

Sports

Nebraska shelves NCAA for this year

By Tim Woods

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Nebraska's hopes for a bid to the NCAA tournament suffered a major blow Friday when the Cornhuskers lost to Missouri, 69-63, in the semi-finals of the Big Eight Conference post-season tourney.

A win over Big Eight regular season champion Missouri, coupled with a victory Sunday in the conference tournament final, would have given the Huskers an automatic bid to the NCAA meet, which opens play Thursday.

But Nebraska, according to Coach Moe Iba, played a poorly organized game and was never able to catch up to Mizzou.

"We were very poor getting back on defense," Iba said. "Everything we did was out of sync."

Adding to the Huskers' miseries was the first technical foul to be called on Iba since he was named acting head coach during the 1980-81 season.

Referee Woody Mayfield whistled Iba nearly three minutes into the game, after a scramble for a loose ball resulted in a layup by Missouri's Greg Cavener, giving the Tigers an 8-2 lead.

"I haven't had a technical in the Big Eight in four years," Iba said. "I was in my bench area, and he called a technical. That's all there was to it. I didn't say a word to him. I just looked at him."

Mayfield, however, told the Kansas City Times that Iba had left the bench area, claiming that Cavener had

knocked over a Nebraska player during the scramble.

"He came down the sideline, and he was protesting," Mayfield said. "I motioned him back to the bench and he kicked the floor. All I saw was the back of his foot."

And with Missouri's All-Big Eight stalwarts, Steve Stipanovich and Jon Sundvold, performing their customary magic, Nebraska eventually succumbed to the Tigers for the third time this season.

In last month's 54-51 loss to the Tigers in Lincoln, Nebraska took a 9-point lead twice in the second half before Mizzou rallied.

Friday, however, Missouri — aided by the technical foul on Iba — jumped out to an 11-2 lead. And while the Huskers twice closed to within one point, Stipanovich or Sundvold answered for Mizzou each time.

"In the four years I've been here, Nebraska's been the toughest against us," Sundvold said. "They're always in the game. You've got to come up with the big play, or else they'll be right on top of you."

Forward Claude Renfro gave Mizzou fits in the first half, hitting all five of his field goal attempts and keeping Nebraska within reach of the Tigers at intermission, 31-27.

But even Renfro, who has been the Huskers' most consistent player this season, had his troubles in the second half, making only 1-5 from the free throw line.

"They all felt good when they left my hand," Renfro said. "But I just didn't get the roll. That's basketball."

For the game, Nebraska made 53 percent of its field goal tries, and 60 percent from the free throw line. Iba said that breakdowns in their offense cost the Huskers dearly.

"Missouri is too good of a team that if you don't execute both offensively and defensively, they'll hurt you," he said. "When we pulled up, we got impatient and took some questionable shots."

"When you're not organized and don't play well, the coach has to take the blame," Iba said.

Stipanovich scored 26 points and Sundvold added 17 for Missouri, who enters the NCAA tournament 26-7 after being defeated by 26-6 and playing Oklahoma State Sunday.

Nebraska center Dave Hoppen said that Mizzou stands of good chance of going far in the NCAA's because of its more balanced scoring.

"They're playing pretty good right now," Hoppen said. "With Bridges scoring now, they've got more people to look for instead of just a couple of players."

Nebraska, which fell to 19-9, should be one of the first teams selected for the National Invitation Tournament if it is not awarded an at-large NCAA bid.

"We have a better record than most of the teams that will be considered (for the NIT)," he said. "We draw well at home, and they should want some of Nebraska's money."

NIT bids are to be announced Sunday night.

NU wrestles for 6th place

By Randy Wymore

The University of Nebraska wrestling team lost its bid to finish in the top five teams in the country over the weekend, finishing sixth in the NCAA tournament in Oklahoma City.

Iowa won the title with 155 points followed by Oklahoma State with 102. Iowa State ended up third with 94½ and Oklahoma fourth with 64½.

Lehigh edged the Huskers for the fifth spot with 49, three points ahead of Nebraska.

The Cornhuskers' Al Freeman, at 142 pounds, failed in his attempt to become the first national champion for Nebraska in 20 years when he was forced to forfeit his championship match due to the aggravation of a chronic rib injury.

The forfeit came against Lehigh's Darryl Burley. If Freeman would have continued and won the match, the Huskers would have won the fifth-place spot.

"There was no way he could continue with any degree of success at all," Nebraska Coach Bob Fehrs said. "He hurt them a while back. He must have just aggravated them again."

In other matches involving Nebraska wrestlers, Ray Oliver at 167 pounds finished fourth after being beaten 8-3 by North Carolina's Jan Michaels.

Bill Scherr decisioned Oregon State's Jim Baumgardner, 10-2.

The NCAA appearances were the third for Oliver and the second for Scherr.

Everyone who places in the top eight automatically gains All-American status. Scherr and Freeman were All-Americans last year along with Gary Albright and Jim Scherr.

Before the tournament opened, the Huskers were shooting for a fourth-place finish. After the first round, Nebraska was struggling in eighth with only four of 10 team members still in competition.

"This has been a lackluster tournament," said Fehrs. "The fact that we ended up sixth is good because after the first day I thought total disaster had struck."

Nebraska had spent most of the year rated fifth, according to the Amateur Wrestling News' poll. Toward the end of the year, a loss to Michigan State caused the Huskers to fall to the seventh spot. At tournament time, they had worked their way back into the number six spot.



Staff photo by Dave Bentz

Nebraska wrestler Ray Oliver anticipates his next move in a match earlier in the year. Oliver finished fourth in the 167-pound division of the NCAA championships in Oklahoma City Thursday through Saturday. Oliver is an All-American.

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