## Arch rival ISU to be Husker gymnasts' first foe

By Rob Barney

An aura of excitement surrounds UNL's gymnastics team as it prepares to open its season Saturday against archrival Iowa State University (ISU).

"The guys are really excited about performing in the New (UNL) Sports Complex," Husker gymnastics coach Francis Allen said. "We would like to perform well enough to be the minor sport that gets to perform in the

The gymnasts have a good chance to do that, Allen

"I'm more comfortable now than I was at this time last year," Allen said. "Before I just put on the best four men, but this year I can put six guys out on the floor and count any four (for scoring) without being hurt.

"For the past three years the conference has been the

toughest in the country," he said.
Allen said the Huskers, ISU and Oklahoma University would be the top three teams in the country this year.

"Both Oklahoma and we return an Olympic performer and Iowa State had some fine returning people," he said. "Looking at their (ISU's) lineup it looks like their strong point will be their specialists," Allen said. "If we lose it will be because of their specialists."

He said the team will be looking to seniors for leader-

"We're going to look to (Kurt) Mackie, (Duane) West and (Gary) Juerink to be the buckbones of our team," Allen said. "They are going to be the ones that meet-in, meet-out score 9.1s and 9.2s."

We each have our own methods of coaching and dif-

Blocker said he was looking forward to the upcoming

"Both teams look stronger," Blocker said. "We don't

ferent ideas," Allen said. "I guess you might call it a pool-

season and in particular Saturday's opening meet with

have the specialists on our team this year like we did last

perennial national power Iowa State University.

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Allen said junior Larry Gerard will be a showpiece for the team. Gerard made it to the Olympic tryouts this

"Larry will score an eight in one meet and then come

beck with 9.7 the next," Allen said.

UNL will debut two freshman against ISU, Mark Williams and Joseph Raymond.

"Williams could be the best gymnast we've ever had here, and that includes Gerard," Allen said. "It might take him more time than Gerard because Larry started out so fast. But he's got the potential.

"Raymond is good in his routines, but he's weak on his compulsories," Allen said. "We're strong on compulsories so I think we'll help him out there. We made him work on compulsories for ISU, which could hurt him but it should make him stronger in the long run."

Saturday's meet, which will start at 7:30 p.m., is the first of two dual meets between UNL and ISU this season. Allen said the teams are getting a jump on other teams because they are opening with each other instead of waiting for the big meets.

Last year, the Huskers split duals with ISU, winning in Lincoln while losing at Ames. The Huskers then nipped the Cyclones to win the Big 8 championship. They went onto finish 4th in the NCAA meet.

Allen said that judges did not play any part in the outcomes of last year's meets.

"I took a judge over there with me, and Iowa State furnished one. It just happened to be that they were better at the start of the year and we were better towards the end," Allen said.

Former Southeast gymnastic coach no stranger to Cornhusker system

ing of ignorance."

By Jim Kay Gymnastics coach Francis Allen thinks he has plenty

of help for the upcoming season.

Allen's new assistant coach, Columbus native Jon Blocker, coached UNL gymnasts Larry Gerard and Gary Jeurink during his four years at Lincoln Southeast High School. And he is no stranger to the UNL gymnastics system.

"I've been working with Francis since I got out of college," Blocker said. "I used to come over and help him out after the season was over at Southeast. We've also worked together in his age-group gymnastics school."

Blocker was a UNL letterman during the 1970-71 and 71-72 seasons. He took the Southeast job in the fall of 1972.

Blocker said working with Big 8 Conference champion Gerard is nothing new.

"I've worked with Larry off and on ever since his sophomore year in high school," Blocker said.

Blocker said that he thought both Gerard and Duane West had good chances at Big 8 and national honors this year.

"Larry has an especially good chance in the high bar and still rings events," Blocker said. "He was fourth in the NCAA and the Big 8 champ last year in the allaround."

Allen said his job is easier because of Blocker and un-

paid assistant Jim Howard. "They are both excellent coaches," Allen said.

"They're going to put me out of a job. It's getting so all

year. Our all-arounders are going to have to fill in."

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