

Teams enter NCAA regional tourneys

By The Associated Press

The Syracuse Orangemen, last-second losers in the NCAA Championship game last season, are prepared for pitfalls and boobytraps as they begin their bid tonight to return to the Final Four.

The Orangemen, who were beaten by Indiana 74-73 in the 1987 title contest, finished the season with a 25-9 record and were ranked No. 9 in the nation.

They open NCAA play against North Carolina A&T, 26-2, in the second game of an East Regional afternoon doubleheader at Chapel Hill, N.C. In the opening game, Missouri, 19-10, meets Rhode Island, 26-6.

In an evening doubleheader at Chapel Hill, Southern Methodist, 27-6, faces Notre Dame,

20-8, and No. 5 Duke, 24-6, opposes Boston University, 23-7.

Meanwhile, the Southeast Regional begins at Atlanta, with Auburn, 18-10, facing No. 11 Bradley, 26-4, and No. 4 Oklahoma, 30-3, playing Tennessee-Chattanooga, 20-12, in an afternoon doubleheader. Then No. 19 Brigham Young, 25-5, meets North Carolina-Charlotte, 22-8, and Louisville, 22-10, opposes Oregon State, 20-10, at night.

In the opening round of the West Regional at Salt Lake City, No. 7 North Carolina, 24-6, plays North Texas State, 17-12, and No. 13 Wyoming, 26-5, meets No. 15 Loyola, California, 27-3, in the afternoon; and No. 10 Michigan, 24-7, faces Boise State, 24-5, and Florida, 22-11, opposes St. John's, 17-11, at night.

Sixteen more games, four of which will be

played at the Bob Devaney Sports Center in Lincoln, will complete the first round.

"Nothing less than a return trip to the Final Four will make me happy," Syracuse forward Stephen Thompson said.

Syracuse center Rony Seikaly agreed.

"We've been there before," Seikaly said. "We are an experienced team, and that should help. We know the short cuts. We've learned how to handle the distractions. We know what we need to do to focus on the games — what we need to do to win."

Syracuse guard Sherman Douglas and Earl Duncan said last season's experience taught the Orangemen how tough the 64-team tournament is.

"We learned last year you have to play hard from the first game to the last because every-

body here is capable of beating you if you don't," Douglas said.

"This is the NCAA's; you can't underestimate anyone," Duncan said.

"I've seen it year in and year out. Teams get knocked out early by unknowns. We want to be around for the beginning of April," Duncan said, referring to the Final Four weekend April 2-4 at Kemper Arena in Kansas City, Mo.

One of those unknowns could be North Carolina A&T.

Despite losing only two of 28 games, tying their school record for victories, winning their last 16 games and capturing the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference regular-season title, the Aggies have received little national recognition.

Blaylock best newcomer; Tubbs top coach

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Mookie Blaylock preys upon point guards the way a pickpocket works a crowded bus.

Sometimes it almost seems unfair. Their attention is distracted, if only an instant, and his hands are so quick.

"It's amazing some of the things he gets away with because of his quickness," said Oklahoma coach Billy Tubbs. "But his biggest asset is the basic instinct to smell out where the ball is going to be or where it's coming from."

While helping the Sooners to the



Blaylock

Big Eight regular-season and postseason titles, the 6-foot Blaylock set conference single-game and season records for steals. He also averaged more than 17 points and four rebounds and was named the Associated Press Big Eight newcomer of the year Wednesday.

Tubbs has mined Midland (Texas) Junior College for both starting guards on the fourth-ranked, 30-3 team he takes into the first round of the NCAA Tournament today. Ricky Grace transferred to Norman two seasons ago, and Blaylock followed last fall.

"For what we do, I think they're the best pair of guards in the country," Tubbs said. "I don't see anybody I'd trade for."

In his sixth game, Blaylock plundered Centenary for a conference-record 13 steals and took off running on one of the finest seasons any Big Eight guard ever had. In addition to his 122 steals — the NCAA record for a junior — his 179 regular-season assists were second in the conference only to Grace's 216.

"I'd like to say he didn't have any of that ability when he came in, and I worked with him for about three days and taught him all that stuff," said Tubbs, who on Tuesday was named the Big Eight coach of the year. "You just tell him what you want him to do as far as who he's supposed to be on defensively, and he can do it."

It must be frightening for other Big

Eight coaches to think Blaylock's season was the product of quickness and instinct. Tubbs said Blaylock will look even more menacing after he adds experience to his weaponry.

"He breaks a lot of our defensive rules," Tubbs said. "And you allow him to do that because he comes up with good results. Some people can just smell the ball. He has that great anticipation of what the guy he's guarding is going to do. You can't teach that to a guy. If we could, all our players would be doing it."

Blaylock said he takes pride in playing defense.

"You've got to want to be a great defensive player," Blaylock said. "I've always been a good defensive player. You can get a lot of easy points

off of it with breakaways and layups."

Blaylock was named newcomer of the year on 11 ballots distributed to full-time Big Eight media observers. Oklahoma State freshman forward Richard Dumas, who averaged more than 17 points and six rebounds, received four votes, and Missouri freshman center Doug Smith got one.

Tubbs, 195-70, is the winningest coach in the Big Eight since joining the league in 1980 and was an easy winner in coach-of-the-year balloting. Kansas' Larry Brown was named on one ballot, and two voters split their ticket between Tubbs and Kansas State coach Lon Kruger. Nebraska coach Danny Nee, whose squad finished the season 13-18, was not named on any ballot.

Gymnasts expect close meet with Tigers

By Lori Griffin
Staff Reporter

A tuneup for the Big Eight meet will await the Nebraska women's gymnastics team when it faces Missouri Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Nebraska women's gymnastics coach Rick Walton said the dual meet is important because it is the Huskers' final competition before the Big Eight Championships March 26 in

Ames, Iowa. He said Nebraska's main emphasis against the Tigers will be to gain a good home score so it can get a good seed entering the regional meet April 9.

Walton said Nebraska should be able to challenge for this year's Big Eight championship. He said he expects a close meet with Oklahoma, whom the Huskers defeated by .05 in 1987 to win the conference crown.

Walton said the difference in this year's Big Eight meet will be the

Huskers' depth. He said Oklahoma has a lot of talent, but lacks the depth it possessed in the past.

Walton said he does not expect a high-scoring meet. He said the conference championships have never been high-scoring affairs.

Oklahoma assistant women's gymnastics coach Dave Henley agreed with Walton. He said the conference meet should be a good lead-in to the regional meet.

Henley said the Sooners' main

concern will be to defeat Nebraska and win the conference title. He said the meet will come down to who is healthy and which team is able to hit its routines.

Henley said Oklahoma will rely on juniors Kelly Garrison-Steves and Kassie Fry, who have been scoring in the 38- to 39-point range throughout the season. He said Garrison-Steves

will not be affected by a cast she's wearing to heal a stress fracture.

Missouri women's gymnastics coach Jake Jacobson said the Big Eight meet will be good because all four teams that are competing are improving. The conference's four teams include Nebraska, Missouri, Oklahoma and Iowa State.

Both meets begin at 7 p.m.

Gymnasts score high in meets

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vidual record in the floor exercise with a 9.7 score.

Nebraska also set school records in the balance beam with a 47.1, in the floor exercise with a 47.5, in the vault with a 47.65 and in the all-around competition with a 38.3 score.

Junior Crystal Savage set an individual school record in the uneven bars by scoring a 9.85 to win the event.

Schermann said the Huskers "had the fire of the eye of the tiger in their eyes" against Arizona and California

State-Fullerton.

Schermann said the Nebraska coaches were impressed with the Huskers' performance. He said they performed up to the coaches' expectations because they did a tremendous job.

Schermann said the Nebraska coaches are looking for the Huskers to do better in their final home meets of the season. Nebraska will face Missouri in a dual meet Saturday night and then face New Mexico April 1.

"The girls are beginning to jell at this point," Schermann said. "We need to show off our potential against Missouri and New Mexico."

Huskers try for consistency

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"Anybody in the top 20 can always beat the No. 1 team."

Wolforth said the San Jose State Invitational is the premier tournament before the NCAA World Series in May. The teams participating in the three-day tournament include No. 1-ranked UCLA, Northwestern, California-Berkeley, Arizona State, Illinois State, Michigan, San Jose State, Oklahoma and Utah State.

Wolforth said Nebraska is capable of winning both tournaments. He said the next nine days are very important because the Huskers will be able to learn where they stand among other teams.

"It is a really exciting time for us because we can find out what we are really capable of doing," Wolforth said. "Absolutely the first thing you have to do is aim to win every single tournament you are in. We can win and have the opportunity to win every single ballgame. We could very well come out of here winning both tournaments."

Wolforth said Nebraska has to be one of the favorites in the San Jose State Invitational because it won the tournament last season.

"If we play the type of softball we are capable of, we will win," Wolforth said. "Our whole purpose is to get to the championships. We need to play well when we get there."

Extra police to patrol tourney

From Staff Reports

University of Nebraska-Lincoln police plan extra security for the NCAA tournament rounds scheduled in Lincoln Friday and Sunday, said Lt. Ken Cauble of the UNL Police Department.

Cauble said seven or eight extra

police officers will be on duty during the games. Usually about 18 officers are on duty during a regular Nebraska basketball game, he said.

Extra security is needed to comply with NCAA rules and because there will be more referees and eight visiting teams instead of one, he said.

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