



Allen's 'monster' will attack ISU

By Scott Jones

UNL gymnastics coach Francis Allen may feel a little like Dr. Frankenstein this week.

He will unleash his "monsters" on defending Big 8 Conference champion Iowa State University (ISU) Saturday at 2 p.m. at the Coliseum.

Allen has taken a group of second-hand parts, unheralded Nebraska high school gymnasts almost exclusively from Omaha or Lincoln, and assembled them into a monstrously good gymnastics team. A fifth-place national ranking attests to that.

But Allen is having trouble controlling his creation. Sometimes it goes too fast and burns itself out, and at other times it stalls.

Last year, for example, the monster devoured Southern Illinois University and set a national scoring record against Oklahoma University but was less than perfect two weeks later in the Big 8 meet.

Then Tuesday, Allen's creation backfired against Louisiana State, losing 210.55-209.15 to the third-ranked Tigers. Allen said he'd like to put a button marked "steady acceleration" on the monster.

"I think our secret is going to be progressively improving meet after meet," he said. "If we perform like we did against Southern Illinois last year, we can be national champs."

"I don't know what happened at LSU. It was like Colorado (an upset loss) last year," Allen said. "We just didn't do a very good job."

If possible, Allen would program his creation to aim for the Big 8 meet and work through dual meets, even Saturday's matchup with rival ISU.

He may have a difficult time holding the 12-headed monster back Saturday, however. Nebraska hasn't beaten the top ranked Cyclones in a dual since 1963-64, including a 214-207.65 loss Oct. 24, 1975.

One of the vital parts of Allen's creation, all-arounder Gene Mackie, said Nebraska still has something to prove Saturday.

"We have to prove to everyone that we can beat them," the Omaha senior said. "We really are a better team than Iowa State. Everybody (on the team) really feels that way."

"When I came here five years ago we could barely beat Kansas," Mackie said. "Now we're right there, and if we could just get a little bit of impetus, we'll be at the top."



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