

Parity...

Continued from Page 12

That's step number two. Third, with the exception of states like Indiana — Branch McCracken and Bobby Knight country — and Kentucky, where the late Adolph Rupp and now Joe Hall are making it routine to go uptown and almost common to make the Final Four, basketball for years, has been a city game. An overwhelming majority of thoroughbreds came out of Chi, the Big Apple, L.A. and D.C. But today, there's great ballplayers in states like Montana, Louisiana and Maine.

This has come about because basketball has come center ring, made the spotlight, gone SRO. It happened because the game was made for TV and the tremendous exposure of the boob tube. Major sponsors prefer college basketball because the ratings are strong and it hits the right audience. Fans like it because the ball is big, not like a hockey puck you can't see. The lighting is excellent, the court is small enough for good camera angles, the players are always visible because of their limited amount of clothing.

Also, with a few exceptions over the last 20 years, basketball camps — specialized basketball camps — have sprung up by the thousands throughout the land. There used to be just a handful of guys who had them, but not anymore. Now the coach at East Cupeake has one, the Little Sisters of the Poor have one, everyone has one. If you've got the time, we've got the camp.

In addition, basketball coaches have finally left the shadows of the goalposts. It used to be, at many schools, they were also assistant coaches in football, but now basketball coaches are extremely well-paid, have competent staffs, and the schools have provided them the monies to promote, recruit, and scout.

Most coaches, too, try to help themselves by trying to keep their schedule relatively soft. That's because most teams go to the NCAA on their record. Some bids are based on conferences, but the rest on record. So today, outside of a regional hook-up, non-conference bookings are usually weak sisters. That's why so many schools today start their conference with 10-0 records.

Finally, televised regional or national games provide a big payoff and have spawned larger recruiting budgets and bigger facilities — some of them mammoth in size. Syracuse is touching close to 30,000 at tip-off time, and the University of Tennessee is building a new arena to seat 25,000.

So, college basketball, welcome to the major leagues, the heavyweight division, the eighth race, the super bowl of college sports. But forget about any consistence in individual schools any more, the fabric has been irretrievably changed. And parity will be the word for whatever college basketball is for the next century.

Parity has already sent the word "upset" the way of the buffalo. Today, you can never count a game an "upset" unless it's on the road. Even Chaminade beating Virginia is not that much of an upset, because it was at Chaminade. There is no upset on the road. Only if you beat 'em on their turf.

Tracksters prepare for championships

By Jeff Korbek

Nebraska will warm up for next week's Big Eight Indoor Championships by hosting the Colorado State and Wichita State track teams in a triangular Saturday at 1:30 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"Wichita State has a good program with good athletes and they will be bringing a lot of athletes," Nebraska Assistant Coach Dick Railsback said. "Colorado State lacks some depth, but has some good individuals."

Railsback explained that the Huskers will be more prepared for this meet than they were in their first dual with Southern Illinois. He said his team realizes that the teams will be coming in trying to win the meet, and Wichita State "is not going to come up to get whipped again."

Nebraska leads the indoor series history between the schools with a record of 4-0 against both Colorado State and Wichita State. Nebraska won the same triangular last year, edging Wichita State by nine and a half points. Colorado State finished a distant third.

Wichita State will feature defending Missouri Valley Conference 60-yard high hurdle champion, Marvell Reid, (7.55) and high jumper Mark Todd (7-0). Reid will also compete in the triple jump, in which he has a 49-8 leap this year. Colorado State will also feature their hurdler in defending Western Athletic Conference 110-yard high hurdle and 400-yard intermediate hurdle champion Lorenzo Zackery.

The Huskers will host next week's indoor championships. Railsback said the triangular this weekend should keep the athletes sharp.

"I feel teams should compete the weekend before the Big Eight," Railsback said. "We are able to run guys in different events and move them around more. It is also nice mentally."

Last week Nebraska hosted the Husker Invitational and Railsback was pleased with how the meet turned out.

"There were some really good marks and it was a good meet to see for the fans," Railsback explained. "We had a couple of places that we could have done better, but on the whole we did very well."

Nebraska won one event in last week's competition, the mile relay. This week they received news that the relay team qualified for the NCAA Indoor Championships while competing earlier this year at the Eastman Invitational in Tennessee. The foursome of Mike Ciechocha, Dennis Wallace, Norman Mills and Jim Hayek ran a 5:12 hand-timed mile. The automatic timing malfunctioned and the hand-held time is fast enough to qualify.

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