

Sports

Nebraska women to defend track title

By Jack Denker

It's been four years since a team other than Nebraska won the Big Eight women's indoor track championship.

When another Big Eight indoor season begins this weekend, most conference coaches expect Nebraska to literally sprint out of the blocks and never look back.

"Nebraska returns a lot of talented people and they have a lot of quality depth to go with it," Kansas Coach Carla Coffey said. "And on the basis of what they have done in the past, one would have to consider them the front-runner for the conference title."

Thirteen Husker letter-winners return, including seven All-Americans, to lead Nebraska. Add to that the return of world-class sprinter Merlene Ottey and Nebraska should have more than enough firepower to win its fourth straight Big Eight indoor title and quite possibly a third consecutive national title.

Last season Nebraska scored 172 points in the Big Eight indoor meet, which more than doubled the score of second-place Kansas State. Husker Coach Gary Pepin said his team should be even stronger this year, which certainly doesn't send optimism soaring at the other Big Eight schools.

"We have basically the same team as a year ago, but we should be a better conference-level team if we don't have a lot of injuries," Pepin said.

The strengths of the 1984 Cornhuskers, according to Pepin, are the sprints, hurdles and middle distance events. With veteran All-Americans Janet Burke, Jennie Gorham-Badami, Nicole Ali, Angela Thacker, who also doubles as a long jumper, and Ottey, Nebraska may have the best group of sprinters in the country. Pepin said Ottey would run in only three indoor meets this season, the Husker Invitational, the Big Eight meet and the national championship.

Two other All-Americans, Rhonda Blanford, two-time Big Eight indoor hurdle champ, and middle distance runner Marcia Tate should also provide Nebraska with valuable points.

Nebraska's only real weakness may come in the high jump and shot put, where 1983 Big Eight indoor champ Karen Wood isn't returning.

A confident Pepin labeled his team the obvious pre-season favorite for the Big Eight title, saying, "If I had to vote for a team to win, I'd vote for us."

With Nebraska the overwhelming favorite, the battle for second could be tight. Any one of the remaining seven teams has the potential to finish second, the Big Eight coaches said.

"After Nebraska, you are looking at a situation where any team could finish as high as second or as bad as eighth," Iowa State Coach Ron Renko said. "The difference may come down to the performances of one or two quality athletes."

"Nebraska is the team to beat," Coffey said. "But the battle for second is up for grabs." Last year's second-place team, Kansas State, may have the best chance to unseat the Huskers.

"We should be as good or better than last year," KSU Coach Steve Miller said. "We're a very balanced team with outstanding individuals in every event."

Leading the way for the Wildcats will be Deb Pihl,



Dan Kuhns/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska hurdler Rhonda Blanford prepares for the coming indoor track season. Blanford is a two-time Big Eight champion for the defending national champion Huskers.

who won the mile and 1,000-meter run last year in the Big Eight meet. Miller said he would run Pihl in at least two or three events again this year.

To go with Pihl, KSU will also be strong in the jumping events. Kelly Wenlock, the defending Big Eight long jump champ, returns and Miller expects high jumper Rita Graves to be better than last year.

Donna King and Michelle Maxey should help Kansas State in the sprints.

Miller said the biggest problem his team will face this season is a lack of depth. Last season they used 17 freshmen and sophomores which will make them predominantly an underclassman team in 1984, Miller said.

Missouri is the team most coaches feel will finish

third in the Big Eight race.

First-year Tiger Coach Rick McGuire said the strengths of his team will come in the middle distance events. The Tigers will have five good runners in events one mile or longer, McGuire said.

All-Americans Andrea Fischer and Sabrina Dornhoefer, plus freshman Jill Kingsbury finished first, second and third at the Big Eight Cross Country meet in 1983 and will be MU's leaders. Lynn Biggs, the defending 880 indoor champ, and Cyd Thomas also return.

"We are not going to enter the Big Eight meet with the intention of scoring large amounts of points," McGuire said. "We are going to isolate the things we do best and build the team from there. But we will try to finish in the top four."

Renko expects his Cyclones to move up from last year's disappointing seventh-place finish to challenge for the upper division.

"I would be disappointed if we didn't earn a top half finish in the Big Eight," Renko said. "We hope we are in the same league as the middle teams and I expect us to be competitive enough to do it."

ISU will field a fairly respectable team in the middle and longer distance events, Renko said, and have some good quality performers in the sprints. Suzanne Youngberg and freshman Bonnie Suns will be competitive in the distance events, while Margaret Davis is also respectable, Renko said.

Renko said he anticipates more from ISU in the field events this year. Lois Green is the Cyclones' top triple jumper and Kelly Mathews, who was injured last season, is back. Renko said Mathews is ISU's most dangerous running and jumping threat.

Kansas is rated the best of the rest by the coaches because they have a strong team in the field events.

Stine Lerdahl could be the Big Eight's premier shot putter, while Connie McKernan will compete in the pentathlon and heptathlon. Dana Bryant is KU's best high jumper.

Coffey said Kansas will be weak in depth and the short sprints, where their only top returner is Dora Spearman.

Kansas and Oklahoma finished in a tie for fifth last year and the coaches believe things won't change much in 1984.

"We are not going to be a really strong team, but we won't be a bad team either," OU Coach J.D. Martin said. "I think we'll be kind of mediocre."

The middle distance events seem to be Oklahoma's strong point this season, thanks to the return of Annette Campbell, who finished sixth at the national meet last year and freshman Sandra Silveira, who will run the 400 and 880.

Sherifa Sanders will be one of the conference's top hurdlers and long jumpers this year, while Jane Clough is an All-American high jumper.

Colorado finished fourth last year, and this year will rely on sprinter Donna Walker and Lisa Greenfield, who high jumps and competes in the pentathlon.

Oklahoma State rounds out the Big Eight. Distance runner Chris McMiken is the Cowgirls' best chance for a high conference finish.

Basketball teams play two against Mizzou

Missouri (11-4, 0-1) at Nebraska (11-3, 1-0)
THE STARTERS:

P. Nebraska	Yr.	Ht.	Pts.	Reb.
G David Ponce	Sr.	5-10	8.9	1.7
G Eric Williams	Sr.	6-2	7.2	2.4
C Dave Hoppen	So.	6-11	19.8	7.2
F John Matzke	So.	6-6	4.1	2.3
F Stan Cloudy	Sr.	6-4	13.5	6-1

P. Missouri	Yr.	Ht.	Pts.	Reb.
G Prince Bridges	Sr.	6-1 1/2	11.5	2.5
G Ron Jones	Sr.	6-4	9.1	3.5
C Greg Cavener	Jr.	6-10	13.1	8.1
F Blake Wortham	So.	6-10	7.2	5.0
F Malcolm Thomas Jr.		6-7	18.5	10.4

The Series: Missouri leads 83-71. The Tigers swept the Huskers last season in three games, defeating them 54-51 in Lincoln, 79-56 in Columbia and 69-63 in the semi-finals of the Big Eight Tournament in Kansas City. The Tigers have won four straight games against Nebraska, including two in the Big Eight semi-finals. The Tigers have also won the last two games between the teams in the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The game: The Huskers are coming off a comeback win against Iowa State Wednesday night in Ames. They came back from a nine point second-

half deficit to win 64-63. Missouri lost to Kansas 73-56 in Lawrence Wednesday. The Tigers had been riding a five-game winning streak before the loss to the Jayhawks. Nebraska is currently on a four-game win streak.

Nebraska Coach Moe Iba said one of the keys to a Nebraska victory will be preventing Missouri from getting second and third shots.

"They've got such a height advantage on our basketball team," Iba said. "It's going to be difficult to stop their first shot. We'll have to hit the defensive boards. It'll take a super effort on our part."

Iba said this Missouri team is different than the Missouri team last year in its style of play. Last year's team was led by All-Big Eight players Steve Stipanovich and Jon Sundvold who were both first-round draft choices in the NBA.

"They're playing more of a power game now," Iba said. "They're pushing the ball inside all the time."

Defensively, the Tigers are more of a physical team than they were last season.

"It's hard to get a second shot against them," Iba said.

The Tigers are shooting 52 percent from the field for the season compared to their opponents' 43 percent. Iba said the Tigers have become more patient on offense this season.

"Last year, Sundvold would take shots from

way out on the floor," Iba said. "This season they don't shoot much further out than 15 feet."

Malcolm Thomas, a junior college transfer from Moberly Mo., has led the Tigers in scoring and rebounding all season. Nebraska tried to recruit Thomas out of Moberly. Iba said he hasn't decided who will have the responsibility of shutting him down.

Missouri Coach Norm Stewart said after the Tigers' loss to Kansas Wednesday that the Big Eight race would be a wide open one.

"It's going to be crazy," Stewart said. "I thought all along that Nebraska would be there."

"Iowa State likes to get away from you," Stewart said. "Nebraska's a hard team to get away from."

The Women: The Nebraska women's basketball team will host 17th-ranked Missouri at 5:15 Saturday before the men's game. The Huskers, who defeated Iowa State Wednesday 79-75, are led by Debra Powell with 18.3 points per game. Powell also pulls down 6.9 rebounds per game. Other starters for Nebraska will be Terri Parriott (5.9 points per game, 2.4 rebounds) Annie Miller (13.6, 7.9), Kelli Benson (8.9, 3.2) and Catay Owen (8.9, 4.3). The Tigers will be led by All-American candidate Joni Davis.