

sports



Photo by Ted Kirk

UNL gymnast Patty Carmichael

Lady gymnasts confirm 'best team around' view

By Paul Huscher

UNL womens gymnastics Coach Judy Schalk said her team has a good chance to repeat as conference champs at this year's Big Eight Conference meet in Boulder Saturday.

"We're going to win the Big Eight this year," Schalk said. "I have the best team around."

Four other schools in the conference besides NU have women's gymnastic teams, including Kansas, Oklahoma State, Colorado and Iowa State. All will compete Saturday.

"Colorado and Oklahoma State are scoring very comparable to us," she said. "But we have more depth than they do."

"We have three good all-arounders while the other teams only have one or two," she said.

Those Husker all-arounders are Peggy Liddick, Patty Carmichael and Renee Reisdorff. The three finished first, second and third respectively in last week's meet against Kansas in Lincoln.

Carmichael agrees

Carmichael, a junior, said she also thinks Nebraska has an excellent chance to win the conference meet.

"We have three strong all-arounders and if everyone does well I think we'll win it," she said.

She said she agreed with Schalk that OSU and CU will give the Huskers their toughest competition in the much improved Big Eight conference.

"I think the talent is better throughout the conference this year," she said.

Carmichael placed first in the OSU-NU dual earlier this year edging out former high school teammate Barbie Cantwell.

"It was the first time I beat her

(Cantwell) and I was really happy about that," she said.

NU's other all-arounders include senior Liddick and freshman Reisdorff who graduated in January from Bryan High School in Omaha.

Good addition

"Renee has been an excellent addition to the team," Schalk said. "It's usually close between Carmichael and Reisdorff in the all-around."

"And I'm really pleased with Liddick's scores which have been steadily improving," Schalk said.

The Huskers, 3-2-1 in dual meets, also have three strong specialists on the squad.

They are Marcia Austin on the uneven bars and the vault, Vicky Harvey in the floor exercise and balance beam and Crissy Robertson in the vault.

"In each event, the top four scores are used and in all cases I have four strong competitors," she said.

"Vaulting is definitely our strongest event," Schalk said. "We have one of the best vaulting teams around."

"The balance beam may be our weakest event because of our inconsistency," she added.

Optimistic attitude

Austin, from Lincoln High School, said she also is optimistic about this weekend's meet and that the attitude of the whole team is good.

"We really think we can win it," Austin said. "Everybody's working hard and we don't have any major injuries."

"Being a freshman, I haven't seen many of the teams, but the upperclassmen on the teams are very confident about the meet," she said.

Liddick has been a major factor of the team's success, according to Austin.

"Peggy is a senior and she is having a great year," she said.

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Senior miler's winning streak writes UNL track history

By Jack Schockley

Mark Fluitt is on a hot streak.

Within three weeks, the Husker senior has:

- broken the school indoor record in the mile.
- qualified for the NCAA indoor track championships in Detroit March 9-10.
- run three of the fastest indoor miles ever recorded by a Nebraska runner.

Fluitt established a Nebraska school record Jan. 27 when he ran a 4:05.56 mile in a triangular meet against Doane and Nebraska Wesleyan which qualified him for the NCAA national meet.

In a dual against Kansas Feb. 3, Fluitt ran a 4:06.3 mile, equaling the old mark held by Lynn Hall. In last Saturday's Husker Invitational, he anchored Nebraska's winning distance medley relay by running a 4:08 final leg.

Fluitt, it would appear, is emerging as one of the premier milers in Nebraska track and field history.

But it hasn't always been easy for the 5-foot, 135-pounder.

Fluitt came to Nebraska after a fine track career at Bellevue High School where he was a state champion in the 880 and runner-up in the mile.

His college track career, however, had a less-than-auspicious beginning.

"I only ran in one meet my whole freshman year," Fluitt said, "and that was the first indoor meet of the season."

He said personal problems, injuries and the difficulty of making the transition from high school to college track hindered his performance as a freshman.

"My best time in the mile my freshman year was 4:33, and I was running that in the 10th grade," he said.

"I guess you could say I was kind of undisciplined when I was a freshman, and some people didn't take me seriously."

But after his disappointing freshman season, Fluitt resolved to apply himself.

Fluitt ran 4:08.7 outdoor mile as a sophomore, had a personal best of 4:13.1 in the indoor mile last season, and has surfaced this year as one of the Big Eight's top miler.

"I feel like I'm only a junior," he said. "It feels like I started my college career when I was a sophomore."

Fluitt's accomplishments in the mile have come in spite of a lack of great speed.

"I only run about a 51- or 52-second quarter (mile)," he said. "I think the fastest I've ever run was a 50-point something in a workout two years ago."

Fluitt said he set an indoor season goal of 4:05. I thought it would be easily in reach because I'd been running all summer. I'm just surprised I got it in the first meet."

Fluitt called breaking the four-minute barrier in the outdoor mile "a realistic goal."

"It's something that's in the back of every miler's mind. I have the potential," he said.

But he played down the significance of the four-minute mile.

"Mainly, it's a psychological barrier," he said. "People for so long have had so much respect for the four-minute mile, but it's really an obsolete time - it's no longer world class."

Running a sub-four-minute mile is still one of his objectives for the outdoor season.

"Since it's my last season, I have a three fold goal," Fluitt said.

"The first is to break four minutes in the mile. If I do that, two other things would probably come about from that."

"One would be breaking the school record (which is 4:00.2 by Bob Unger, who is now a Nebraska assistant coach) and the other would be winning the Big Eight."

Fluitt said he feels the Huskers, who are unbeaten in indoor competition, have a good chance to win the Big Eight indoor championship.

"I've been gearing up for indoors all season long because I felt we had a shot at the Big Eight title," he said.

An outdoor championship is also within reach, he added.

"It's there," he said. "If everybody works to their potential, we can win it. We had the Big Eight nearly won last year and we just gave it away."

Fluitt praised NU's track program and the coaching philosophy of Coach Frank Sevigne.

"One good thing about Frank is he treats people like adults. Some guys want their coaches to pamper them, but Frank won't do that. He treats all his athletes like mature men," he said.

Fluitt added that he is glad he decided to come to Nebraska instead of the other schools that offered him track

scholarships.

"I had scholarship offers to UNO, here and Drake," he said.

"At one time, I was set to go to UNO. But I wouldn't trade coming here for anything in the world."



Photo by Jerry McBride

Senior Mark Fluitt