

sports



UNL gymnast Jim Hartung.

Photo by Mark Billingsley

Close struggle expected for Big 8 gymnasts meet

By Jack Shockley

Nebraska's gymnastics team, unbeaten and ranked number one nationally, will have another opportunity to flex its muscles when it competes in the Big Eight Gymnastics Championships at Oklahoma University this weekend.

And Coach Francis Allen thinks his squad is entering the meet in a sound frame of mind.

"I was pleased that in the last meet against Louisiana State University, that all four of our all-arounders hit their peak," he said. "In fact, they've been getting better every week and I don't expect this weekend to be any different."

All-arounders Jim Hartung, Larry Gerard and Chuck Chmelka scored career highs in leading Nebraska to a 222.80 - 211.75 win last weekend over LSU. Mark Williams, NU's other all around performer, also turned in a solid performance in the LSU meet, helping the Huskers set a school scoring mark.

NCAA rule change

Under a new NCAA ruling, this year's Big Eight gymnastics champion will not automatically qualify for the national championships, as in the past. The meet is for the conference title only—the Midwest Regional, March 23-24 at Colorado State University will decide the NCAA's Midwest entries.

But Allen said that does not diminish the meet's significance in the eyes of his team.

"Even though the champ won't qualify for the NCAA, we very badly want that Big Eight trophy," he said.

"We are not going into this meet

thinking it doesn't mean anything, because it means a lot to us.

"If you win the Big Eight, you're one of the best in the country. We're already number one, and now we have the chance to prove to everybody why we are ranked first."

Nebraska, fourth-ranked Iowa State and host Oklahoma, rated second nationally, are expected to go neck-and-neck for the team title.

Upper hand

Nebraska, however, may hold the upper hand.

NU defeated both Oklahoma and Iowa State in a triangular in Ames, and beat CU, the defending national champion, in a home dual.

The Huskers, though, will be without floor exercise and vault performer Steve Elliott. Elliott, who is also a diver on the swimming team, won the Big Eight three-meter diving championship last week and will compete in a NCAA regional swimming and diving meet this weekend.

But Richard Brindisi, who has been hobbled by a foot injury he received in the Oklahoma dual, is expected to be at full strength for the meet, Allen said.

Action will begin Friday afternoon in the Lloyd Noble Arena, and will conclude Saturday evening.

Probable NU performers

All around—Larry Gerard, Mark Williams, Chuck Chmelka, Jim Hartung
 Floor Exercise—Richard Brindisi
 Pommel Horse—Terry Nowles, Steve Todd
 Rings—Brian Austin, Kevin Dunkley
 Parallel Bars—Brindisi, Kirk Fridrich
 High Bar—Brindisi, Fridrich

One eye on snowshoes, ballplayers yearn for outdoors

By Sara Martens

The sun was shining, the snow melting and it looked like spring and baseball both were around the corner. That was last week, before a four-inch snowfall on Saturday and alternative days of warm and cold weather this week.

"We might be wearing snow shoes," Coach John Sanders said, "but I like our chances to get out and get something done next week."

"Getting something done" includes playing a ten-game home schedule before the Huskers leave on a two-week tour of California and Hawaii.

UNL is scheduled to open the home season Saturday at 1:30 against Missouri Western, but the team is in a holding pattern, not sure of who or when they will play depending on the weather, Sanders said.

The weather also has hampered construction of a bleacher and concession area at Buck Beltzer field.

Sanders said he expects the project, with the exception of landscaping and some finishing, to be ready if the Huskers play Saturday.

Boost pride

The stands will help in recruiting players and fans, Sanders said, and will boost player pride.

"You come out here and football is everything," said freshman Mike Vojtesak. The stands will help motivate the team to perform for themselves and for the crowd, the Joliet, Ill. native said.

"There are not that many places in California that are this nice," said UCLA transfer Ray Tromba. "They cut down the wind, which helps the pitchers and they'll get more people out to watch. All athletes are entertainers, and we're the best show in town," Tromba said.

The home schedule would give the team a chance to get some of the kinks out before a road trip where they will face some of the best baseball schools in the country,

Sanders said. Pepperdine, and California State Universities at Fullerton, and Long Beach are on schedule in California. The Huskers will also meet the Japanese National Championship team in a tournament in Hawaii.

"We would like to be able to say we've played before we meet the top teams in the nation. But if we don't play before we go we will be eager and enthusiastic about playing," he said.

Climbing the walls

The team has been practicing inside the North Fieldhouse since late October. The outfielders have been outside for about one and a half hours since then, all in the last two weeks.

"We feel that we don't lose any time inside. We get things done and simulate the outside as much as possible but it's no substitution," Sanders said.

The indoor workout area is large enough to play a complete infield and two batting cages.

The indoor conditions are not much of a problem for pitchers and infielders, due to the indoor turf, but they say they are anxious to get outside.

If the team plays Saturday, Sanders said either Tromba or junior college transfer Jim McManus will be the starting pitcher.

The depth of the pitching staff is one advantage this team has over last year's, Sanders said. Nine pitchers, including one left-hander will make up this year's staff as opposed to five last year.

Sanders has 12 lettermen returning from last year's 36-20 team. Every player, with the exception of two lettermen, have collegiate playing experience, and the freshmen are playing more like sophomores or juniors, Sanders said.

Tracksters mass talents for relay attack

By Mark Getzfred

Nebraska's track team hopes to put its best foot forward this Friday and Saturday at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships in Detroit, Mich.

Although the Cornhuskers qualified individuals in 11 different events, the team will emphasize the mile and two-mile relay events. Only three individuals will participate in individual events, said assistant coach Dick Railsback.

Randy Raymond, a Fremont native, will compete in the pole vault. Raymond cleared 16-6 in the Big Eight Indoor championships for a second place finish.

Railsback said Raymond has improved tremendously throughout the year. He continues to improve as his technique improves, Railsback said.

Senior Doug Phelps from Hastings will compete in the high jump. Phelps also

finished second in the Big Eight tournament with a jump of 7-1.

Timing will be the key to Phelps' performance, Railsback said. Because he is attending physical therapy school in Omaha, he hasn't had the practice he needs, Railsback added.

"He is just learning right now where he is in the air," Railsback said.

Probable runners

Randy Brooks, a sophomore from Omaha, will compete in the 60-yd. high hurdles. Brooks, along with Ray Mahoney, Pat McKenzie and Everton DaCosta will probably be Nebraska's entry in the mile relay, said head Coach Frank Sevigne.

Scott Poehling, Mark Fluitt, Brian Dunigan and Paul Downes comprise the two-mile relay team, he added.

"We feel like we have put together some very good relays for the indoor. We won't be exactly sure what everyone will run until right before the meet," Sevigne said.

"I feel that most people are in a position where they can contribute the most," Sanders said.

Two new players have been added to the infield, while others have been moved to different positions.

Sophomore Jeff Hunter is scheduled to start at third, replacing graduate Doug Miller. Junior Kelly Combs, a transfer from UCLA, will be the other newcomer at short stop.

Need sun

Pete O'Brien, last year's leading hitter returns at first, with team co-captains John Russo and Val Primante at second and catcher.

The Husker outfield will include Stan Haas at left, Steve Oakley at right and Joe Scherger in center.

Scheduling of the events at the meet and the competition was the reason for only competing in the relays, Railsback said.

"We're going after events that we feel through past performances, scheduling of the meet and with the athletes we have, we have the best chances of doing well in," Railsback said. "We felt we had a better chance of scoring well in the mile and two-mile relays."

Emphasizing the relays will mean Poehling will by-pass the 880-yard dash. Poehling holds the Nebraska record in the event and has the best time in the Big Eight this season with 1:48.97.

Ray Mahoney will skip the 440-yard dash and Mark Fluitt will by-pass both the 1,000-yard run and the mile run. Nebraska also will not run their distance medley because other schools will be loading the relay with their best runners, Railsback said.

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