

Women's basketball teams to use smaller ball

By Mike Reilley

Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

It's smaller, lighter, and with some time, it could be better.

Women's basketball teams on the college and high school levels will play with a smaller ball this season.

The ball Nebraska uses — the official game ball of the Big Eight Conference — is manufactured by Baden Sports, Inc.

Baden, a sporting goods firm in Seattle, Wash., distributes inflatable athletic balls. The company supplies balls to U.S. colleges and high schools.

An NCAA rule for the 1984-85 season made the smaller ball mandatory at the college level. Since the change, Baden's sales have skyrocketed.

"We've supplied about 20,000 balls since the change," Michael Schindler, vice president of sales, said. "The demand is just unbelievable."

The women's ball and the regulation ball differ in both size and weight. The women's ball is one centimeter smaller in diameter and two ounces lighter than the standard basketball.

Nebraska women's basketball coach Kelly Hill said the smaller ball can be gripped more easily by the players.

However, Hill said, the ball has one drawback that may be corrected as players adjust to the new ball.

It could create some turnovers early in the season because the players will try to do more with it," Hill said.

The lightness of the new ball also increases shooting range.

Husker cager Shelly Block said she has noticed a big increase in her perimeter shooting.

"I had to learn how to address my shot," Block said. "I don't use as much leg power as I did with the heavier ball."

Although the Baden ball is one the open market, many players still use the regulation ball in private practice and pickup games.

"Whenever we want to play a pickup game with the guys, we have to use the heavy ball," Block said.

"As long as women keep playing pickup games with the men, they'll have to learn to adjust from the lighter ball to the heavier ball," Schindler said.

The now-defunct Womens Basketball League was the first league to use the smaller ball. Schindler was part of a group that planned to bring a franchise to the Seattle area.

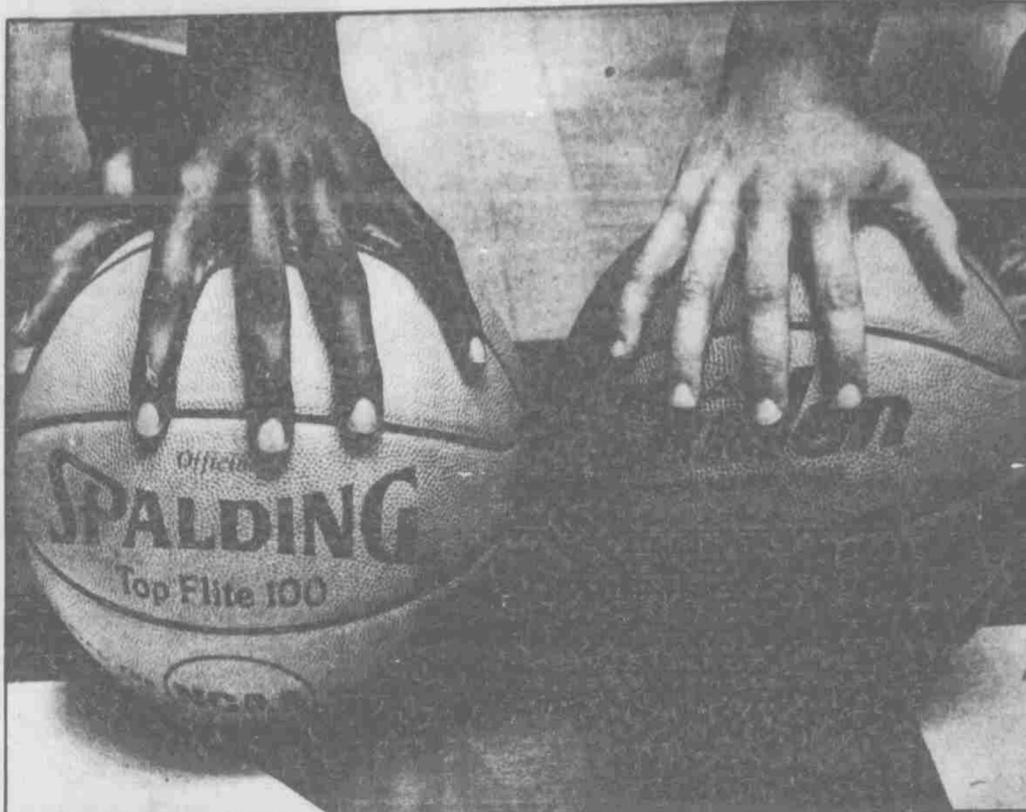
"I think the reason the WBL had such an exciting style of play and high scoring games can be attributed to the use of the smaller ball," he said.

When the professional league folded, the ball was deflated.

Schindler said there had been rumblings among the college and high school women's coaches to switch to a smaller ball. The rumblings, combined with the success in the pro ranks, motivated Schindler to convince Baden to start manufacturing the ball.

"We decided to go ahead and make the ball one year before the rule was passed," Schindler said.

It was "the best move ever made in women's collegiate basketball," Schindler said.



David Creamer/Daily Nebraskan

The new women's basketball, on the right, compared to a regulation men's ball.

Close calls for Huskers, Sooners prove no team's safe from upsets

Analysis by Jim Rasmussen

Daily Nebraskan Senior Reporter

For the second week in a row, it's the Big Four vs. the Little Four in Big Eight football.

Oklahoma, Nebraska, Oklahoma State and Missouri are heavily favored to beat Kansas, Kansas

Around the Big 8

State, Colorado and Iowa State, respectively. Last week, I said it would be a week of slaughters in the Big Eight. Nebraska and Oklahoma failed to wipe out their opponents, however. The Huskers barely escaped at Colorado, and Oklahoma pulled out a two-point win at Iowa State. Oklahoma State Coach Pat Jones took

note of the near-upsets:

"The close games in the league last week reaffirm our belief nobody is safe or immune to upset, OSU included."

The Cowboys will host Colorado Saturday. The buffaloes near-upset of Nebraska had CU coach Bill McCartney talking about pride.

"I told them (CU players) they did their black jerseys proud," McCartney said. "They did a good job and just played their hearts out."

The Buffs will have to play their hearts out again if they're to stay in the game with Oklahoma State. The cowboys, ranked 11th in UPI, blitzed Kansas 47-10 last week.

Things don't get any easier for the Jayhawks, who will face Oklahoma this Saturday at Lawrence, Kan. Kansas coach Mike Gottfried said he thinks Iowa State

coach Jim Criner underrated the Sooners when he said OU could win half its games in the NFL.

"I think they could go undefeated," Gottfried said.

Oklahoma coach Barry Switzer said he's not looking past the Jayhawks, especially after last week's close call against Iowa State.

"I hope we learned a valuable lesson," Switzer said. "We had better be ready to play every week regardless of the opponent or we could lose."

Halfback Spencer Tillman said the Sooners did learn a lesson against the Cyclones.

"We gained confidence from the fact that although we were flat and didn't play exceptionally well, we still managed to win the game," Tillman said.

Iowa State will need another big performance to upset Missouri Saturday. The kickoff is set for 1:30 p.m. in Columbia, Mo. Tiger coach Warren Powers said he was impressed with the Cyclones' effort against OU.

"Iowa State played a great game against Oklahoma, and really was in a position to win," Powers said. "I was very impressed with Iowa State's quickness and speed of defense."

Tiger fullback Eric Drain, who had been tearing through defenses this season, may miss the game. University of Missouri police arrested Drain over the weekend for trespassing in the school's gymnasium. Drain had been fighting with teammate David Peyton before he was arrested, police said. Powers has not said whether Drain will play Saturday.

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