

## sports

## Huskers, Tigers at crossroads

By Jack Shockley

When Nebraska's and Missouri's basketball teams meet Saturday night in the Bob Devaney Sports Center, it will be a game that both teams can ill-afford to lose.

A couple of weeks ago, both schools were near the top of the Big Eight standings, Missouri with a 5-2 conference record and Nebraska at 5-3.

But the Tigers dropped three of their next four games, plummeting to fourth place, while the Huskers have lost three straight and are now tied for fifth place with Iowa State.

What just two weeks ago would have been a match-up of two of the conference's leaders now will be a game between two teams struggling to finish in the upper-division of Big Eight.

Teams finishing in the top four spots in the league's final standings will be awarded home-court sites for first round games in the Big Eight post-season tournament.

### At the crossroads

With just three conference games left, both teams badly need a win to stay in contention for the home-court berth in round one of the post-season tourney, Nebraska coach Joe Cipriano said.

"We are at a crossroads in the season where we need to make things happen for ourselves," Cipriano said. "Our game Saturday will be a make or break game for both us and Missouri."

Nebraska Assistant Coach Moe Iba put things in similar perspective.

"Both teams realize the importance of the game, and our players realize that it's exceptionally important for us," he said.

A lack of offense has contributed to Nebraska's three-game tailspin. In their last three games, the Huskers have

managed just 46, 46 and 58 points, respectively, in losses to Kansas State, Iowa State and Oklahoma.

### Missing rebounds

But Iba sees a rebounding deficiency as the source of the Huskers' problems.

"Our main problem all season has been rebounding. We haven't been going after the ball and it's something we're going to have to do something about (against Missouri)," he said.

In their 79-58 loss to Oklahoma Wednesday, the Huskers were out-rebounded, 41-22. The Sooners brought down 14 offensive boards, compared to Nebraska's six, and repeatedly had second and third shots at the basket.

Despite Nebraska's frustration in its recent games, Iba said a sense of optimism still pervades the team.

"I think our people feel we still have the best team in the conference," he said. "I think they all have the attitude that by playing well in our three remaining games, we have a good chance for the home-court advantage in the tournament."

### Games even up

If Nebraska beats Missouri Saturday, and should the two teams then tie for fourth, the Huskers would be awarded the opening round home site by virtue of beating the Tigers in two of three games.

The two teams have met twice already this season, and have split, with Nebraska winning 58-56 in overtime in the Holiday Tournament, and Missouri taking a 76-60 decision in Columbia.

In the event of a fourth-place tie between Missouri and Nebraska, the outcome of Saturday's game could tip the scales, Iba said.

"It's a situation where it's sure to be a hard-fought contest," he said.

Tipoff is set for 7:35 p.m.

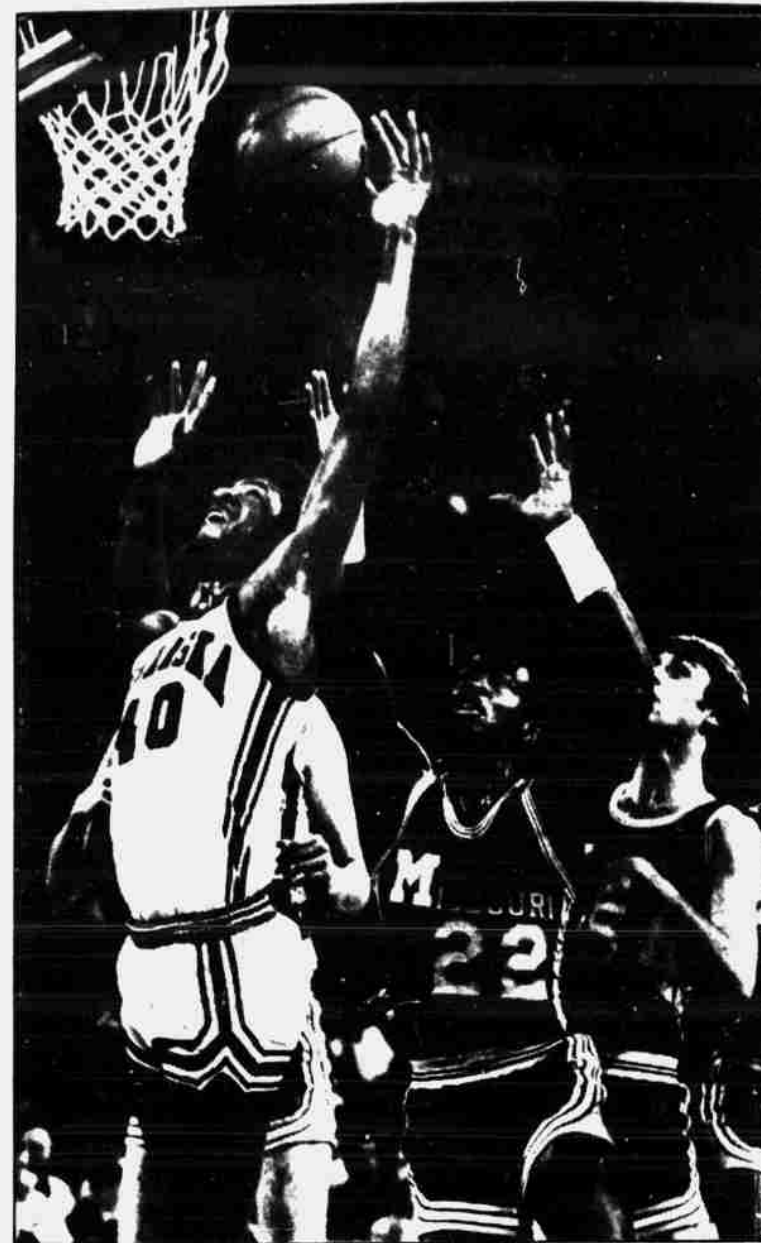


Photo by Ted Kirk

Andre Smith will lead Husker charge against Missouri.

## Newest NU-OU shoot-out gymnastics, not football

By Sara Martens

The coaches may disagree on the merits of the teams, but they agree that the meet between number one rated Nebraska and number two Oklahoma will be a showcase for some of the best gymnastics in the country.

Four of the top five gymnasts in the country will be performing when the teams meet at 7:30 in the Bob Devaney Sports Complex Track Friday.

Bart Connor and Mike Wilson from Ok-

lahoma and Huskers Jim Hartung and Larry Gerard currently are rated in the top five.

"It will be an exciting meet. Anytime you get Connor, Hartung and Gerard together, you see some of the best the country has to offer," Nebraska Coach Francis Allen said.

Oklahoma Coach Paul Ziert agreed with Allen, saying the meet should provide some of the best gymnastics in the nation.

### Style difference

Ziert said the major difference between the two top teams is one of style.

"The thing we notice is that the Nebraska team is much cruder in its execution. It's for the more football, physically orientated judge," he said.

"If the judge looks for technical, artistic routine it's in our favor."

The meet will offer both sides, with the outcome depending on the judge's taste, Ziert said.

Allen, however, disagreed with Ziert.

"The only Oklahoma gymnast with any resemblance of execution is Connor," Allen said. "Ziert thinks his whole team has good execution because Connor does."

"That's like me saying my team has big ears just because Hartung has big ears," he said.

Allen and Ziert also disagreed on how important injuries will be in determining the outcome of the meet.

### Injured Okie

Mike Wilson, Oklahoma's number two all rounder will only compete in the pommel horse and parallel bars due to a knee injury, Ziert said.

"It is impossible for me to imagine how our team will do without Wilson," Ziert said. "We have a number of young specialists that should fill in well."

Allen said the loss of Wilson will have a great effect on the meet.

"Oklahoma won't beat us without Wil-

son unless something drastic happens," Allen said.

Ziert said the meet will be close, basing his prediction on the results of the Jan. 27 triangular at Ames, Iowa, which included NU, OU and Iowa State.

"Nebraska performed very well at Iowa State. We had our worst meet ever and were only .95 points behind them," he added.

Ziert said Nebraska does have an advantage due to its experience and the home team advantage.

The meet will not be held in the Sports Complex Arena as usual because of the Nebraska State High School Wrestling Tournament.

"We would rather have the main arena. The lighting is different and the floor is harder in the track," Allen said.

"We want to put on a show that will be fun to attend so the fans will keep coming back," he said. "The track will not help create that atmosphere," he said.

Allen said the state meet also caused the team to be locked out of the gym Thursday.

"The number one team in the country was locked out of the gym. I hope for some prime time next year for the sake of good gymnastics and a good team," he said.

## Meet to 'tune-up' top teams

By Kirk Wolgamott

A "tune-up" is how the coaches are describing the men's triangular track meet Saturday between Wichita State, Colorado State and UNL.

According to Colorado State's head coach Jerry Quiller, the meet will offer some top competition which is vital to the athletes trying to qualify for the NCAA national meet this March.

"We are looking to qualify Donnie Hill in the 60-yard dash. He is undefeated this season, but with his 6J time, he is still one tenth of a second off the qualifying standard," Quiller said. "This meet should offer some super teams that could help us qualify."

Along with Hill, CSU also features Jon Sinclair, who is undefeated in the two mile run, Manuel Miranda in the mile run and Elliot Drumright a two-miler who has been highly praised by Quiller this season.

"We are going to try to run under 4:04 in the mile," Quiller said. "Running in the mountains with the different altitude

makes the times different and hard to predict."

### Praise for Poehling

"At the beginning of the season, I thought we were going to be able to handle (NU's middle distance runner Scott) Poehling, but now we have people hurt and it looks like we can't get to him. He's a great runner. I'd like to have a team of guys like him," Quiller added.

Quiller said Hill should be able to run with NU sprinter Randy Brooks.

"That should be a good race. Very interesting to say the least," he said.

Wichita State also sports their share of 60-year sprinters.

Norris Donnell who has been clocked at 6.2, Mike Patton who has been clocked at 6.3 and Alfred Mitchell has been timed at 6.4.

"That will be a good running event. All the people are great and the competition will be fierce," Wichita State coach Herm Wilson said.

"This is more or less a tune up meet for us before

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Photo by Mark Billingsley

UNL gymnast Chuck Chmelka