

Arizona Invitational to open Huskers' spring season

By Darran Fowler
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska women's softball team is loaded with talent, Coach Ron Wolforth said, but that isn't the only ingredient necessary to be successful.

Wolforth said a team's mental attitude is just as important when competing in NCAA sports.

This year's team is the most physically talented group he has seen at Nebraska, he said.

"We have outstanding athletes," Wolforth said. "We've never had 17 better athletes on one team as we do this year, but mentally we need experience."

Nebraska, which has won five straight Big Eight titles, is 14th in the pre-season national rankings. The

Cornhuskers' roster includes five seniors, two sophomores, one junior and nine freshmen.

Wolforth said the success of this year's team hinges on the adjustment of the younger players to the demands and pressures of competing at the collegiate level. He said Nebraska's long practices that are combined with academics and social lives are a big difference when compared to high school.

"Division I is real intense," Wolforth said. "The mental maturity of the freshmen concerns me the most."

Wolforth said the younger players gained some experience during the fall season when the Huskers finished with a 10-4-1 record. But, he said, the time between the fall and spring seasons was more beneficial.

"We matured more mentally in the off-season," Wolforth said.

Wolforth said the fall record isn't a good indication of the team's strength because of the lack of competition. He said Nebraska spent its fall playing against upset-minded teams that it is expected to beat.

Wolforth said Nebraska's 14th-place ranking is a welcome relief because the Huskers have started their previous three seasons ranked 2nd.

"It's a breath of fresh air," Wolforth said. "If you're No. 2 you're expected to be there at the end. There's just one way to go."

Big Eight rivals Oklahoma State and Iowa State are also ranked in the Top 20. Oklahoma State, which is

ranked 3rd, returns almost every player from last year's team that was undefeated in the Big Eight's regular season. Iowa State is ranked 10th.

Wolforth said Nebraska will have a difficult time defending its Big Eight title. He said Big Eight softball has reached a competitive level that is similar to the balanced nature of the conference's basketball.

Wolforth said Nebraska will be challenged because it has to replace four of its top players from last year's team. Those players include pitchers Lori Sippel and Donna Deardorff, infielder Margie Ogradowicz, who was the Huskers' top offensive threat, and Lecanna Miles, who was their top base-stealing threat.

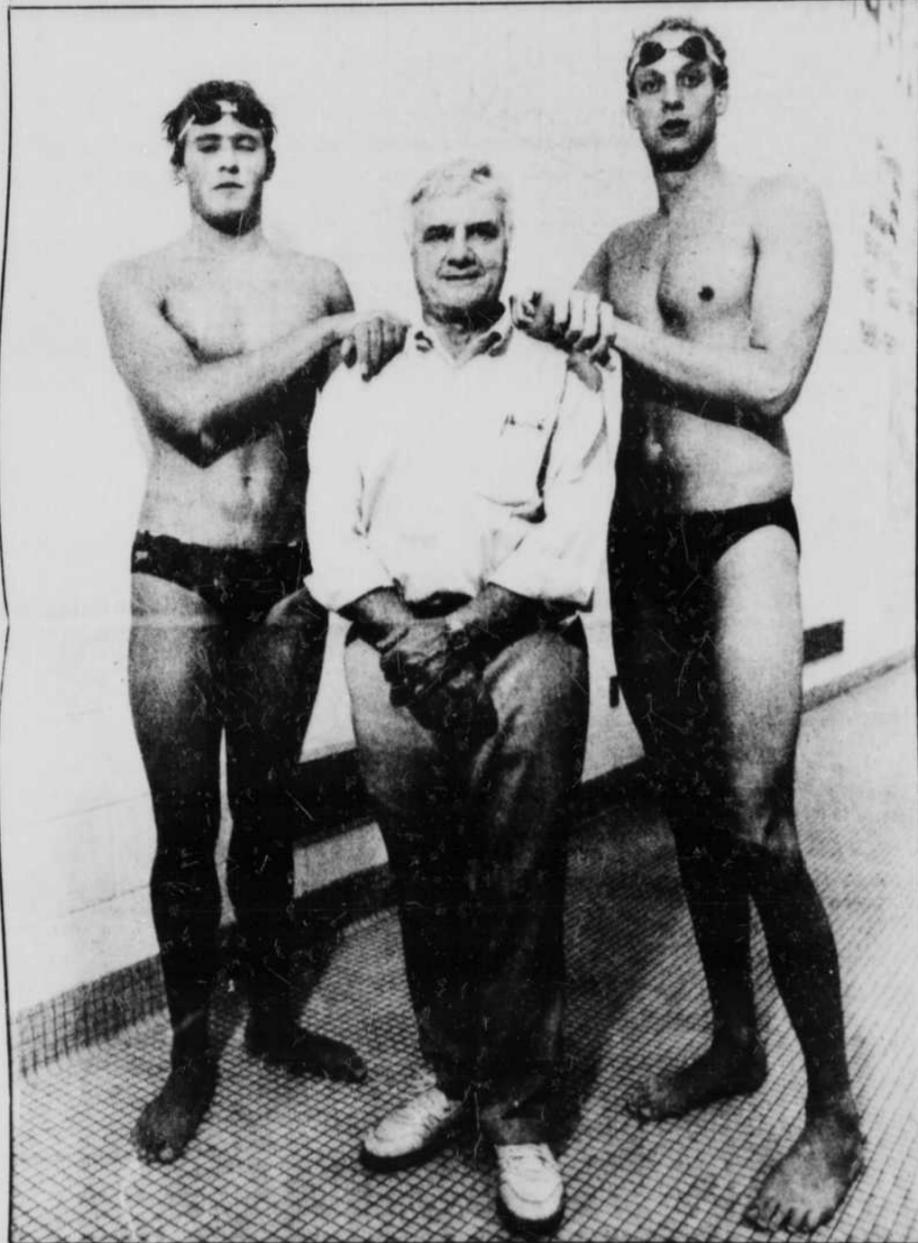
Infielders Jennifer Biallas, Ruth Chatwin, Jane Kremer, Katie Wolda

and outfielder Janelle Frese all return for their senior seasons. Junior Jill Rishel also returns.

Nebraska opens its spring season today at the Arizona Invitational. The tournament, which will run through Sunday in Tucson, Ariz., includes three nationally ranked teams -- Nebraska, 6th-ranked Arizona, and 8th-ranked California State-Fullerton. The remaining teams that will be competing are Northwestern, Toledo, U.S. International, Bowling Green, California State-Berkeley, Kansas, California State-Long Beach, New Mexico State, Oregon and Utah.

Wolforth said he knows the tournament will be tough.

"We could come back 4-4 and not have played badly," he said.



Nebraska men's swimming coach Cal Bentz stands between 6-foot-7 Seddon Keyter (left) and 6-8 Mark Nieuwenhuis.

Tall newcomers give swim team championship boost, Bentz says

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

A pair of tall newcomers have helped give Nebraska men's swimming coach Cal Bentz high hopes for the rest of the season.

Bentz said Seddon Keyter, a 6-foot-7 backstroker from Cape Town, South Africa, and Mark Nieuwenhuis, a 6-8 freestyler from Duran, South Africa, should make strong contributions when Nebraska competes in the Big Eight and NCAA championships.

The Cornhuskers will compete in the Big Eight championships Feb. 23 through 25 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center and the NCAA championships will be held March 30 through April 1 in Indianapolis.

Bentz said Keyter and Nieuwenhuis possess an immediate advantage because of their height. He said the height is an asset because both swimmers have excellent coordination.

"Size is not always an advantage if you do not have skill and coordination, which both of those guys have," Bentz said. "It's very much as it is in many other sports -- you have to have strength and power."

Bentz said Keyter's and Nieuwenhuis' slender builds mean they have more surface area that comes into contact with the water. He said it also means they have an advantage when they reach for the walls.

Bentz, who swam at Nebraska prior to taking his coaching position in 1978, said he expects to see more tall swimmers in the future. He said tall swimmers represent a trend that is increasing in popularity.

Nieuwenhuis said he likes to use his 6-8 frame in an intimidating manner. He said swimmers feel intimidated when they line up next to him on the starting blocks.

"I know I feel intimidated when I see someone who is taller than me," Nieuwenhuis said.

Bentz said Nieuwenhuis used his height and flashed his potential last Saturday during Nebraska's 63-50 victory against Kansas. Nieuwenhuis, who was filling in for injured teammate and fellow South African Peter Williams, won the 100-yard freestyle in 45.13 -- the best time ever recorded in the 60-year history of the Husker program.

Nieuwenhuis said he credits his record to the individual attention he receives from the Nebraska coaching staff. He said he could not find that attention at Alabama, where he spent the first three years of college.

Nieuwenhuis said he transferred from Alabama because he had a "pretty poor" season as a junior. He said he also left the Tuscaloosa, Ala., school because Alabama swimming coach Don Gambriel revoked his scholarship.

Gambriel said he revoked Nieuwenhuis' scholarship because the senior swimmer had a "lack of contribution" as a junior.

"A lot of it had to do with missing practices and study halls," Gambriel said. "I'm sure he's probably not real happy with me, but I was trying to do him a favor."

Bentz said he did not have any second thoughts when Nieuwenhuis contacted him about transferring. He said Nieuwenhuis has been a positive addition.

"I think he adds to our team," Bentz said. "He's fun and he does an excellent job."

Bentz said Keyter has also done a good job. He said Keyter, a freshman who arrived at Nebraska in January, "has the potential to be among the best swimmers in school history."

Keyter said he does not feel pressured by such accolades.

"I don't feel any pressure because I'm not one of the better swimmers," Keyter said.

Keyter said the biggest change he has encountered since arriving at Nebraska is adjusting from long course to short course competition. He said the long course competition, which is swam in meters instead of yards, usually required him to execute one turn while the short course competition requires as many as three.

"It's a big change," Keyter said. "There's so much more emphasis placed on starts and turns."

Keyter said he is looking forward to the upcoming Big Eight and NCAA competitions even though he has never competed in them.

"Everybody is talking about them," he said. "I've heard all about them. We want to win (the Big Eight championship) again this year."

Today is opening of Fonner season; simulcast wagers are expected to rise

By Steve Sipple
Staff Reporter

Grand Island's Fonner Park will open its thoroughbred racing season today, and Lincoln race fans can view the opener via simulcast.

State Fair Park, along with Nebraska's three other thoroughbred tracks, will simulcast Fonner Park's entire season.

Intrastate simulcasting in Nebraska provided a big boost for Fonner last season. Off-track betting raised the track's crowd 64 percent to 7,983 daily and wagering 65 percent (\$837,906). Meanwhile, on-track attendance dipped 23 percent to 4,185 and handle 14 percent to \$392,938.

Last season while simulcasting Fonner's races, State Fair Park averaged 1,024 patrons per day who

wagered an average of \$124,000, said State Fair Park General Manager John Skold.

Those figures surprised Skold, he said Wednesday. "We had estimated beforehand a mutual handle of between \$50,000 and \$70,000," Skold said.

Skold said the figures may improve this year.

"We certainly hope we can equal what we did last year," Skold said. "Maybe even up it a little -- now that more people are aware of simulcasting and it's caught on."

Skold said State Fair Parks splits the mutual handle, after common expenses, with the live track -- in this case Fonner. State Fair Park funds go into its racing operation and the state fair.

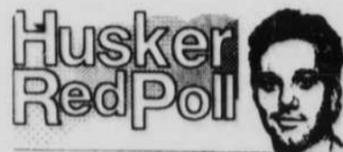
Fonner Park will run on a Thursday through Sunday schedule, with one exception. There will be racing Wednesday, March 22, but none on Easter Sunday, March 26.

Post times are 2 p.m. weekdays through March 24 and 3 p.m. beginning March 30.

Saturdays and Sundays will have a 1:30 p.m. start.

Simulcasting at State Fair Park will be held in the enclosed grandstand area. Patrons can enter through either the grandstand's east or west entrance. General admission is free.

Patrons can also purchase a \$5 table in the Winners Circle -- a curtained-off area in the east end of the grandstand. The \$5 table is good for up to five persons. Each table has its own television.



By Craig Christensen
OCR Relations Director

The Top Ten

1. LOSERS (4-0)
2. ATO A-1 (3-0)
3. RUNNING REBELS (3-0)
4. UNL TOBC (5-0)
5. CHI PHI A1 (3-0)
6. SPANISH FLYERS (3-0)
7. SIG EP B-2 (4-0)
8. SAE B-1 (4-1)
9. FIJI A (2-1)
10. BETA SIG B (3-1)

KEY GAME OF THE WEEK

(1) LOSERS vs. (4) UNL TOBC
9:40 P.M., FEB. 16
AT ML 301-2 GYM

Coach Melton has bypass operation

Nebraska assistant football coach John Melton underwent coronary bypass surgery Tuesday afternoon at Bryan Memorial Hospital.

Melton, 61, has been a member of the Cornhusker coaching staff since Bob Devaney came to Nebraska in 1962.

Melton has spent the last 16 years as the Huskers' linebacker coach. He also coached the tight ends and wingbacks for four years along with his linebacker duties. During his first five years at Nebraska, he served as the freshman coach.

Don Bryant, Nebraska sports information director and an assistant director of the athletic department, said Melton's surgery followed a routine physical in which doctors discovered complications that necessitated immediate surgery.

After surgery, Melton was listed in fair, but stable, condition in the hospital's intensive care unit.