

Coaches: Big Eight wrestling nation's best

With two victories in the Hall of Fame wrestling classic in Stillwater, Okla., the Nebraska wrestling team went to work on using body position in preparation for the Bison Open Saturday in Fargo, N.D.

"I was pleased with the outcome of both matches," Nebraska coach Bob Fehrs said, "and more importantly, we saw those areas we felt we were prepared in and those we were not."

The top Nebraska wrestlers, heavyweight Gary Albright, 190-pounder Jim Scheer and 177-pounder Bill Scheer won each of their matches handily against Arizona State and Penn State opponents. At the start of the lineup, 188-pounder Matt Campbell won his two matches, while 126-pounder Gill Sanchez, 134-pounder Chris Marisette and 142-pounder Lance Milsap split their matches.

In the middle, Nebraska newcomers won all six of their matches.

"I really feel as a team we performed very well," Fehrs said. "We thought we were going to have problems in the middle weights, and we did. But we have several inexperienced people here, and this match did allow them to get some competition under their belt."

Footwork and position were the team's major flaw at the Hall of fame meet, Fehrs said.

"We were not preparing ourselves for the different kinds of offenses they threw at us," Fehrs said.

Nebraska will return to Stillwater next week to open the Big Eight season. The Cowboys, with two returning national champions, are the conference favorite according to a consensus of Fehrs' coaching colleagues.

"Of course, it's hard to tell right now," Fehrs said. "but OSU would have to be the favorite this year, with Oklahoma, Iowa State, Nebraska then Missouri," he said.

A brief look at Husker conference foes:

OKLAHOMA STATE:

Oklahoma State coach Tom Chesbro

has six starters back from last year's team, which won the Big Eight Championship.

Three of those returners, Clar Anderson at 134 pounds, Kenny Monday at 160, and Mike Sheets at 167, were NCAA finalists last year. Anderson and Sheets were national champion, while Monday won the award for outstanding Big Eight wrestler.

In addition to those three senior starts, the Cowboys return junior Mark Perry at 118, sophomore Luke Skove at 142, junior Leo Bailey at 142, and senior Karl Lynes at 190. Bill Dykeman, a transfer who was red-shirted last season, should fill the 158 slot, Chesbro said. But, the Cowboys will probably fill the 126, 177 and heavyweight classes with freshmen, he said.

Chesbro said he sees a four-team race in the Big Eight in 1983-84.

"Missouri's going to be last," he said. "I think Oklahoma State and Oklahoma will probably be the front-runners, with Nebraska and Iowa State right behind those two."

"Our experience is definitely our strength," Chesbro said. "Oklahoma has the most people back (seven) and they will be tough. Iowa State lost five or six people, but I think they have some pretty good backup people from last year who are ready to step in. And, Nebraska should have a fine team."

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma coach Stan Abel may be understating things a bit when he says his Sooners will be "a pretty seasoned team." With seven starters back from last year's team, which finished third in the Big Eight, Abel will field the most experienced team in the conference.

"I think we have good experience and good overall talent," Abel said. "We were seventh in the nation in recruiting last year, and the previous two years we were No. 1 in recruiting, so we should have good depth."

Senior Clint Burke, last year's Big Eight champion at 134 pounds, re-

turns to defend his crown for the Sooners. Other returning starters are: Bobby DeProsperio, 118, sophomore; Mark Zimmer, 126, senior; Darren Abel, 150, senior; Johnny Johnson, 158, sophomore; Melvin Douglas, 167, junior; and Dan Chaid, 117, sophomore.

Abel said he expects a close race in the Big Eight this year.

"The Big Eight is without a doubt the toughest conference in the nation," Abel said. "There are three or four teams that could win it. If I were guessing, I'd say Oklahoma State would be the leader, with us second, and Nebraska and Iowa State tied for third."

Abel said he thought Nebraska could be a factor at the NCAA tournament this year because of its talented wrestlers in the three heaviest weight classes — Jim Scheer at 177, Bill Scheer at 190, and Gary Albright at heavyweight.

"If they get their top three guys to the finals, they could be a very high-scoring team at nationals," he said.

— Jim Rasmussen

IOWA STATE

Iowa State's traditional battle for the Big Eight crown may be hampered this season by a lack of experience. Only Kevin Darkus (126) and John Thorn (118) return from last year's team, which won second-place in the conference and fourth place in the nation.

"We're going to be young," assistant coach Les Henderson said. "There's no other way to describe it."

The Cyclones face what is commonly recognized as the nation's toughest schedules, Henderson said. He and head coach Harold Nichols are concerned about the lack of returning talent since many of the schools they will face this season are on the upswing of the maturity level, while the Cyclones are obviously at their low swing, he said.

"We think we have some good young

wrestlers here though," Henderson said. "We're just going to have to wait till the season starts to get some seasoning."

The biggest loss the Cyclones may have will be that of three-time national champion Nate Carr at 150, but Joe Gibbons, a former Big Eight runner-up coming off a injury-redshirt year at 142, should help out some.

Henderson said Oklahoma State should win the title, with Oklahoma and Nebraska contending for second.

— Ward W. Triplett III

MISSOURI

Missouri wrestling coach Bob Kopnisky said it's hard to say how his team will do this year, but he is optimistic with six returning lettermen, and the transfers, redshirts, and new recruits on this year's squad.

"We are not a powerhouse, but we are a good club," Kopnisky said. "We will get better as we go along."

The Tigers finished fifth in the Big Eight and 19th in the nation last year, and had a 4-10 dual record.

"We weren't bad last year," Kopnisky said. "We just had alot of injuries that hurt us bad."

Returning wrestlers for Missouri include Joe Spinazzola (118), Bruce Malinowski (126), John Sonderegger (150), Shepard Pittman (167), Brian McCracken (190), and heavyweight Mike Kleb. Kopnisky said the return of these men should help the team quite a bit.

"We had a good recruiting year, and are pleased with the kids," he added.

Kopnisky predicted Oklahoma State would win the Big Eight.

"They have a better team than anybody else, and the championship they won last year puts them in a plus direction," Kopnisky said. "They have a team that could contend for a national championship."

"We have a very difficult schedule," he said. "We are meeting all the powers in all the conferences in the United States."

— Jeff Korbek

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