

# Wrestling coach delivers promised 3-year gains

Unlike a politician, Bob Fehrs does not easily forget his promises.

When he came to Nebraska three years ago to take over the foundering Husker wrestling program, Fehrs was not shy about saying he would make things better.

"Fehrs Promises to End Mat Drought," read the headline on an Omaha World-Herald story in April of 1978. Fehrs photocopied the story and has it pinned to his office bulletin board.

"When I arrived here," he said, "my overall goal was to have the program become competitive and respectable. At that time, it wasn't either one."

Three years later, Nebraska with a 17-4 dual record, has broken into the nation's top 20 for the first time in at least three decades. Fehrs said the last-rated Husker team, to the best of his knowledge, was the 1948 squad.

But Fehrs had goals more specific than becoming competitive and respectable.

"My short-term goal was to become competitive with everybody except the top 10 teams or so," he said. "I wanted to do that in three years, so we're operating about on the schedule I've anticipated."

In two more years, he said, Nebraska should be actively competing with every wrestling program in the nation.

"We're doing about as good as could reasonably be expected," he said. "Of course, we're never satisfied with where we are."

### No seniors

Not being one who is satisfied to rest on past accomplishments, Fehrs is looking for more results. One, for example, is producing an individual Big Eight champion, something the Huskers have not seen since 1962. It could be a bit much, at least this year, because half the Husker first-line wrestlers are freshmen and there are no seniors on the team.

With a squad that young, most coaches would be enthusiastic about the future of the program—Fehrs is.

This year's freshmen will have to be the base of the teams that could establish Nebraska as a national power Fehrs said, saying that they have been doing a good job so far, especially Jim and Bill Scherr and Mark Shortsleeve.

"I think they (the freshmen) should be able to contribute enough the next two years so that we can become competitive with anybody," he said. "Then, if we can recruit just three or four good individuals, we will really have a good chance. We don't need many more, since we aren't losing anybody this year. We just need more depth."

Nebraska faces tough recruiting competition because it is a member of one of the best wrestling conferences in the nation. The five Big Eight teams with wrestling programs—Iowa State, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Missouri and Nebraska—are all ranked in the top 20.

"Being in the Big Eight is a double-edged sword," Fehrs said.

Some recruits see wrestling at Nebraska as a challenge, with some of the best competition in the nation readily available, while others are lured by the established wrestling traditions of Iowa State, Oklahoma State and Oklahoma, he said.

### Tradition needed for recruits

In recruiting, tradition is the most important of all factors, Fehrs said.

"Tradition is more important than the facilities, more important than the coach's personality, or anything," he said.

The Huskers are competing against established nationwide networks of alumni, such as the situation Nebraska football enjoys. With only one full-time assistant, Kelly Ward, an Iowa State graduate and former NCAA champion, recruiting is demanding, both physically and time-wise, Fehrs said.

With limited outside financial support and minimal help from alumni, "it's a major task convincing them (recruits) Nebraska is the place for them," Fehrs said. That's why he formed the Nebraska Wrestling Booster Club when he arrived, and has been trying to expand it ever since, he said.

Money contributed by the wrestling boosters goes mostly toward sending Husker wrestlers to summer tournaments.

"As we get better, more interest will be shown," Fehrs said. "It's like anything else. When you really need the money to get established, it isn't there. When you're good, everybody wants to help out."

Fehrs is not reluctant to point out what he feels are needs in the program, and he does not hesitate in giving his honest opinion about his team.

"It's a definite advantage to be honest and set realistic goals," he said. "I'm different than a lot of other coaches in that if I think we're going to win, I say it."

One of Fehrs' realistic goals is to edge out Missouri for fourth place in the conference tournament this year. Not every day does a nationally ranked team find itself trying to get out of the conference cellar.

"We're working with young men, not children," Fehrs said. "If I told them we were going to go over and challenge for the Big Eight title, they'd look at me like I was crazy."



Photo by Mitch Hrdlicka

Nebraska wrestling Coach Bob Fehrs

# Men's track shines in 'tune-up' meet

If Nebraska's track "tune up" meet is any indication of how the Husker men will fare in this weekend's Big Eight Championships, Nebraska fans are in for a treat.

The Huskers won 10 of 15 events Saturday, easily surpassing second-place Drake with 38 points, Wichita State with 32½ points and Colorado State with 13.

Nebraska's Joe Staub improved his own school record set last week in the shot put with a 62-8 throw. Staub, who beat Wichita State's Phil Koonce by 10½ feet last week in the Husker Invitational, threw 60-11¼. He is the first UNL athlete to throw the shot more than 60 feet.

Randy Raymond won the pole vault at 17-1¼—a personal best for Nebraska's co-captain. Raymond has gone over 17 feet only three times in his career and Saturday he broke the barrier for the first time this season.

Mark Newton, who set a Big Eight record in the event with a vault of 17-6 last week, missed all three attempts at his opening height of 15-6. Newton spent

all of Friday night at airports across the country coming home from the Jack-In-The-Box meet at San Diego.

Raymond attempted 17-6¼, but missed on all three attempts.

Brian Dunnigan, who has qualified for the NCAA meet in the mile, Saturday qualified for nationals in the 1,000-yard run, although he placed second behind Drake's Chris Mares by 0.14 of a second. Dunnigan finished in 12:09.60.

Ricky Simmons won the 60-yard dash for Nebraska, posting the schools season's fastest time of :06.43, and Rodney Lewis, won the 300-yard dash in :31.73 for the Huskers.

Other Nebraska event winners included Charles Lawrence in the 440-yard dash with :48.62, Mike Cielocha in the 600-yard dash with 1:12.0, Everton DaCosta in the 880-yard run with 1:55.05, Randy Brooks in the 60-yard high hurdles with :07.49, Wade Harrington in the triple jump 49-6¼, and Jon Jones in the long jump with 23.9¼.

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