

Big 8 teams dressing for conference salad days

Analysis by Stu Pospisil

Can it be that the Big Eight conference will send more teams to post-season basketball tournaments than it will to football bowl games this season?

Listen to Missouri coach Norm Stewart, who predicts "six teams have a chance to be in postseason play. That's how good the league is."

Compare that with football, where only three conference teams will be invited to bowls.

The times, they are a-changing in the Big Eight.

No longer is the talk in November only about bowl games and the shootout in Lincoln (or Norman), but includes arguments about shot clocks, three-point shots and freshman phenoms.

The Big Eight will use a 45-second clock

in league play after conference coaches voted 5-3 in favor of it at their spring meeting. A three-point field goal was rejected when Oklahoma coach Billy Tubbs changed his vote for a 4-4 deadlock.

Some coaches said later they voted for the 45-second clock with the understanding that the three-point play would be used.

"Zone defenses make for dull games," said none other than Kansas State coach Jack Hartman, who used such a defense to defeat Nebraska 41-39 in the first round of the conference tournament last season.

Nebraska coach Moe Iba said, "Maybe we'll do what everybody else is going to do: stay back in the lane and just hold up our hands, knowing we'll get the ball back in 45 seconds."

"The players don't want it. The people

don't want to watch it. I don't want to coach it," said Missouri's Stewart.

Oklahoma and Kansas played in the NCAA tournament last season, and are in everybody's Top Twenty. Nebraska and Iowa State played in the NIT.

All four of those teams could again have their seasons extended past the conference's post-season tournament in early March, as could Missouri and Colorado.

Here's a look at the conference teams, listed in the order of their predicted finish:

Oklahoma — "If you've got it, flaunt it and taunt it" is the Sooners' motto after last season, when several players became involved in shouting and gesturing contests with fans at the end of games. Tisdale passed entering the NBA's hardship

draft to try to lead Oklahoma to its third straight NCAA tournament and a possible berth in the Final Four. He'll be teamed with Tim McAllister, the conference's newcomer of the year a season ago, and forwards David Johnson and Darryl Kennedy. Anthony Bowie, a juco All-American, could be an immediate replacement for departed Calvin Pierce.

Kansas — Two Omaha players that snubbed Nebraska in favor of Kansas will start for the Jayhawks. Ron Kellogg of Omaha Northwest, sank the game-winning shot against Oklahoma in the conference final. Cedric Hunter of Omaha South has overcome academic woes and will team with Mark (the Surgeon) Turgeon at guard. Manning and 7-1 center Greg Dreiling are nearly as tall as the campus' Mount Oread.

Continued on Page 17

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Hoyas picked Number One

This month, 270 Division I basketball teams begin their quest for an NCAA tournament berth.

Almost one-fourth, or 64 teams will make it. Another 32 teams, including Nebraska, will have to settle for the National Invitation Tournament, a.k.a. Have Ball, Will Travel.

Popsicle's Picks

Thus, there are 96 teams fighting for No. 1 (or No. 65 in the case of the NIT). Only one team will combine skill, momentum, luck and bribery of officials to earn the title NCAA Champion — and a cool million dollars.

Who then will be the nation's best? I don't know.

I will still give it the ol' college try, and Popsicle's Top Twenty is headed by...

Georgetown (you were expecting Creighton maybe?). Patrick

Ewing is nearly as infamous as his Southfork cousin, J.R., but the T-shirt has got to go. With the NCAA finals at the University of Kentucky, Hoya coach Tom Thompson will sequester his team in Paducah. No one in the press would bother looking for Georgetown in Paducah.

2, Illinois — The Fighting Illini were fighting mad after getting "homered" in a loss to Kentucky in the Midwest Regional final. They'll try to erase those unpleasant memories on the same Rupp Arena floor come next March.

3, DePaul — The Blue Demons could cap Chicago's finest sports season with an NCAA title that eluded Ray Meyer for 42 years. Son Joey takes over while Pop gets to second-guess.

4, Indiana — Winning in the Big Ten will be harder for Bobby Knight than winning in the Olympics. Knight took along the family pet, guard Steve Alford, to Los Angeles to teach free-throw shooting.

5, Duke — Bill Jackman may question later in the season why he left an Atlantic Coast Conference championship ring at Duke for a "nicely-done" handshake at Nebraska. Coach Mike Krzyzewski has five starters back.

6, Oklahoma — Wayman, Bill and the Boys should roll through the Big Eight without any sweat, save for two games with Kansas. Tubbs' goal this season is to have his players point to the scoreboard with the index finger.

7, Southern Methodist — Koncak of the Wild, center Jon Koncak, is bigger and better after his Olympic experience. He outplayed Akeem and Patrick Ewing in games last year, and could be the surprise player in the nation.

8, Washington — In Seattle, they can't see the forest for the trees, 6-9 Detlef Schrempf (the only NCAA player to have both names end in F) and 7-0 center Christian Welp.

Continued on Page 19

Picking Top 20 tough task

Analysis by Ward Triplett III
Daily Nebraskan Sports Editor

It's tough for anyone without a car and a gas expense account to know enough about national women's basketball to predict anything.

Without television exposure, it's pretty hard to determine why Texas is better than Louisiana Tech and so forth. This poll is based almost strictly on press releases and women's basketball publications.

1. TEXAS — The Longhorns have lost only five games in the last two years, one of those to Nebraska. Jody Conradt's team spent most of last year at the top of the polls before losing badly to Louisiana Tech in the Midwest Regional finals. By that time, the Texas lineup had been so depleted with knee injuries that only nine players suited up for the finale.

This year, All-American candidate Annette Smith will miss another season with her knee injury and another starter, Sherry Hauglum, decided to become a student coach rather than risk another injury.

So, Texas will send only another All-American type, sophomore Andrea Lloyd and Olympic alternate Kamie Ethridge to lead this year's team. In addition to those two, the Longhorns will have Gay Hemphill, a transfer from Wayland Baptist, in uniform along with last year's holdovers, Cara Priddy (6-2), Audrey Smith and Fran Harris, who was the team's leading scorer at 18.6 points per game.

2. GEORGIA — The Bulldogs have one of the two Olympic stars left on the collegiate level in uniform this season, and Teresa Edwards isn't even the player the Southern papers play up the most.

Janet Harris, 6-3, has been the biggest star for the balanced Georgia team, and probably will be again this season. The Bulldogs lost center Wanda Holloway to graduation, but 6-3 Katrina McClain and 6-7 Barbara Bootz can probably make up the slack.

3. SOUTHERN CAL — Cheryl Miller's familiar face showed up in most post-Olympic material. Now, if only Miller's fame can carry into the women's collegiate season, that could be one way to drum up extra attention. The other way is to make sure it's Miller's team that ends up on the CBS-televised final. Miller should be enough to guarantee the Trojans will be close.

4. CAL STATE-LONG BEACH — With only one senior, the 49ers looked very impressive against eventual champion USC in the West Regional finals last year. Of course, Long Beach has been near the top of the women's collegiate ranks for the last five seasons.

5. NORTHWEST LOUISIANA — Perhaps this isn't even the best team in Louisiana. But the Indians will have the advantage of being the least renowned of the powers in the state and thus can sneak up on some people. The Indians, who will be in the same tournament with the Huskers in Minnesota, have the rather large Lisa Ingram at center and the sharpshooting Eun Jung Lee at guard. Lee was a member of the Korean national team at the Olympics.

6. LOUISIANA TECH — Perhaps this will be the best team in Louisiana. But Louisiana Tech did lose Olympians Kim Mulkey and Janice Lawrence, as well as Debra Rodman. Only Pam Gantt, a former record setter at Joliet East in Illinois remains from the headliners from last season's final four squad. But like Dean Smith's

North Carolina, the Lady Techsters just pull high school All-America's off the bench and teach them how to win.

7. OLE MISS — The Lady Rebels showed up in the top five of every poll released. But this is the one team I haven't seen play anywhere, so ascertaining just how good 6-3 Eugenia Conner and 6-2 Jennifer Gilom are isn't easy.

8. LOUISIANA STATE — The team that put Missouri out of the playoffs last season lost its star, a guard, but replaced her with Gert Scott, who finished just behind Perry in the high school all-world voting.

9. MISSOURI — The one national contender that will play in Lincoln this year, the Tigers' best weapon is senior Joni Davis, who averaged over 20 points per game last season. All three graduation losses were offset by a recruiting class that included a 6-4 junior college transfer.

10. OLD DOMINION — Another team ranked in the top five, but even with former Kansas star Tracy Claxton and Patrick Ewing's high school classmate Medina Dixon, the Lady Monarchs will still have to get by Georgia to reach the final four in Austin.

11. Vanderbilt; 12. Ohio State; 13. Western Kentucky; 14. Tennessee; 15. San Diego State; 16. Penn State; 17. Iowa; 18. North Carolina State; 19. Maryland; 20. Nebraska*.

*Call it luck, call it faith, call it karma... I believe that everything happens for a reason. Kansas State's (apparent) decline should open the door for one of the Big Eight teams to not only challenge in the conference, but gain some national attention. With an early season upset over Tennessee or Northeast Louisiana, Nebraska could be that team. Why the heck not, huh?

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