

# Wrestler Whitehead hopes for higher Big Eight finish



Photo by Tom Gessner

Husker wrestler Rick Whitehead expresses the look it takes to get out of Colorado State wrestler Steve Rygen's hold. Whitehead won the 126-pound match by decision.

By Joni Kramer

Being small hasn't kept Rick Whitehead from being a top Husker athlete.

Whitehead, a sophomore 126-pound class wrestler with a 10-2 record this year, said he didn't have many options in choosing his forte.

"I got into wrestling because I was too small for other sports," Whitehead said.

A little family push didn't hurt either. "All my brothers wrestled, so I never thought about doing anything else," the Griswold, Iowa native said.

Last year Whitehead finished fourth in the Big Eight, but said he is optimistic for a higher finish this year in the 134-pound class.

"I feel better when I weigh more, because I'm eating more and I'm stronger." A few more pounds brings a bit more confidence, too, he added.

### 126 pounds

Last week against Colorado State, Northwest Missouri State and Northern Illinois, Whitehead wrestled at 126 pounds because the team was low in that weight class. He will challenge for the 134-pound varsity spot this week.

Whitehead said Head Coach Bob Fehrs was one reason he came to UNL.

"My high school coaches said he (Fehrs) was good, and when I came down here, I was impressed with both him and the facilities," Whitehead said.

In addition to team workouts, Whitehead works out on his own, running and lifting weights to keep in shape for each meet.

### Key attitude

However, Whitehead said he believes mental as well as physical preparation are important in wrestling. Personally, he said, mental attitude is a key in his wrestling performance.

"I go as hard as I can for the whole match," said Whitehead. "The confidence you have in yourself is also very important. When you're afraid of losing, that's when you will lose," he added.

Whitehead said he has high hopes for the Cornhusker wrestlers.

"We've turned things around this year, and next year will be even better. It takes good individual performance to build good team wrestling," he said. Whitehead added that a person has to win for himself as well as for the team, and with this attitude, it is possible to maintain a winning team.

## Basketball...

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Sharing the other forward spot opposite Guy are 6-8 junior Johnny Crawford and 6-7 sophomore David Magley. Crawford is averaging 6.7 points a game coming off the bench while Magley, a starter, is scoring 5.1 points a game.

At center, 6-9 senior Chester Giles is the starter with a 5.8 scoring average, but 6-10 junior Art Housey may see a lot of playing time. Housey, a junior college transfer, came off the bench to score 10 points and eight rebounds in the second half in the Missouri win.

### Physical game

Iba said he expects it to be a physical game. "They're (Kansas) going to go to the boards very, very hard," Iba said. "We're going to have to get good position under the boards and make sure everyone takes care of their responsibility," he said.

KU has not beaten the Huskers at Lincoln since the 1974-75 season when they beat Nebraska 79-77 in double overtime in the old Coliseum.

"Nebraska isn't any harder to play at than any other place in the Big Eight," Owens said. "It's just that Nebraska has played well against us."

"Year in and year out, I think Joe (Cipriano) and his staff has the best coached team in the conference, and this year is no different."

Owens also had praise for Husker center Andre Smith. "I think he's an excellent player, one of the best big men in the conference," Owens said. "He hurt us real bad in Lincoln last year and is someone we need to slow down."

Iba said the Huskers will go with the same line-up he went with against Missouri, but added that 6-2 freshman Greg Downing "will play a lot" at forward. Starting forward, Tim West still is out with a severely sprained ankle and might not be back for another two or three weeks.

Tonight's game is set to begin at 8:10 instead of the usual 7:35 starting time. The game also will be televised regionally by cable station KBMA. The Husker jayvees will face the Kearney State jayvees at 5:45 p.m.

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