

Nee picks OU to be NCAA champions

By Mark Derowitsch
Senior Reporter

A preseason consensus of the Big Eight basketball coaches revealed that this was the premier year for the conference.

Now, those predictions have turned into reality as two Big Eight teams — Kansas and Oklahoma — are included among the teams competing in this year's Final Four at Kemper Arena in Kansas City, Mo. The Jayhawks, who dropped a 70-68 decision to Nebraska earlier this season, will face Duke Saturday at 4:30 p.m., and the Sooners play No. 1-ranked Arizona at 7 p.m.

Nebraska coach Danny Nee said he isn't surprised by the accomplishments of Kansas or Oklahoma. He said this year was the premier

season for the Big Eight because of players like the Jayhawks' Danny Manning, Iowa State's Jeff Gray, the Sooners' Harvey Grant and Colorado's Scott Wilke.

"The coaches at the preseason press conference were singing the song about the Big Eight," Nee said. "From top to bottom, this conference has never been deeper or more powerful than this year."

Nee said the benefits of having two Big Eight teams in the Final Four will aid each conference school. The Big Eight will split almost \$3.75 million in NCAA Tournament revenues from Kansas' and Oklahoma's participation.

"I think it's very super and very exciting," he said. "It's great for the other Big Eight schools.

Now, recruiting should be easier because the talent will overflow and trickle down to the other teams."

Nee said the winner of the Oklahoma-Arizona contest will win this year's national championship game Monday night. He said this year's title game will be similar to last season's, when Indiana forward Keith Smart hit an 18-foot jump shot at the buzzer to give the Hoosiers a 74-73 win against Syracuse.

Nee disagrees with the skeptics who think Kansas should not be in the Final Four. He said the Jayhawks, who defeated Xavier, Murray State, Vanderbilt and Kansas State to earn a Final Four berth, are a great team that deserves to be there.

"You've got to beat them all if you want to

be the national champs," Nee said. "Every team in the Final Four is a great team."

Nee said the Kansas-Duke matchup should be a close game. He said Manning, a 6-foot-11 senior and a consensus All-America selection this season, and Kansas coach Larry Brown helped the Jayhawks overcome a midseason slump and earn a Final Four bid.

"Danny Manning maligned sports writers and had a great end of the year," Nee said. "He was double-teamed and he was still able to show he was the country's best player. Also, Larry Brown did a great job of coaching them through the season."

Nee said Duke should defeat Kansas and the Sooners will defeat Arizona. He predicted that Oklahoma will win the national championship by defeating Duke 85-80.

Softball coach hopes 1st home game proves high rank

By Mike Kluck
Staff Reporter

Two similar teams will face each other when the Nebraska softball team opens its home season tomorrow against Eastern Illinois.

Nebraska coach Ron Wolforth said Eastern Illinois is like the Cornhuskers because it possesses strong pitching supported by a good, scrappy defense. He said those factors will stiffen the Huskers' challenge when they face Eastern Illinois in a double-header at 2 p.m. at the Nebraska Softball Complex.

"I don't care what team they are, if they play good defense and have good pitching, they're going to be in the

ballgame," Wolforth said.

Eastern Illinois coach Janet Marquis said she is equally worried about the matchup. She said Nebraska is a solid team with a good mix of power and speed.

"We need to keep them off the bases so they can't use their speed," Marquis said. "We're going to play as tough as we can, and we may be able to win on our defense."

Marquis said Eastern Illinois' 11-6 record is misleading because all of the Panthers' games so far this season were played on the road in a two-week period.

Marquis said Eastern Illinois is led by senior pitcher Zam Mogill, a two-time all-Gateway Conference selec-

tion who enters Saturday's competition with a 10-3 record and a .79 earned run average. Marquis said Mogill's contribution is important because senior Sara Karcher, an all-Gateway Conference selection last year, is 1-3 with a 1.22 ERA.

Wolforth said he is looking forward to the addition of freshman Ann Halsne and sophomore Deb Hoffman to the Huskers' lineup. Halsne, a shortstop and third baseman, and Hoffman joined the team Tuesday after finishing their basketball season.

Marquis said Eastern Illinois is led offensively by senior Angel Lendvay, a three-time all-Gateway Conference selection who has hit two home runs

this season. She said Lendvay is supported by freshman Carrie Voisin, who is hitting .288.

Marquis and Wolforth said they are looking at Saturday's matchup as an opportunity to increase their ratings. The Huskers are tied with Florida State at No. 13, while the unranked Panthers lost three games to the Seminoles earlier this season in Tallahassee, Fla.

Wolforth said he knows Eastern Illinois has nothing to lose. He said he expects the Panthers to give a good effort against Nebraska.

"Our basic thing is to attack and be real aggressive on offense," Wolforth said. "If we hit the ball we will win."

Wolforth said it is important for

Nebraska to win both games of the double header. He said if the Huskers get swept or if they split with Eastern Illinois, it would leave a bad mark on Nebraska's national ranking.

Wolforth said the Huskers have been the target of a lot of criticism for their 17-8 record. He said the record is disappointing to him because he expected the Huskers to be 21-4, but he hopes to start a string of wins Saturday.

"We're looking to put our game together this weekend," Wolforth said. "We're looking to string together some wins. We would like five or six wins but want at least four

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Huskers hoping for ninth straight title

By Kyle Schurman
Staff Reporter

Nebraska will mix balance with momentum while trying to sweep the Big Eight outdoor track championships for the second straight year.

Nebraska coach Gary Pepin said the Cornhuskers will ride the momentum they built after winning the Big Eight indoor championships earlier this season. He said Nebraska should be able to keep that momentum going because it is very balanced.

"Those people who did well indoors should do well outdoors," Pepin said. "I'm more concerned with where our weak events are than our strongest events."

The Husker women have won the indoor and outdoor titles the last eight years. The men won the indoor and outdoor titles in 1987, making Nebraska the first team in Big Eight history to sweep all four conference titles in the same season.

Pepin said sweeping the four titles this season is a goal for Nebraska. He said it is too early to know if the Huskers can win the outdoor titles and reach that goal, but Nebraska should

do well at the Big Eight championships May 13-15 in Ames, Iowa.

"We don't have any real holes," Pepin said. "Our men's and women's teams will certainly be some of the better ones, but it's so early in the season it's hard to tell. Oklahoma should have a great outdoor team, too."

The Nebraska men won four events at last year's outdoor conference meet, but return no Big Eight champions. The Husker women won six conference events in 1987 and all six defending champions return.

Pepin said the Kansas Relays April 22-23 in Lawrence, Kan., and the Drake Relays April 29-30 in Des Moines, Iowa, will be the top meets before the Big Eight championships.

He said a quadrangular April 16 at Eugene, Ore., against Louisiana State, Oregon and Washington State will also be an important meet. That the NCAA outdoor championships will be in Eugene from June 1-4 is "helpful" for Nebraska, he said.

"But meets in Eugene are great," Pepin said. "They get crowds of 8,000 to 10,000. It's like a small version of a Nebraska football game. The fans

out there are really super."

Nebraska will open its outdoor season Saturday at the Ed Weir Track against Kansas State and South Dakota.

Pepin said he wants to have a successful outdoor season.

"If we could win both conference meets, qualify people for nationals and do as well outdoors in the championships as we did indoors, we should have a successful season," Pepin said.

The Nebraska schedule:

April 2 — Kansas State, South Dakota at Lincoln; 6-7 — Texas Relays Decathlon/Heptathlon at Austin, Texas; 8-9 — Texas Relays at Austin; 9 — Nebraska Intercollegiate at Lincoln; 16 — Louisiana State, Oregon, Washington State at Eugene, Ore.; 22-23 — Kansas Relays at Lawrence; 29-30 — Drake Relays at Des Moines, Iowa; May 6-7 — Howard Wood-Dakota Relays at Sioux Falls, S.D.; 13-15 — Big Eight Championships at Ames, Iowa; 18 — Nebraska Twilight at Lincoln; 25 — Nebraska Twilight at Lincoln; June 1-4 — NCAA Championships at Eugene, Ore.

Triangular meet will preview Big 8

By Kyle Schurman
Staff Reporter

Nebraska will get a preview of the Big Eight championships when it opens its outdoor season Saturday against Kansas State and South Dakota.

Nebraska assistant coach Mark Kostek, who watched Kansas State finish second to Nebraska in the indoor and outdoor competitions last year, said the Wildcats have the needed talent to do well at this season's Big Eight championships.

"We feel like Kansas State is one of the teams that could challenge for the title again this year," Kostek said. "We should be able to get a good feel for what will happen at the Big Eight meet."

Kostek said the Cornhuskers want to have a good meet Saturday to begin the outdoor season on a positive note and to continue riding the momentum

they built during the indoor season, when they won the men and women's Big Eight titles.

"Outdoor is a whole new season," Kostek said. "We were very pleased with the indoor campaign and hope we can keep the momentum going. We've got the ball rolling, now we have to keep it rolling."

Kostek said the Huskers have increased the intensity of their workouts since the end of the indoor season and may not be ready to give peak performances Saturday.

But, Kostek said, Nebraska should still do well in the meet, especially in the field events. He said the distance events would be the most closely contested.

"The distance events are where Kansas State and South Dakota have put their emphasis, so they'll be strong there," he said. "It should be a really well-rounded meet competitive-wise."

Kostek said most of Nebraska's athletes will compete Saturday, but Kansas State's Kenny Harrison, the defending Big Eight outdoor triple- and long-jump champion, will not because of a prior commitment.

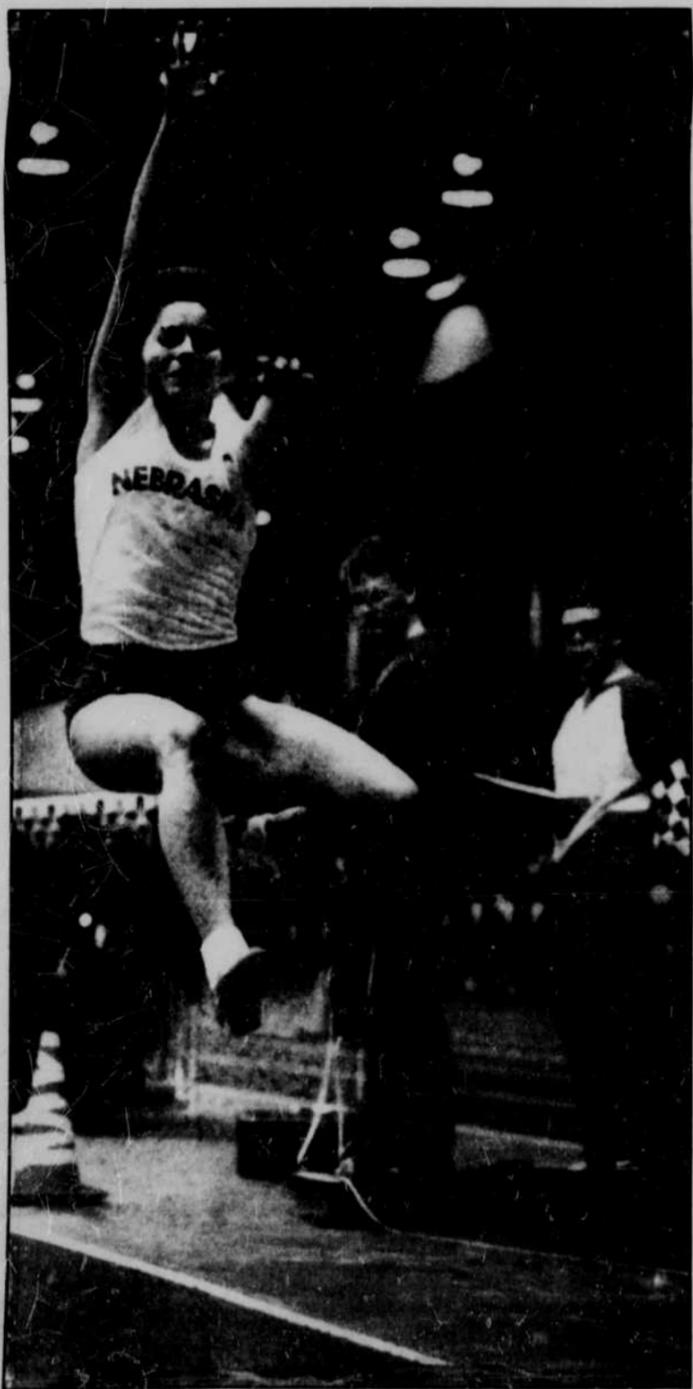
He said Saturday's meet will help Nebraska prepare for the Nebraska Intercollegiate meet next Saturday in Lincoln. The intercollegiate meet is for athletes from all Nebraska colleges.

"The Nebraska Intercollegiate should be a real good meet," Kostek said. "We're going to have two real good home meets for our kids."

Kostek said it's difficult to know how well the Huskers will perform in Saturday's meet because it is the first outdoor meet of the year.

"We're just trying to kick off our outdoor season with a good meet," Kostek said.

The field events at Ed Weir Track begin at 11 a.m., and the running events start at 12:30 p.m.



Eric Gregory/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's Kim Guthrie competes in the long jump earlier this season.