

A genuine big man, Jim Thom, 6-9 sophomore, has been acquired. The

advance word was that NU would have scant trouble improving upon last year's overall 9-12 record. However, if the ratio of its first

six games is maintained Nebraska would finish at 8-16.

There are, of course, substantial reasons for the Scarlet's

slow start. For one, Thom apparently is not ready. Ekwall has been starting at center, thereby reducing NU's height considerably. Veteran Guard

Whity Buel has not played because of a broken collarbone suffered early

in practice. Ekwall has missed two games because of a heavy cold. And

coach Jerry Bush, now in his second season at Lincoln, is paying the price

of experience by starting three sophomores.

These include Don Smidt, 6-4 Anderson, Ind. forward;

and Guards Jim Kubacki, a 5-10 long-range artist, and Gary Reimers,

5-11 Millard, Neb. product. Chuck Smith, a two-lettered senior, is handling

the opposite forward.

He is the Huskers' brightest pre-tournament

performer. His scoring average through the first six games is 17.6 against

a seasonal mark of 9.4 last season. Smith stands only 6-1, but jumps

so high he appears to be a 6-6 hand under the boards.

Ekwall is expected to be up to par by the time the

Huskers' ply their give-and-go offense against Missouri in the second

session of the four-day affair. Even as a sophomore, he led the club in

rebounds with an 11/4 average and finished second only to Fagler in

the scoring column at 12.4. He was averaging six-tenths higher than

that up to Wednesday night's hand-off against Vandy.

Another known Husker asset is Norman Coufal, quite likely

the league's best two-hand set shooter last year.