elsewhere. UNL doesn't have one single "pool for everyone"; its money comes from a mix of private donors.

The players who would get recruited could earn millions of dollars in NIL. According to NIL valuation reports and national sports media outlets such as On3 and ESPN, Arch Manning (Texas) has been valued at over \$6 million, while players like

Drew Allar (Penn State) and Cade Klubnik (Clemson) have valuations around \$3 million, showing how top recruits can earn at that level.

While NIL often causes college athletes to switch schools in search of better deals—with over 2,600 football players entering the transfer portal recently—Nebraska has used it as a tool for stability. By leveraging local collectives like the 1890 Initiative, Nebraska provides the financial incentive for stars to stay put rather than leave. This is especially clear in Nebraska Volleyball, which has 5 players in the top 10 of NIL volleyball earners according to On3.com. Stars like Lexi Rodriguez and Harper Murray have signed deals that keep the roster intact, allowing the team to build the long-term chemistry needed to remain a

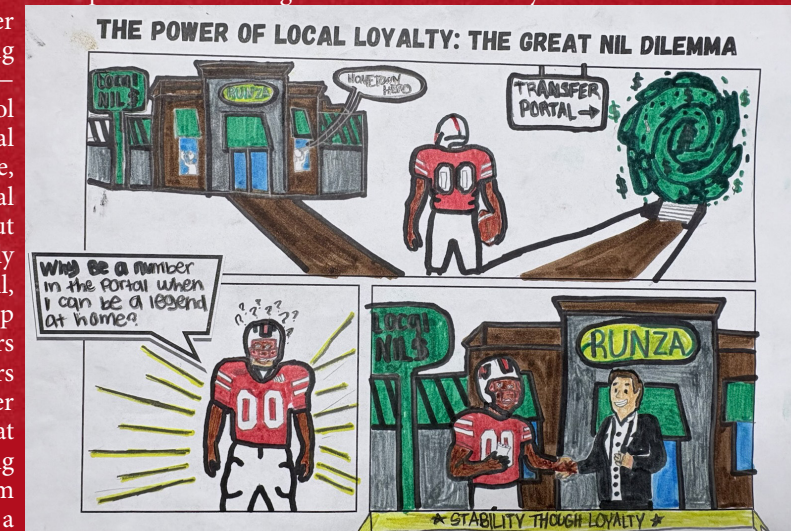
NIL and Its Effects on Collegiate Athletics

national powerhouse.

NIL has impacted the culture of sports at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln by giving student-athletes the power and making the program more competitive. Although issues

still exist, such as issues of equity and balancing academics with branding, NIL has opened doors for student-athletes and the university.

As the future of NIL unfolds, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is



By: Asher McKenna

By: Kaser Johnson