

sports

OU game important in standings race

By Ron Powell

It's tiebreaker time again for the UNL basketball team.

Last Saturday night, the Huskers dropped out of a first place tie in the Big Eight by losing to Kansas State 66-64, in double overtime. Tonight, the Huskers, 13-7 overall and 4-2 in the conference, host Oklahoma at the Bob Devaney Sports Center in a game that will help settle a three-way tie for second between the Huskers, Sooners and Missouri Tigers.

Tonight's game is an important one for the Huskers.

A Husker victory will give the team at least sole possession of second place. If Missouri and Nebraska both win, there will be a three-way tie for first place between KSU, Missouri and UNL.

But beating the defending Big Eight champs will not be an easy task, according to Acting Head Coach Moe Iba.

"It will be as tough a home game as we've had here, including Missouri," Iba said. "Oklahoma has played well on the road."

Five losses overall

OU, 13-5 overall and 4-2 in the conference, has won road games from K-State 72-62 and Iowa State 93-78, and narrowly missed a third win in a 65-64 loss at Colorado when a Sooner basket at the buzzer was disallowed. The other Sooner loss was against Kansas 72-67, a game that the Sooners led by 16 points at one time in the first half.

The Sooners also have a victory over Missouri, the other team that has beaten the Huskers in conference play. The Sooners upset the Tigers 78-73 last Saturday.

"It (Missouri) was the best team we've played all year," said Oklahoma Head Coach Dave Bliss.

The Sooners return four starters from last year's 21-10 team that made it to the second round of the NCAA tournament. But with the loss of all-conference forward John McCullough, there was a hole to fill.

Bajema plugs hole

Six-seven junior Steve Bajema has taken

over McCullough's spot this season, and has been doing well. Bajema, a transfer from Denver University, has been averaging 10.2 points a game.

If there is one word to describe the Sooner attack, it would have to be balanced. All five starters are averaging in double figures.

Senior forward Terry Stotts, 6-8, leads the Sooner scoring with a 16.2 average. Junior guard, 6-2 Raymond Whitley, is averaging 15 points a game and leads the team with 80 assists and 27 steals. Whitley's mate at guard, 6-4 senior Aaron Curry is averaging 14.5 points a game.

Although Iba said that Whitley and Curry could be the best guard tandem in the conference, Bliss said he doesn't see that much of an advantage for OU at guard.

Nebraska guards quicker

"We might have the advantage on paper, but the Nebraska guards are quicker than ours," Bliss said. "(Jack) Moore has done very well handling the ball. He's a good penetrator and has been very effective from the free throw line."

The featured match-up might be at center where Andre Smith will go against the Sooners' 6-9 senior Al Beal.

"When they need Beal to have a good game, he has come through for them," Iba said.

Smith an offensive threat

"Andre Smith is the best offensive post man in the conference," Bliss said. "He's better than Stipanovich right now, because he's much more of an offensive threat. He may not be as big as Stipanovich, but he's quicker and has a variety of moves underneath."

While Bliss is worried about Smith, Iba is concerned about matching up with the Sooners, and handling the Sooners' shooting.

"We have problems matching up at every position," Iba said.

As a team the Sooners are shooting 53.2 percent from the field. The starters are averaging 55.6 percent from the field, and all five are shooting 50 percent or better.

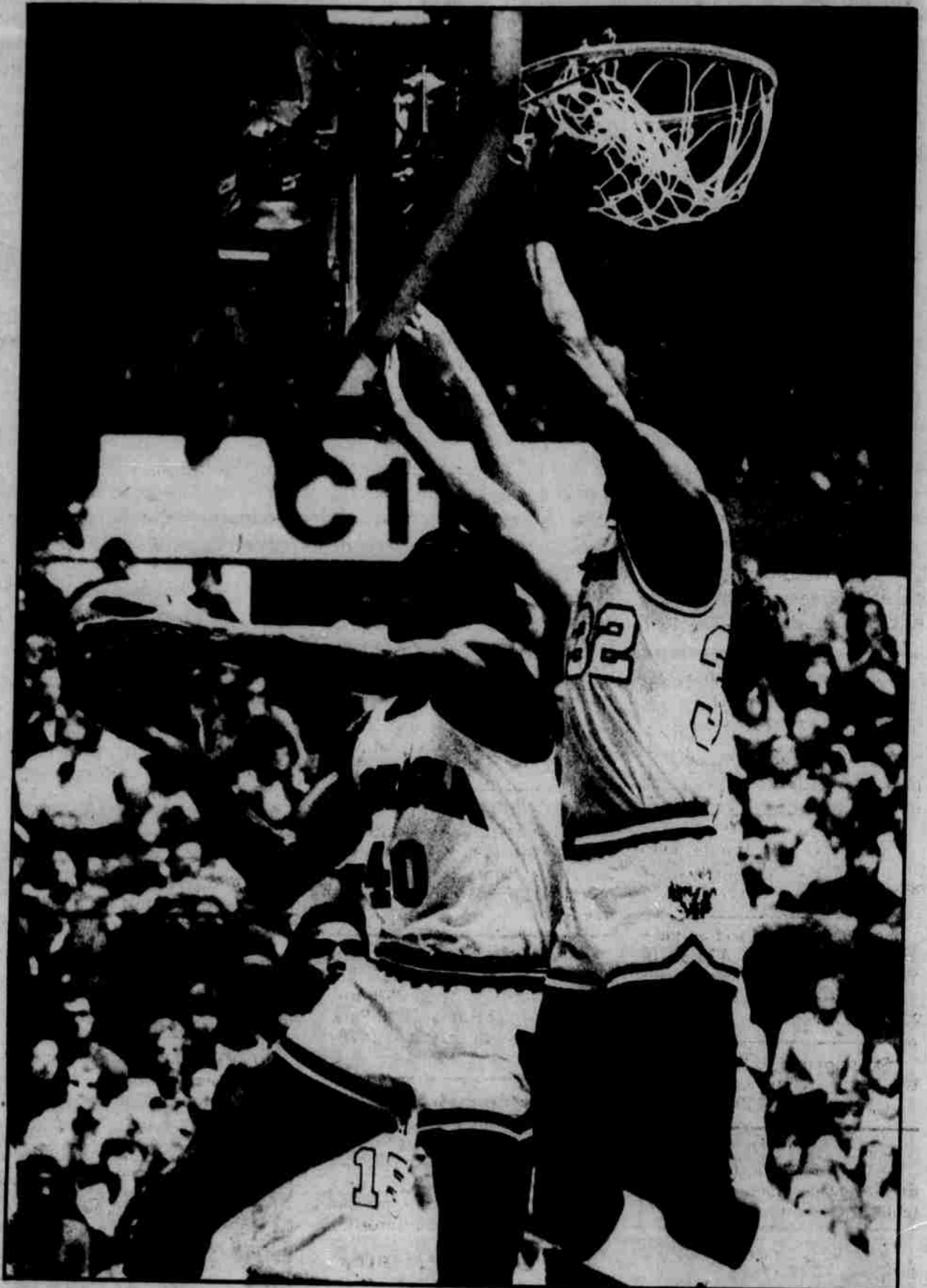


Photo by Tom Gesner

Husker center Andre Smith (40) drives past Missouri's Ricky Frazier. The Huskers meet Oklahoma tonight at 7:35 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. The Nebraska women's team is scheduled to play at UNO at 5:15.

Rough road to success

Sullivan breaks school records

By Scott Ahlstrand

"Our natures are like oil; compound us with anything.

Yet will we strive to swim at the top."

Beaumont and Fletcher

Renee Sullivan seems to be on her way to the top. After overcoming early season illness, the sophomore has been one of the main cogs for the Nebraska women's swimming team.

Sullivan has broken school records in three out of the last four meets, including the 100-meter freestyle record she set in the Kansas dual with a 53:78.

But Sullivan's road to success hasn't been easy, she said.

As a freshman, Sullivan was hampered in workouts because of a mid-season illness. The missed practices caused her to get out of shape, and led to a disappointing season, she said.

"The trouble with last year," Sullivan said, "was that I knew I could do better, but I just got too far out of shape."

Loves swimming

While several people would be downhearted and might consider quitting after a disappointing season, Sullivan said the thought never occurred to her.

"I never really considered quitting," she said. "I just love swimming too much. I've been competing since I was five and I've known both the ups and the downs."

Women's Head Swimming Coach Ray Huppert attests to Sullivan's determination.

"Renee has really been working very, very hard. She's shown a lot of improvement," Huppert said.

"She is turning in her best lifetime times, and has been one of the big factors on this year's team," he said.

Sullivan, a Cedar Falls, Iowa native, is attending UNL on a full-ride swimming scholarship. Although she visited several universities, she said she was most impressed with the people at UNL.

"I really enjoyed my first visit at UNL," Sullivan said. "At other universities it seemed like they wanted me just to swim, but here at UNL they seemed to care more. They were really nice. The university had all I wanted and needed."

Publicity helps

Although Sullivan puts in numerous hours a week swimming, she said she has not neglected school.

"Basically my studies come first, but so far I've had a lot of time for both," Sullivan said.

Another factor that's helped contribute to Sullivan's as well as the team's performance, is the publicity the team has received this year. In past years, Sullivan said she felt the lack of publicity was due to the lack of swimming knowledge by the public.

"We've really gotten a lot more publicity this year," said Sullivan. "It really pumps us up when we read about the team in the paper. We kind of say, 'WOW!' they do know about us."

Sullivan said she feels that the team is getting better every week, and is really gearing for a Big Eight championship.

Saturday, both the men's and women's swimming teams meet Iowa State at 1:30 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Sullivan is expected to swim in the 200-meter freestyle, the 100-meter freestyle, the medley relay and the free-style relay, according to Huppert.

Coping at No. 1

Everybody would like to be No. 1—or would they?

That question came up Monday night in Omaha after top-ranked DePaul downed a determined Creighton Blue-jay squad, 84-73.

Fans all over the country long to be able to thrust their index fingers into the air. But, for those teams which gain the so-called "national distinction", being No. 1 is not all it's cut out to be.

DePaul Coach Ray Meyer won the 600th game of his 38-year career last month and gained a No. 1 ranking for the first time this season.

brent robinson

"We're not super-human," Meyer said. "Whether we are No. 1 or not I don't know. There are several other teams which are on the same level with us, but they do not have to fight the pressure of being called the best."

Pressure is beginning to take its toll on the Blue Demon players.

Sophomore Mark Aguirre was the first to feel the pressure and was first to do something about it.

Being No. 1 attracts attention, especially from sports writers. Aguirre felt he was mistreated and misquoted by the scribes; thus he has refused interviews with the press.

Meyer has also felt the pressure, but he knows how to cope with it.

"DePaul will lose," said Meyer. "And when we do, I'll be the first to send a wire to the new No. 1 coach. It will take the monkey off of our back. Then someone else will know what it's like."

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