

sports

Hartung views victory as another rivalry battle

By Cindy Gardner

The duel is over, and now that the smoke has cleared, Jim Hartung reigns over the world of collegiate gymnastics. The Nebraska junior retained his all-around title by out scoring second place Bart Conner of Oklahoma 115.90 to 115.85 in the Thursday and Friday night

sessions of the NCAA Gymnastics Championships.

"This is just another battle in the war," Hartung said of his victory against Conner, "and the war is getting tighter and tighter. Bart will beat me again and I'll beat him again, but no one can take this one from me."

Hartung entered Friday evening's optional session with 20 of a point lead over Conner, but the final decision came down to his specialty event—the still rings. When the Huskers entered the arena to compete in the rings, all of Conner's optional scores had been posted and Hartung said when he looked at the board he really didn't think he had a chance.

However, according to Hartung, the Huskers have some fast adders.

"I think it was Jim Mikus who told me I needed a 9.75 to win," he said.

In order to help assure that 9.75 Hartung made a decision he said was against what he normally would do. Although he usually ends his routine with a full twisting

double-back somersault dismount, he opted for a somewhat more consistent ending Friday night. Hartung said the decision to conserve was his.

"Francis (Coach Allen) tells me to do what I want as long as I do good," Hartung said.

While Allen and the crowd anxiously waited to see if Hartung had made the right decision, Hartung said he had his eye on the judge's lips. After the first judge posted a 9.7, Hartung said he saw the other judge saw 9.8, and at that point he knew he had repeated as the all-around champion.

Winning the all-around title a second time tied for what Hartung considered his greatest moment in gymnastics. The other moment at the top of his list came Saturday when the Huskers won their third consecutive team title.

Allen said the all-around title was a "milestone" in Hartung's career.

Now that he's on top, Hartung said, he still will try to improve.

Women claim top track title

The UNL women's track team rolled up 139.5 points en route to the championship of its own invitational Saturday at the Ed Weir track. Kansas was second with 125 points, followed by Minnesota, Kansas State and Missouri.

Merlene Ottey and Norma Lee Murray led the team to the title by placing first and second in the 200-meter dash and qualifying for the national meet with times of :22.4 and :23.8, respectively. Other UNL placers:

100-meter hurdles: 3. Cheryl Zajic, :14.4; 5. Nancy Kindig, :14.6. **400-meter dash:** Paula Chace, 1:01.1. **100-meter dash:** 1. Merlene Ottey, :11.0; 2. Norma Lee Murray, :11.6; 6. Robin Mills, :12.8. **400-meter hurdles:** 2. Cheryl Zajic, 1:03.5; **500-meter run:** 3. Sara Stricker, 18:03.4.

Shot put: 1. Karen Wood, 43-1. **High jump:** 1. Sharon Burrill, 5-6; 3. Christy Lee, 5-6; 6. Sandra Roberts, 5-4. **Long jump:** 1. Nancy Kindig, 19-3½; 3. Sharon Burrill, 18-7; 4. Chandra Roberts, 18-2; 5. Cathy Seybold, 17-9¼. **Javelin:** 1. Kathy Kraaj, 127-4; 4. Nancy Kindig, 105-4; 5. Cathy Seybold, 103-9. **Discus:** 2. Karen Wood, 143-3.

The Cornhusker 400-meter relay team of Ottey, Murray, Zajic and Mills placed first with a time of :46.6. The 1600-meter relay team came in fourth in 4:12.9.

Lincoln praised as gymnastics capital

By Larry Sparks

If Kurt Thomas had his way, Nebraska would become the permanent site for the NCAA gymnastics meet. The former world champion from Southern Illinois, known across the country as Mr. Gymnastics, said Lincoln makes a perfect host for the event.

"This is pretty much the capital of gymnastics," Thomas said. "It's just tremendous the support you give them out here. I'd vote to keep the meet here every year."

"It's a disadvantage for the other teams coming in here but I don't think any other school could ever support it the way Nebraska has," Thomas said.

He found at least one explanation, though, for the support the Cornhusker fans have shown.

"I've been in Lincoln since Monday and I can tell you, there is not a whole lot else to do here," Thomas joked.

Thomas, although retired from gymnastics competition, is keeping in touch with the sport by coaching at Arizona State and working for ABC Television. Thomas was pulling double duty at last weekend's meet. The Arizona State team was in the competition and ABC also was taping a special to be broadcast June 7. He said he doesn't miss being in competition.

"I just don't have the itch anymore," Thomas said. "I achieved everything I wanted to achieve and I'm content with what I'm doing now."

Thomas, whose favorite events were the floor exercise, high bar and pommel horse, said the two major changes made in the NCAA meet this year were both successful. Dropping all the compulsory and optional scores and starting with a clean slate for the finals makes a better meet for the fans, he said.

"It makes it more exciting, although it will hurt a team like Nebraska," he said. "The most consistent team is usually going to win."

Gymnast says talent, crowds help team win

By Larry Sparks

Winning national championships has become a habit for Francis Allen's gymnasts, but for No. 4 all-arounder Jim Mikus, it was a new experience.

"It's just really exciting," Mikus said Saturday after UNL had captured its third straight NCAA title. "This is new to me. It's just really an experience you have to go through."

Mikus, a freshman from Reading, Pa., wasn't able to go through the meet in the all-around competition, though. He has suffered from tendonitis for several weeks, and was only able to compete in the floor exercise and the vault.

"I was disappointed," he said. "It was difficult, but I'm just glad that Chuck (Chmelka), Scott (Johnson), Jim (Hartung) and Phil (Cahoy) all did well."

"I thought I would have done well if I would have been able to compete in the all-around but it didn't work out that way," he said. "We still won and that's the key."

Mikus said the parallel bars were the turning point in Saturday's team finals.

"We had a miss the first guy, and then the next guy," Mikus said. "Brandon Hull just went out and did a great job and we just really did well on the p-bars from then on. On the high bars, we put them (Oklahoma and UCLA) away."

"I'm glad the other teams performed so well," he said. "It's always good to beat a team when they're at their best. Oklahoma and UCLA really hung tight."

The bitter rivalry between Nebraska and Oklahoma exists largely because of OU Coach Paul Ziert, according to Mikus.

"I get along with all of their guys real well but their coach I just don't think he shows a lot of class," Mikus said. "If he wants to say something, he should just come up to everyone and say it instead of making cheap shots from Norman."

"It just really started when we lost at the Big Eight meet," Mikus said. "We didn't like that very much."

Mikus said much of Nebraska's success at the NCAA meet was because of the enthusiastic crowd.

"Every routine, whether it was a hit or a miss, the crowd responded well," Mikus said. "It just really picks up a lot—especially in the finals."

It is a relief to have the championship meet over, Mikus said, but there could be some more national titles down the road.

"We just have to take them one at a time," he said. "You never know what will happen next year. Somebody else might get hurt. More than one person might get hurt."

Mikus said, "If everyone stays healthy, I see no reason why we can't just keep on winning."

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