

Sports

Persistence, friends lead to NIT

By Jeff Apel
Staff Reporter

It's nice to have friends in New York. That's the attitude Nebraska men's basketball coach Danny Nee took Monday as he commented on the Cornhuskers' Wednesday-night matchup against Marquette in the first round of the National Invitational Tournament. Tipoff for the game at the Bob Devaney Sports Center is set for 7:35 p.m.

Nee, who was born and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y., said the Huskers were fortunate to be invited to the New York-based NIT because of the prestige in reaching a postseason tournament.

Nee said invitations to such a tournament help recruiting and give play-

ers an opportunity for a fresh start.

"(The NIT) is nothing like the NCAA (Tournament)," Nee said Monday at his weekly press conference. "(But) psychologically and prestigewise, you can't put (the NIT) in dollars and cents. To be in the first stage of your program and be in a postseason tournament — that's very significant."

Nee said the Huskers' chances of making their second consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance were hindered because two of their wins were over non-Division I opponents.

Nebraska defeated Division II Northwest Missouri St. and Missouri-St. Louis enroute to compiling a 17-11 record.

But Nee said the NCAA Tournament should feel fortunate that the 32-team

NIT exists because the top 64 teams

are not playing in the NCAA Tournament. "There are some very good teams playing in the NIT," he said.

Nee said the matchup against the 16-12 Warriors looks good because Marquette mixes an aggressive, man-to-man defense with a variety of zones in hopes of overpowering their opponents.

Nee said the Warriors are much like the Big Eight champion Missouri Tigers when center Gary Leonard plays. Leonard, a 7-0 sophomore, scored a career-high 15 points to lead the Tigers to an 80-64 victory over the Huskers in Columbia, Mo.

The Warriors are led by forward David Boone and guard Michael Sims. Boone, a senior, is averaging 16 points and nine rebounds per game, and Sims is averaging 15.1 points.

Nebraska forward Mike Martz said the Huskers are looking forward to facing Marquette because of the Warriors' rich basketball tradition.

Marquette has made 26 consecutive, postseason tournament appearances including seven NIT appearances.

"We really don't know that much about them (Marquette)," Martz said. "But it's still great to just play a team like them."

Martz said the game against the Warriors is particularly special because Nebraska will get another opportunity to prove itself in a season that many Nebraska basketball fans wrote off.

Martz said while it would have been easy for the Huskers to give up after beginning the Big Eight Conference season 1-4, they instead chose to rally around themselves and finished the conference season 7-7.

"If we didn't get a bid, it would have been tough," Martz said. "This is a nice award for what we've done."



Doug Carroll/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's Brian Carr shoots over the outstretched arms of Kansas State's Mitch Richmond during Friday's 47-45 Cornhusker loss in the first round of the Big Eight conference basketball tournament in Kansas City.



Doug Carroll/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's Keith Neubert battles Charles Bledsoe of Kansas State for position during the first round of the Big Eight basketball tournament in Kansas City Friday.

Seats available for Wednesday's NIT first round

Today is the final day students can buy tickets for Nebraska's first-round National Invitation Tournament men's basketball game against Marquette Wednesday night.

Tipoff for the game is scheduled for 7:35 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Tickets will be sold at the South Stadium ticket office from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. To purchase tickets, students must have full-time student IDs. Each student can buy only one ticket. Student tickets will cost \$5 if purchased today. Only general-admission tickets will be sold Wednesday and will cost \$7 or \$9 each.

Joel Selig, Nebraska's associate ticket manager, said Monday that floor seats are still available.

Softball team places third in Road Runner Invite; defense solid but offense fell asleep, coach says

By Rich Cooper
Staff Reporter

Nebraska's softball team finished third in the Road Runner Invitational at Las Cruces, N.M., this weekend as it lost in the semifinals Saturday to No. 8-ranked Fresno State 3-0.

The Cornhuskers, ranked No. 3 in the preseason polls, finished their road trip at 8-2. In their opening game of the season, the Huskers defeated No. 19 Arizona 1-0.

Nebraska coach Ron Wolforth said he saw many good things in the tournament, but Nebraska needs to improve if it is to contend for the national championship this season.

"I thought in this tournament we played pretty consistent defense, and that is usually the area that gives a team problems early in the season," Wolforth said. "Offensively, though, we had some mental lapses which hurt us in the two games that

we lost."

Nebraska dropped its first game of the season Friday to Central Michigan 2-1 in a 10-inning game.

Wolforth said he was happy with the Huskers' pitching and said it kept Nebraska in every game. He said the pitchers' only problems were that they gave up too many bases on balls and they got behind hitters too much.

'We need to be more aggressive offensively if we are to win some ball games.'

—Wolforth

"Our pitching was solid this weekend but we didn't dominate teams like we did in the fall," Wolforth said.

Wolforth said the team played well at times in the tournament. Nebraska defeated Fresno State 4-0 in the first game, then defeated Big Eight Conference rival Iowa State 1-0 on a squeeze play.

Wolforth said that during the next two weeks of practice the Huskers will concentrate on basics and execution. He said he was unhappy with the execution on sacrifice bunts. In the Fresno State game, the squeeze play failed three times and cost Nebraska the game, he said.

If Nebraska is to continue its success this season, Wolforth said, it has to play the tougher teams with more intensity and take the lesser-talented teams more seriously.

Wolforth said Nebraska should have won the game against Western Michigan and that offensively the team seemed to "fall asleep."

"We need to be more aggressive offensively if we are to win some ball

games," Wolforth said. "We have to attack the ball and not take too many strikes."

Wolforth said the tournaments

'Our pitching was solid this weekend but we didn't dominate teams like we did in the fall.'

—Wolforth

will only get tougher as the season progresses. During spring break, the Huskers will play the Houston Classic March 19 through 22 and the San Jose Invitational March 27 through 29.

"After spring break we will know how good this team is and if we can challenge for the national title in June," Wolforth said.

Top triple-jumper expects to improve

By David Mussman
Staff Reporter

Nebraska's Big Eight triple-jump champion Renita Robinson is anticipating a top-four finish in the NCAA Championships March 13 and 14.

Robinson won the triple jump, posting a Big Eight Conference record of 41-10 3/4. She also placed sixth in the long jump with a 19-0 1/4.

Robinson's score in the triple jump qualified her for NCAA Championship competition. She said she is expecting a good finish there.

"I should be in the top four at least," Robinson said. "I'd be really surprised if I didn't score in the top four with relation to the other jumpers, and the competition that will be there."

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