

sports

Husker gymnasts blow away Sooners 280.15-273.

By Kim Hachiya

In gymnastics, seven points is a blow-out, and by that standard, Nebraska blew away the Oklahoma Sooners Sunday afternoon 280.15-273.00.

Senior gymnast Chuck Chmelka tallied his best-ever all-around score, a 55.75 to take second in the all-around competition to teammate Phil Cahoy's 55.85.

"I'm pretty psyched right now," Chmelka said after the meet. "This is by far the best I've ever done. I beat my best by over a point."

Chmelka said both head coach Francis Allen and assistant coach Jim Howard have been pushing him extremely hard this last week in preparation for the meet.

"I'd been having a lot of screwups, so they really pushed me," Chmelka said. "I guess it's starting to pay off."

Allen said Chmelka's good performance was not unexpected.

"I knew he had it in him," Allen said. "We just couldn't get it out of him. At the beginning of the season, he was the number five all-around, now he's number two."

"This is the level Chuck should have been at all year. I'm glad to see he's finally getting there."

"Chuck puts his time in, he trains hard. He just doesn't have some of the showmanship some of the others have. But he's obviously getting there."

Allen said Chmelka's performance indicated the depth the Huskers have this year. With all-arounder Hartung competing in only four events, and Scott Johnson

competing in only two, the Husker's still never trailed the Sooners, whose star all-arounder Bart Conner competed in only two events.

"You gotta have kids in there backing you up," Allen said. "You just can't win a national championship without depth."

Johnson competed on the rings and parallel bars despite a knee-high cast on his ankle. Allen said he entered Johnson because he adds "dazzle and sparks" to the team, plus competition would keep him sharper and aid his recovery.

Johnson said performing with the cast was not as difficult as it would appear to be, adding that it actually helped him on the parallel bars. He said it hampered his dismounts however.

Nebraska swept every event, with Jim Mikus winning the high bar with a 9.7, Phil Cahoy taking the parallel bars with a 9.65, Steve Elliott winning both the vault and the floor exercise with scores of 9.8 and 9.75.

"They (OU) don't perform or train with the kind of aerial skills our gymnasts have," Allen said. "They really need to be on balance to hit well. I'll take my kind of gymnasts any day. They're powerful and they're not afraid to show off."

Hartung said although the win was a good one, he hoped to win the Big Eight Championships in Norman, Okla.

"I want to win in Oklahoma, just because it's in Oklahoma," he said. "That will be especially satisfying. OU is gonna be tough. They have a lot of potential, even though they didn't really show it today."

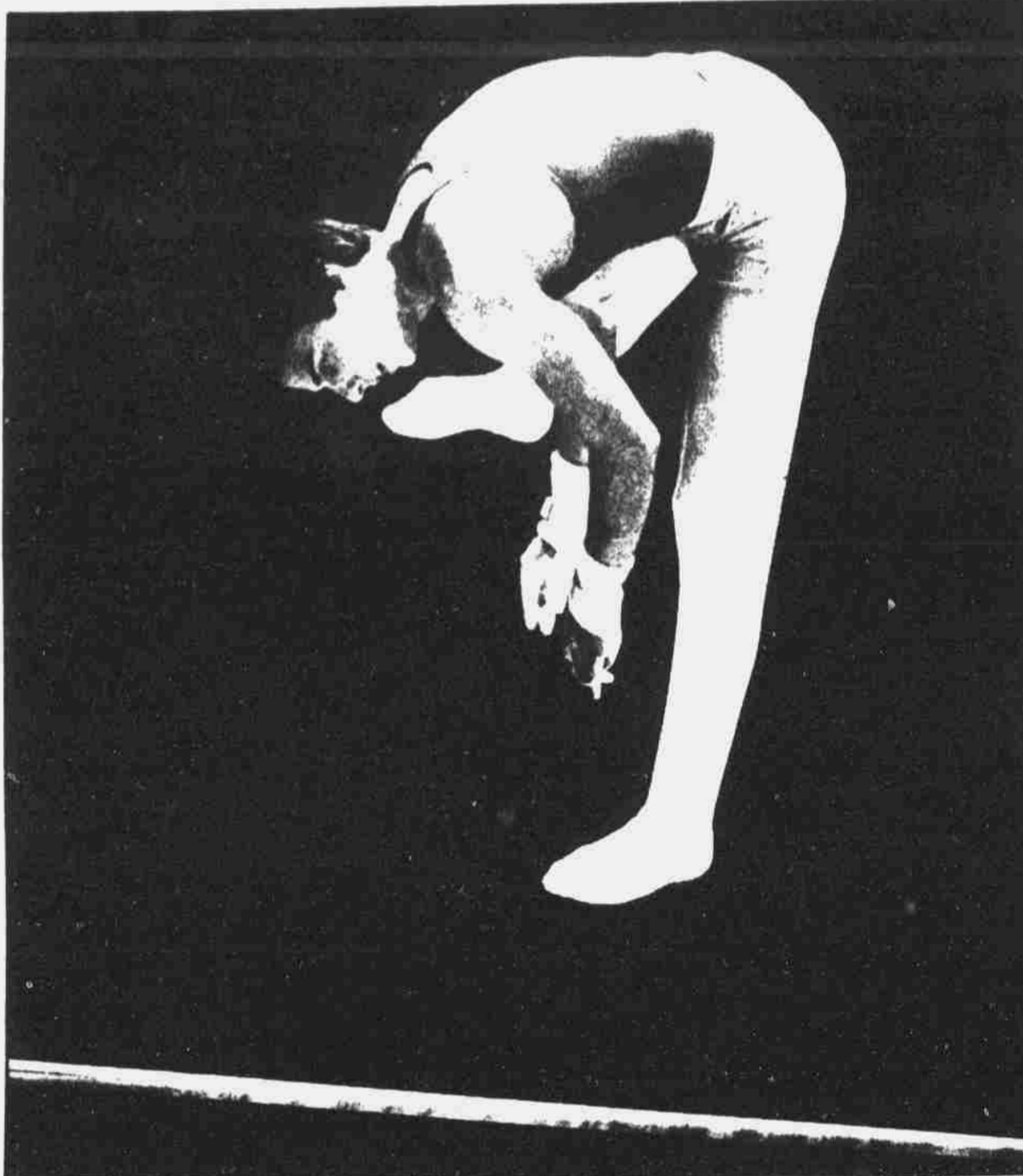


Photo by Mark Billingsley

Chuck Chmelka

"They didn't really give the meet away, but it kind of looked like it sometimes. If they made a mistake, it was like they didn't care, they didn't fight to st

the routine. You can't win doing that," Hartung said.

"The OU gymnastics team is just a whole different breed of people."

Post-season hot streaks weaken NCAA play-offs

Who will represent the Big Eight in the NCAA basketball play-offs? It will all come down to whoever is playing best the first week in March.

The Big Eight regular season champion, be it Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas State or Kansas, will have little, if any, advantage of the other three first division finishers. They will all have a first-round, home-court advantage in the conference post-season tournament. So the real challenge during the regular season is merely to finish in the top four.

It should not be this way. The regular season champion should automatically represent the Big Eight in the NCAA's. A post-season tournament opens the way for a weaker, less consistent team to grab all the marbles by getting hot for a week or two. Several conferences have such tournaments, and every year a longshot emerges from one of them and steals the NCAA tournament bid that automatically goes to the conference champion.

UNL tied for 1st after Mizzou loss

Jack Moore led Nebraska with 16 points, followed by Kenny Walton with 10 and Smith with eight.

Missouri, Nebraska and Kansas State are all tied for the conference lead with 8-4 records. The Huskers will put their share of the lead on the line Wednesday when they play at Kansas. Also Wednesday, Missouri will play at Colorado and Kansas State will host Iowa State.

The Nebraska basketball team dropped into a three-way tie for the Big Eight lead with a 55-45 loss to Missouri Saturday in Columbia, Mo.

For the first 38½ minutes, it looked like Nebraska might have been on its way to its first victory in Columbia in seven years.

With 1:34 remaining in the game, Husker center Andre Smith found himself open under the basket and went up for a lay-in. Smith was called for traveling, though, and the basket that would have narrowed the Missouri lead to two was nullified. After the traveling call, the Tigers raced for eight unanswered points to account for the 10 point win.

Missouri's Curtis Berry may have been the biggest difference in the game. Berry led the Tigers with 22 points. He played only six minutes and was held scoreless when the Huskers defeated the Tigers 66-53 in Lincoln last month.

I grant that the tournament format usually makes things more exciting at the end of the year, especially for teams at the bottom of the conference. The main reason for the tournament, I imagine, is the extra money generated by the large crowds at Kansas City's Kemper Arena for the semifinals and finals.

One of the most exciting tournaments in the country is the annual Atlantic Coast Conference post-season war. It has produced its share of upsets, which is not necessarily bad, but the regular season champion always seems to lose something in the deal. It has been said the ACC teams, usually do poorly in the NCAAs because they are mentally and physically drained, having just survived going through the wringer. This goes for any at-large teams chosen from the conference, as well as the champion.

This logic could be extended to the Big Eight, but Missouri's upset of Notre Dame last March coupled with Kansas State's wipeout of Arkansas and narrow loss to eventual champ Louisville tend to dispel that. Maybe the Big Eight is almost as good as the Big Ten, just like Johnny Orr says.

The Big Ten still is ahead of the Big Eight when it

Husker women tie for division lead; qualify for tournament with victory

By Cindy Gardner

The Nebraska women's basketball team has qualified for the Region VI Tournament and remains tied for the top spot in its division following a 68-64 win against St. Louis University Saturday night at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"I was pleased with our defensive effort," Matsuhara said. "We got a lot of free throws, but this is the first game I can remember where we haven't had anyone in real serious foul trouble."

The Billikens committed 24 team fouls and hit four of nine from the line. The Huskers hit 18 of 30 charity tosses and committed 13 team fouls. All 28 of the Billikens' first-half points came from the field while seven of the Huskers' 29 came from the free-throw line.

Nebraska's Janet Smith opened the second half scoring and the Huskers seemed to be in control of the game until St. Louis' Caroline Drain became a one-woman scoring threat from the right side. With 2:56 remaining in the

comes to selecting its conference champion, though. They aren't afraid to let the regular season champion really be the champion. Maybe they lack an exciting post-season tournament, but right now their late season regular season games mean much more than the Big Eight's do.

Random Shots: The job Jerry Shoecraft and Kenny Walton did shutting down Iowa State's Robert Estes in last Wednesday's second half shows that even a red-hot

stryker

shooter can be rendered ineffective if he can't get the ball. Estes scored 18 points in the first half and none in the second. Often, teams with a hot shooter don't go to him often enough. The Cyclones played a part in keeping the ball out of Estes' hands, too.

Andre Smith is trying to finish his career with a bang. Smith has never been accused of overhustling, but he has dived onto the floor chasing a loose ball the last two home games.

game, Drain hit her 20th point on the evening and pulled her team to within five.

After Nebraska Coach Colleen Matsuhara called a time out to regroup her forces, St. Louis continued to answer the Huskers bucket-for-bucket and with 1:39 left in the contest the score was 64-63, Nebraska leading.

The key plays for the Huskers were provided by Ami Beiriger and Susie Wickham. With 1:12 showing on the clock, Beiriger hit a quick outside shot. A disoriented St. Louis squad made a poor down-court pass that was intercepted by the Huskers' Wickham, who was fouled in the process. Wickham hit both ends of the one-and-one situation to make the score 68-63.

Drain led all scorers with 22 points. Nebraska was led by Wickham with 17, and Beiriger and Smith had 14. Matsuhara had special praise for Wickham, who replaced Kathy Hagerstrom in the starting lineup for Saturday's game.

The Huskers travel to Texas next weekend for games against Texas A&M and Texas.