

Davison advances to World Championships

senior writer **ACHIM HUNT**

Michelle Davison, a sophomore diver at USC, won the 3-meter springboard event at the U.S. Senior National Diving Championships in Atlanta, Ga., at the Georgia Tech Aquatic Center on Aug. 15th. In addition to winning the 3-meter title, Davison was named the best all-around athlete of the Senior Nationals meet.

Davison won the 3-meter event after competing in the 10-meter and 1-meter events the previous two days. Her high scores throughout the three-day meet landed her the best all-around athlete award. She finished fifth in the 1-meter event and ninth on the 10-meter platform.

"Michelle is a tough competitor," USC Head Diving Coach Todd Sherritt said. "Not every diver in the championships competed in all three events like Michelle did. When she won the 3-meter she was really tired and sore, but being the true champion that she is,

she really sucked it up and pulled out the win."

Davison also won the Phillips Performance Award at the Senior Nationals. The Performance Award is voted on by all of the coaches as an award to the most outstanding diver of the meet.

"This win marks a big turning point in my career," Davison said. "I've been up there, and now I finally proved to myself I have the ability to beat some of the country's best divers."

Davison's coach at USC, Todd Sherritt, also won the United States Diving Coach's Award of Excellence at the meet. That award was also voted on by all of the coaches.

With Davison's win at the Senior National Championships, she advances to the World Diving Cup in Wellington, New Zealand on January 12-16.

Davison won the SEC 3-meter Diving Championship this past year while setting a new conference record in the event.

Coaches use variety of strategies to boost morale

college press **EXCHANGE**

If Dennis Franchione was certain of anything when he took over the Texas Christian University football program, it was that changes would have to be made. After all, the Horned Frogs went 1-10 under Pat Sullivan in 1997.

The most important difference he could make, though — a major talent upgrade — might take years to achieve. So Franchione dipped into the coaches' bag of psychological tricks and made a move unquestioned for its simplicity or its brilliance.

He changed the color of the helmets.

Out with the silver, in with the purple. Off with the TCU logo, on with the Spirit Frog.

He also redesigned the jerseys, going to a darker shade of purple, and reconfigured the locker room into a single, open space.

It's not that Franchione's become a dedicated follower of fashion.

Rather, Franchione explained, "It's a piece of the whole attitude change I'm trying to develop here.

"This team," he said, "needs to gain confidence, self-esteem, put last year behind them. Cleanse their minds. I can't change the players a great deal, but I can change how they think. And changing the helmet and the uniforms and the locker room is all part of that process."

Plenty of coaches and players agree with Franchione. What might be cosmetic alterations to outsiders can represent a whole new and improved era to a football team, especially one that's been living on the dark side.

Money also plays a role in some schools' decisions to change uniforms, logos or color combinations. New and different tends to sell more, and university athletic departments rely on sales of licensed merchandise as an important revenue stream in a time of tighter budgets.

But, for the most part, it's a mind thing. Downtrodden programs at local schools such as the University of North Texas and Southern Methodist University have made their own fashion changes in recent years, particularly when they've hired new coaches.

By contrast, traditionally successful programs like the University of Nebraska aren't as likely to make major changes, such as dropping the "N" from its helmets, even when a new coach is hired.

"It's like we're starting over," explained TCU punter and wide receiver Royce Huffman, endorsing his school's changes. "It's a whole new attitude: getting rid of the past and starting fresh. It's psychological. Yeah, I think it's going to help us."

TCU linebacker Joseph Phipps calls the darker purple color and the new helmets "a nice change," but adds, "the color of the helmet's not really going to matter when you get out there against Iowa State or Oklahoma."

Asked whether he would rather play in the old colors of the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers, or in Tampa's new, improved colors, Phipps laughed. He chose the new look, but said that's not the reason the Bucs are finally winning.

"The changes in their uniforms didn't make them a better team," Phipps said. "It was their coaches' and

players' commitment to do better. We changed our uniforms, but what we're really trying to do change is our commitment."

A change in commitment is what Hayden Fry had in mind when he took over the coaching job at the University of Iowa in 1979. Fry, a psychology student, gave the Hawkeyes black helmets and mimicked the uniforms of the Pittsburgh Steelers, who'd just finished a run of Super Bowl championship seasons. He also changed the school logo to a meaner-looking hawk.

"The first thing he did when he came here was change the uniform, recalled Phil Haddy, sports information director at Iowa. "He didn't want his team putting on the old uniform, which was associated with losing."

That was some of the thinking behind the UNT's decision to emphasize the "Mean Green" nickname and logo over the "Eagles."

"We've always been the Mean Green and the Eagles. We just tried to put more emphasis on Mean Green because it represented a time when we were more successful," said associate athletic director Hank Dickenson. "You're maybe trying to create a new era."

There will be fewer such changes at UNT this season, even though a new coach, Darrell Dickey, is in place. Dickenson said that's because there have been many changes in recent years at UNT, and consistency is needed.

Sometimes, coaches make more subtle changes in fashion. SMU head coach Mike Cavan added horseshoe stickers to the helmets of top-performing players. At practice, he has his players wearing T-shirts that say, "TEAM" in bold lettering. Underneath, in small print, it reads "me." The Mustangs also have moved away from blue jerseys to red jerseys under Cavan, who is in his second season. Academics don't place much importance on a team's change in colors or uniform design, but some professors say they're not surprised to see them.

"You move into a new house," said Michael Katovich, a professor of sociology at TCU, "the first thing you do is change the color."

"It's a bizarre notion to me," adds Richard Crepeau, a professor at the University of Central Florida, "to think that there would be some psychological impact. But coaches will do anything to get an edge."

Hokies' QB Clark fights through pain

college press **EXCHANGE**

Five-step drops and sprint-outs were the furthest thing from Al Clark's mind a few months ago. Virginia Tech's senior quarterback longed more for a return to normalcy in everyday life than a return to football. The pain he felt getting in and out of a car or climbing a flight of stairs gnawed at him. He wondered when — or if — his left knee would ever be right again.

But that pain — which finally subsided enough to allow Clark to open practice with the Hokies last week — was nothing compared to the pain he felt two years ago when his brother, Sean Leo Clark, committed suicide.

"It was one sudden thing," Clark said. "I talked to him one day, and then two days later you get a phone call." On Clark's left bicep is a tattoo of a tombstone with the inscription "RIP Leo, 1970-1996."

"I put it on there the day he passed," said Clark, the fourth of five brothers and one behind Sean in the birth order. "He couldn't get a tombstone because

we didn't have enough money, so I got him one."

Clark said he thinks of his brother whenever he catches a glimpse of the tattoo in the mirror, or when someone asks about it. Clark said Sean was born without an esophagus, and the resulting health problems made it difficult to hold on to a job. He moved away from home, then moved back when money ran short. He had a child on the way and pressures mounting.

"But he never told me; I didn't know he wasn't all right," Clark said. "He could have come here and stayed with me. Sometimes he gave me money. I could have let him live with me and he could have got a job here."

Clark said it's still hard to fathom that his brother is gone and the circumstances that led him to take his life. "I'm pretty sure one day it will hit me," Clark said. "I still don't know all the details."

The details about Clark's knee have been a taboo subject for him much of the summer. But at Tech's media day last Wednesday, he obligingly withstood

a blitz of reporters' questions. "I didn't think I'd be able to come out here and play again," Clark said. "Football was way in the back of my mind. I just wanted to get healthy first. ... It took a long time."

Time will tell just how healthy he is. As Tech opened practice this week, Clark said his knee felt fine. He will be treated as delicately as fine china during practices leading up to the Sept. 5 opener against East Carolina.

Three weeks ago, Clark's left leg tested 10 to 15 percent weaker than his right, a vast improvement over just a couple of months ago. "They say that at 90 percent you're pretty much good, you're pretty much healed," said Clark, a senior from Washington. "Just around the corner and you'll be right there." Since he tore the meniscus cartilage early in last year's West Virginia game, Clark has had a litany of leg problems and lots of self-doubt.

He missed one game, then was a gimpy quarterback the final three regular-season contests. On Dec. 1, he underwent arthroscopic knee surgery that

normally requires about three weeks to heal, but a month later he was hobbled and ineffective against North Carolina in the Gator Bowl before being pulled.

Clark still wasn't well by spring practice. He played sparingly in the spring game, and afterward the knee swelled. Inflammation developed behind the kneecap, and rest was prescribed. When Clark did work out, pain prevented him from pushing himself, and his leg weakened.

"I don't think he was working as hard as he should have been," said orthopedic surgeon Marc Siegel, who performed the arthroscopic surgery. "I don't think he was motivated."

Early in the summer, tests revealed Clark's left leg was about 40 percent weaker than the right.

"It showed him, 'Look, Al, this is the problem — you just have to work your butt off to get stronger,'" Siegel said.

Finally, Clark had enough. About six weeks ago Clark he began working out feverishly every day in Tech's weight room.

"I was already experiencing setbacks and swelling in my knee, so I figured I didn't have anything to lose," Clark said. "Just going in there and rehabbing every day and giving it everything you've got; after two weeks or three weeks of that hard training I pretty much was getting back to normal."

"We were just trying to find something that works. I think we found something that works and we kind of stuck with it. Right now I'm feeling pretty good and the knee is probably the last thing on my mind."

With his left leg just 10 to 15 percent weaker than his right, he has reason to be optimistic. For Clark, that's a welcome emotion after months of uncertainty. "He hasn't felt that way in a long time," offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Rickey Bustle said. "It's been very frustrating for him. He's getting that spark back. I'm glad to see Al come back mentally as well as physically."

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Mississippi St.	Sept. 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23
*Arkansas	Sept. 21, 22, 23, Oct. 5, 6, 7, 14, 15
Tennessee	Oct. 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28

*Monday Sept. 7 Labor Day - No Classes
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 Date Coupon Book Sales - Aug. 24, 25, 26, 31 Sept. 1, 2

Block Seating Schedule

Ball State, Georgia	Aug. 24, 25, 26, 31, Sept. 1, 2
Marshall, Mississippi St.	Sept. 8, 9, 14, 15
*Arkansas	Sept. 21, 22, 23, Oct. 5, 6
Tennessee	Oct. 5, 6, 7, 14, 15

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