

Sports

Coaches labeling close gymnastic competition

By Kristi Reetz
Staff Reporter

Competition will be close in this year's gymnastic championships, with each team having an equal chance to come out on top, competing coaches said.

"Nebraska will have an advantage over the others Friday night because of their crowd," Art Shurlock, head coach of UCLA men's gymnastics team, said. But Shurlock said NU will lose that advantage when it gets to the team finals because the crowd can concentrate on other teams.

Shurlock's UCLA Bruins go into the meet as third seed with a 280.19 average. Their top performers this year are Brian Ginsberg, alternate on the USA/World team and second place finisher at the America's Cup, and Rob Campbell, who has one of the best all-around averages in the country.

The defending NCAA gymnastics champions, the Ohio State Buckeyes, enter this meet as number six seed. Coach Mike Willson is glad to be back at the championships.

"We're glad to be here. We graduated so many kids last year it was scary," Willson said. "I don't know what our particular strengths are, other than we have a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of young kids."

The University of Oklahoma, coached by Greg Buwick, comes to the meet as eighth seed with top performer Mike Rice. Rice is the number two qualifier in the all-around competition, behind only the defending all-around champion, Wes Suter of Nebraska.

Southern Illinois coach Bill Meade and his Salukis come into the championships as the seventh seed.

"We had a good record; we were 10-1-1. We were fortunate enough to beat Nebraska, Iowa, and Ohio State," Meade said. "I think any one of the ten teams could win. It's going to just take a few mistakes, and there's a lot of equipment out there, a lot of routines that have to be done, and a lot of freshmen in some of the spots. It puts an added amount of pressure on an individual."



Dan Dulaney/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska gymnastics coach Allen talks with other coaches at a press conference Thursday at the Bob Devaney Sports

Center. Nebraska will be host to the NCAA gymnastics championships today and Saturday at the sports center.

Huskers enter gymnastics meet No. 1

By Richard Cooper
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's gymnastics team is seeded first in the 1986 NCAA men's gymnastics championships, but Nebraska coach Francis Allen said he doesn't take the top seed lightly.

Allen said this year's championships will be very close because only .84 separates the top five teams. One mistake can make the difference for the championship, Allen said.

Nebraska is one of 10 teams competing at the Bob Devaney Sports Center Friday and Saturday.

Allen said the team is on a hot streak going into the NCAA's. The Huskers won the Big Eight Championships March 15 and have won three out of their last four meets.

He said for the team to win the NCAA title, the five all-arounders will have to hit 95 percent in their routines.

"All we have been doing in practice is routines," Allen said. "Every one of the guys are peaking just at the right time for this meet."

Allen said he thinks he has the best five all-arounders in the nation. Leading the Huskers into the NCAA's, is team captain Wes Suter, last year's NCAA individual all-around champion. Suter is the nation's No. 1 seed in the championships with a 56.89 average.

Strong competition is expected from Oklahoma's Mike Rice, the 1986 Big Eight all-around individual champion, UCLA's Brian Ginsberg and Arizona State's Dan Hayden, Allen said.

Four of the five Midwest regional qualifiers were Cornhuskers, Suter, seeded first, sophomore Tom Schlesinger,

seeded third with a 56.32 average, sophomore Mike Epperso, fourth with a 56.08 average and sophomore Kevin Davis, fifth, with a 55.97 average.

Allen said the team has improved a lot since the beginning of the season. The Huskers have competed previously against seven of the nine teams in the tournament.

"The other nine teams are very good, in fact almost every one of them have beat us at least once this season," Allen said.

The Huskers have competed most against Arizona State, UCLA, Oklahoma and Southern Illinois, with the most success against Oklahoma. Allen said there were no meets where the Huskers were blown out.

"We have just as good a chance of winning this meet as the other nine teams," Allen said. "But we have the

home advantage and that will definitely help us out."

Last year the Huskers were in first place going into the team finals. But because of an ankle injury in warm-ups before the finals, Epperso could compete only in four events.

This year, Allen said, everybody is healthy and ready to go. He said the team's intensity and confidence are very high.

Allen said that since the Huskers are starting with the parallel bars in the qualifying round, the team should have a strong start.

Friday and Saturday night sessions will start at 7 p.m. with the team finals Saturday afternoon at 1 p.m. In the individual competition Saturday night, Suter will defend two titles — floor exercise and high bar.

Remember: Mets or Cardinals to be the champs

Analysis By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Let's face it, folks. The National League's East Division is where it's at.

Remember that statement next October. Just one question, though: Which NL East team will win the 1986 World Series?

Anyone who watched last year's fall classic saw St. Louis, the winningest and, most likely, the best 1985 baseball team unmercifully robbed of the world championship. They were stopped by a call so bad it sent me and millions of other Cardinal fans searching for the Pepto-Bismol. The call by umpire Don Denkinger in the bottom of the ninth inning — when the Royal's Jorge Orta was ruled safe at first, despite being thrown out by a step — gave Kansas City a second, undeserved chance to rally. And they did, sending the series into the final seventh game. We all know what happened there, don't we? I finished off the bottle of Pepto-Bismol that night.

The Cardinals certainly have the talent to repeat as division and National League champions in 1986, but there's one major roadblock in New York.

Last season, the Mets were second to St. Louis by three games. Montreal was third, followed by Chicago, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Here's how I see it in 1986.

1. New York: Yep. I'm afraid so. With Cy Young winner Dwight "Dr. K" Gooden spearheading one of the best pitching staffs around, they'll be a tough team to stop. Gooden, who posted a devastating 24-4 record last summer, is backed by Ed Lynch, Ron Darling and Bruce Berenyi, among others. On the receiving end of the pitches will be catcher Gary Carter, without

much doubt the best catcher in the league. It's only right that the best catcher in baseball should catch the best pitcher. At the plate, Carter batted .281 last season, knocking in 32 home runs and 100 RBI's.

Add to this tandem an outfield of Darryl Strawberry, Mookie Wilson, who is somewhat questionable because of off-season injuries and George Foster; throw in Tim Lincecum and a cocaine-less Keith Hernandez in the infield; and top it all off with coaching expertise by manager Davey Johnson. The fans in New York will stop reminiscing about the "good old days" when the Yankees reigned supreme.

2. St. Louis: BUT WAIT!!! Just when you thought you didn't need to check the sports page for the division standings at all this summer, the Cardinals enter the picture quicker than you can say "bad call."

"Quicker" is the key word.

St. Louis boasts the fastest outfield in any American ballpark. Willie McGee, baseball's best 1985 batter returns, as do Andy Van Slyke and Vince Coleman. Coleman stole 110 bases last season and will challenge for Ricky Henderson's record of 130 this summer. Van Slyke and Coleman are both worth their paychecks at the plate, too.

The St. Louis infield is more than solid with the best first baseman in Missouri (Jack Clark), the best second baseman in the league (Tommy Herr) and the best shortstop anywhere (Ozzie Smith). Manager Whitey Herzog said he believes the Cardinals have the best defensive team in history.

That claim is aided by a pitching staff that returns John Tudor, 21-8 last season, and Tim Lincecum, as well as Bob Forsch, Kurt Kepshire and

an ailing Danny Cox, who chipped a bone in his right ankle this winter. If he's healthy, the Cardinals may chip away at New York's World Series dreams.

3. Chicago: As much as I hate the Cubs, I still have to give credit where credit is due — even when very little credit is deserved. Since the Cubs won their pennant in 1984, they have slipped back to their usual fourth and fifth-place form. With this swift recoil to mediocrity came numerous excuses for their — excuse the expression — "slump." Last year, it was the injury-riddled pitching staff that denied Chicago another pennant, according to the phoney Cubs fans in Lincoln, who come out of the woodwork every summer with the flies and mosquitos. Three years ago, these same people couldn't name two players on Chicago's roster, and now they all claim to be lifetime supporters of the Cubs. What will be their excuse for "their" team's horrendous performance this year? Increased prices of beer at Wrigley Field?

Enough of that. If the Cubs' pitching staff is healthy, Chicago could challenge — for third. Rick Sutcliffe, Steve Trout and Dennis Eckersley are dead on the mound, while second baseman Ryne Sandberg, third baseman Ron Cey and left fielder Gary Matthews will provide excellent defense.

Like they say in Chicago every fall, "Wait 'til next year." At least.

4. Montreal: With Joe Hesketh and Bryn Smith, the top two pitchers, the boys from the north could have a long season ahead. Jay Tibbs, acquired from Cincinnati, could pick up some of the bullpen slack, but the Expos will have to rely on their offensive power to avoid becoming the butt of numerous late-season jokes.

Andre Dawson and Tim Lincecum, who batted .255 and .320 respectively last season, will join shortstop Hubie Brooks in a virtual three-man battle against the division to stay out of the cellar.

5. Philadelphia: The Phillies will have a different look this season. Shortstop Tom Foley, second baseman Juan Samuel and right fielder Glenn Wilson are the only three members of the team returning to their 1985 positions. Mike Schmidt will move back to third base and first-year Phillies Gary Redus and Milt Thompson will help in the outfield.

Pitcher Steve Carlton injured a shoulder and is in doubt for the start of the season. Shane Rawley, 13-8 in 1985, appears to be the top man on the mound for the Phillies.

But one man can't do it all.

6. Pittsburgh: What's a team to do? In 1985, the Pirates walked the plank right into the NL East cellar. In 1986, they will again battle for the division doormat spot.

Catcher Tony Pena and second baseman John Ray are the only experienced returners. The remainder of the team is fresh, eager and ready to lose.

With the acquisition of outfielders Mike Brown and R.J. Reynolds, the Pirates will have an impressive outfield, rounded out by Steve Kemp and reserve Joe Orsulak. The outfield will be the most impressive aspect of this yellow-and-black disgrace of the diamond. Sure, most of the balls hit to the Pittsburgh outfield will land somewhere in the stands, but the outfielders will still be impressive as they watch the balls fly over their heads.

So there you have it. Either the mets or the Cardinals. Which will it be?

Let me think about it until October.