

Bride's gain is tennis team's loss

Despite the UNL women's tennis team's 8-1 record, Coach Gail Whitaker gives her squad little chance of taking the top title when it closes out its season at the Missouri Valley Tournament today through Sunday.

Whitaker's top performer will be unable to compete in the meet at Columbia, Mo. Freshmen Kathy Hawkins, undefeated in regular season play, has a previous commitment to serve as a bridesmaid this weekend.

"I don't believe we stand a chance," Whitaker said. "Hawkins is a big loss."

UNL will be represented by an entire team, however. Cindy Gossard, Geri Fisher, Barb Scribner, Jerri Moyer, Betsy Abbott and Mary Duffey, ranked in that order, all will play both singles and doubles.

Whitaker said 64 girls entered the meet last year and about that many would be entered again this year. She listed Central State College (Okla.), Stephens College and Kansas University (KU) as teams likely to be in contention for the title.

KU handed the Huskers their only loss of the season last weekend, but Hawkins was able to retain a bit of Husker prestige by winning the first singles match. The Kansas player she beat has beaten the defending champion of the Missouri Valley Tournament, which indicates Hawkins could have done well in the meet, Whitaker said.

Among Husker victims this year were Concordia State

College, Doane College and Creighton University, the only other schools in the state with women's tennis programs. This year's scores indicate the rapid improvement of UNL's squad, Whitaker said.

For example, the Huskers whitewashed Concordia 9-0 this year after losing to virtually the same team last season. Despite the relative lack of competition within Nebraska, Whitaker said UNL will continue to play the in state schools.

"We have a commitment to try to contribute to the building of the teams in the state," she said.

According to Whitaker, UNL's rapid rise to success can be attributed to increased interest in the program. While last season no cuts had to be made, this year she had to cut to a squad of 16 from the original 40 who tried out. This selectiveness has led to greater squad depth, the second year coach said.

"The program's had more publicity," she said, citing one of the reasons for the increased interest. Another reason she gave was the improvement of high school programs throughout the country. Players from Iowa, Michigan, South Dakota and Kansas are included on the Husker roster.

Whitaker's optimism is further bolstered by the fact that she loses only one senior from this year's team. She probably is also hoping for fewer weddings next year.

sports shorts

The UNL baseball team continues its home stand with

a doubleheader against Colorado University starting at 1:30 p.m. today. The series ends with a single game Saturday at 1 p.m.

player to a national letter of intent. He is Eric Coard, a 6 ft., 1 in., guard from DeMatha High School in Washington, D.C.

The UNL rowing team travels to Madison, Wis., Saturday for the Midwest Championship Sprints.

Husker Coach Joe Cipriano has signed a third basketball

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Other sports languish in football's shadow

Whenever one mentions Husker sports, the one that usually is talked about is football. And much of the tremendous success and interest in that sport on the UNL campus can be attributed to one man, former coach and current athletic director, Bob Devaney.

Now Devaney has found that the football mania he helped create has led to problems for him in his role of athletic director. It seems that the overwhelming interest in football has helped push other sports into relative obscurity.

Despite free admission, crowds at wrestling meets this winter were virtually negligible, for example. One wonders what would happen if admission were charged.

Even when NCAA basketball semifinalist Kansas University journeyed to the Coliseum, the Huskers were unable to draw a capacity crowd.

Devaney said a correlation exists between the success of a sport and the interest the University shows in that sport. Besides bringing in revenue, the successful sports perpetuate their success by attracting the better athletes.

Devaney gave as examples the wrestling programs at Iowa State University and the two conference schools in Oklahoma. Perennial national powerhouses, they bring in about as much money as basketball at those schools.

dennis onnen press box review

UNL is among the small percentage of schools in the country that shows a profit from its athletic program. What is surprising is that football is the only one of the 11 sports which shows a profit. The excess revenue from that sport is used to support the other, less fortunate ones.

Despite UNL's good financial position, Devaney is quick to point out that money does not necessarily lead to a successful program. Baseball recruiting is hurt by the climate, for example. An athlete, even if offered a scholarship, might prefer to go to a school where warmer weather prevails; The team thus must rely generally on players from Nebraska. Only four members of this year's team are from out of state.

While the use of native Nebraskans hurts baseball because of the relatively weak high school programs, other sports fare somewhat better. The golf and gymnastics teams rely almost entirely on in state players, but they are competitive because of the good high school programs. Both finished second in the conference last year.

"We try to keep comparable with other schools in the conference," Devaney said when discussing the offering of scholarships at UNL. "Our sports are close to what the limit is."

Full-time scholarships in each sport are restricted in both the number offered per year and the number of athletes on scholarships at one time. Yearly quotas range from three for golf and tennis to 30 for football.

Each year the Big 9 awards an All-Sports Championship. Last year the Huskers finished fourth, and they occupy that position after the completion of seven sports so far this year. They could very easily drop lower after spring sports are completed.

The new Fieldhouse undoubtedly will help increase interest in Husker sports and help propel UNL farther up the All-Sports ladder. But as Devaney pointed out, Husker fans shouldn't expect immediate national champions in every sport.

"It (interest) has to come over a period of time," he said. "We have to be realistic."