Big Eight basketball race may clear up Saturday

The outcome of the Big 8 basketball race, in doubt since the beginning of the season, may become a little clearer after three key games Saturday.

That's the opinion of Husker Basketball Coach Joe Cipriano, whose team travels to Boulder to meet Colorado Saturday night in one of those games. "They're going to have a lot to say about the winner," Cipriano said of Saturday's games. "After the weekend you can pretty much tell where everybody's going to finish. If we win the rest of our games, there's no way that we can't at least tie for the title.

Nebraska's task will not be easy since three out of the Huskers' last four games are on the road, including one against Kansas State, a team that is currently tied with Missouri for the conference lead. The Huskers remaining home game is against Missouri on March 4.

Besides the Nebraska-Colorado game, Kansas hosts Missouri and Kansas State visits Oklahoma in two regionally televised games Saturday afternoon. Missouri and Kansas State have 8-2 conference records, while Nebraska is third with a 7-3 record and Oklahoma is fourth with a 6-3 record.

Cipriano predicted that Missouri and Kansas State would win Saturday, but he said Kansas, with their home advantage, might surprise the Tigers.

"I think Missouri will probably beat Kansas, but KU has the type of team that can give Missouri trouble," he remarked. "Right now, I'd also have to say that Kansas State is the most improved team in the league."

Colorado enters Saturday night's game against the Huskers in seventh place with a 2-8 record. However, the Huskers have always had a difficult time winning in Boulder. "We're not going into the game overlooking them," Cipriano said.

The Husker coach said Colorado has shown it likes to rig a defense to stop the foe's leading scorer. Cipriano expects the Buffs to do the same against the Huskers in an attempt to stop center Chuck Jura, the league's No. 2 scorer with a 23-point average in conference games.

Looking back at the Huskers' 99-78 victory over Kansas last Saturday, Cipriano singled out two seniors, guard Al Nissen and forward Mike Peterson, for outstanding performances.

"Nissen has been a superb player all year—he's getting the outside shot, he's providing leadership and he's always had to defend against one of the better players," Cipriano said. The Husker coach summed up his evaluation of Nissen by saying the senior guard is probably an All-Big 8 player.

Peterson, who scored 18 points against Kansas, was praised by Cipriano for his improved rebounding and shooting. The Husker coach said Peterson will get the assignment to cover Colorado's leading scorer Jim Creighton, who is averaging 19.6 points in conference play.

Bill (Thunder) Thornton. . .moving from the Big Red to the Cardinals.

Thornton resigns for NFL post

Bill Thornton resigned Thursday from the Nebraska football coaching staff to accept a position with the St. Louis Cardinals of the National Football League (NFL).

Thornton, who coached the defensive ends, had been a coach at Nebraska for three years and was the only black on the Husker coaching staff.

The announcement of Thornton's retirement was made jointly by Nebraska Coach Bob Devaney and St. Louis Coach Bob Holliway.

"I really want to offer thanks to Bob Devaney for the opportunity he gave me," Thornton said. "He has taught me a lot about football and coaching and I'll always be grateful. This is a great opportunity with a good football team and it will be great to get back in the NFL."

Thornton was a running back with the Cardinals for five years before becoming a Nebraska coach.

"We feel Bill will be an asset to our team," Holliway said. "He has had outstanding training with a fine football coach and staff. From all I've been able to determine he really knows the game and has outstanding references as a coach and teacher."

Devaney said, "Bill has contributed a great deal to our program. Not only as a coach, but as an outstanding individual. We are all sorry he's leaving, but this is something he's looked forward to and we wish him the best for the future."

Thornton graduated from Nebraska, where he was a star running back and co-captain on Devaney's first Nebraska team in 1962.

sports shorts

Scuba classes will begin at 7 p.m. March 6 at the Abel-Sandoz pool. The classes will run for eight weeks and will cost $35 including all equipment. For further information contact the Recreation and Intramurals Department (R&I) at 1740 Vine St.

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The R&I Department is sponsoring a basketball golf tournament for any interested students. Qualifying rounds are scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, March 1 and 2 at 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. and final matches are scheduled for March 6 and 7 at 6:30 p.m.

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Entries for the men's intramural volleyball tournament are due Thursday, March 2 at the R&I Department. The double-elimination tournament will field teams from fraternities, residence halls and independents. Matches are scheduled to begin Monday, March 6 at the Men's P.E. Building.

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