

Husker wrestlers erase thoughts, down Drake

By Steve Sipple
Staff Reporter

Despite having bigger and better things on their mind Wednesday night, the Nebraska wrestlers first had to take care of the business at hand. The business was Drake, and Nebraska took care of the Bulldogs 36-3 in a non-conference wrestling dual at the Bob Devaney Sports Center track area.

With a dual against sixth-ranked Big Eight rival Oklahoma scheduled for Friday, Nebraska coach Tim Neumann said he thought his team may have been looking past Drake on Wednesday.

But No. 14 Nebraska erased any thoughts of a letdown by rolling to a 33-0 lead after seven matches against the Bulldogs.

"I really like the fact we wrestled with the intensity we did," said Neumann, whose team raised its record to 12-5-2. "It would have been easy to look past this one to Oklahoma."

The win was Nebraska's ninth in its last 10 duals and gave the Huskers an 8-1 home record, their best home mark since the 1982-83 team went 10-1 in Lincoln.

Nebraska beat Drake despite being "tired and physically beat," Neumann said. The Huskers, in the midst of preparations for the Oklahoma dual in Norman, Okla., held an afternoon practice prior to Wednesday's match.

Neumann said his team's hard work paid off against the Bulldogs.

"(The Huskers) like a one-match

dual in front of a crowd," Neumann said. "It gives them an opportunity to put their hard work on the mat."

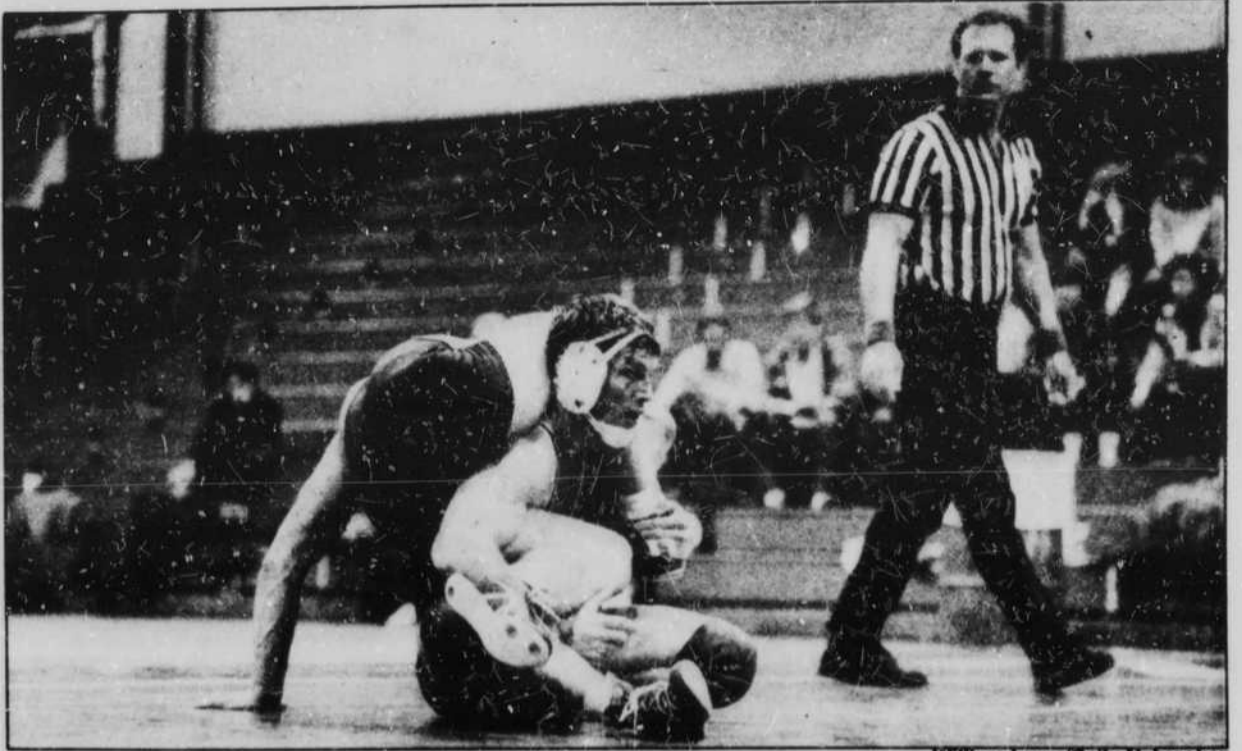
Neumann was especially impressed with the work of 118-pound junior Jim Sanchez and 134-pound senior Mike Hemann. Sanchez began the Huskers' onslaught by defeating Drake sophomore Vance Light 7-4.

'I've beat tougher kids than him so I felt I could win. I felt I wrestled well, but at the end I wasn't happy with the way I let up.'
--Hemann

Sanchez used a takedown with eight seconds left in the match to raise his record to 17-14. Light dropped to 30-9-1.

Hemann gave Nebraska a 11-0 lead by recording a 4-2 decision against Jon Anderson. Anderson lost only his fifth match against 41 wins. Hemann raised his record to 10-3-1.

Neumann said he knew Nebraska would cruise to the win after Sanchez and Hemann defeated Drake's two toughest wrestlers.



William Laver/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's Shane Snyder grits as he competes against Drakers Rod Lyman. Snyder won the match 9-4.

The duo's victories show Nebraska is peaking at the right time, Neumann said.

"We really are. Jim and Hemann beat their two best guys," Neumann said. "They both did a great job, but not a real surprising job."

Hemann said he wasn't surprised by the win.

"I've beat tougher kids than him so

I felt I could win," Hemann said. "I felt I wrestled well (against Anderson), but at the end I wasn't happy with the way I let up."

Hemann led 3-1 before Anderson was awarded a penalty point for stalling. Hemann was awarded a point for riding time, accounting for the final score.

Drake coach Lonnie Timmerman

said he took solace in that his team wrestled with intensity, even after Light and Anderson lost.

"I was very proud of the upperweights for never giving up," Timmerman said.

The Bulldogs won once, when freshman Brett Sharp defeated Nebraska's Tony Robbins 8-4 at 190 pounds. Drake dropped to 19-9.

Tough defense pleases Nee

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didn't use revenge as a major inspirational tool.

Nebraska's victory came two weeks after the Buffaloes defeated the Huskers 83-80 in Boulder, Colo.

"I never use negatives as the incentive," Nee said. "The incentive was Nebraska's trying to get a win at home. The incentive was we're trying to get out of the basement. The incentive was to try and get into a position to control our own destiny at the end of the season."

Nebraska improved its record to 15-12 overall and 3-8 in the Big Eight. The Huskers took advantage of Iowa State's 97-89 victory against Kansas Wednesday night in Ames, Iowa, to move into a sixth-place tie with the Jayhawks.

The loss dropped Colorado to 7-17 and 2-9. The setback, which was Colorado's 43rd straight conference road loss, gave Colorado sole possession of the Big Eight cellar. Nebraska and Colorado entered the game tied for last place in the Big Eight.

Nee said Nebraska played excellent defense early in the game.

"I was very pleased with the intensity of our players," Nee said. "I

thought they fought hard. The defense -- I was very pleased with all aspects of the game."

The Huskers' took advantage of their aggressive man-to-man defense by turning nine first-half steals into a lead Colorado couldn't overcome.

Nebraska's pressure defense ignited a 12-0 run that propelled the Huskers to a 15-2 lead with 13:44 left in the half. The Huskers' then capped off the half by outscoring Colorado 21-4 in the final five minutes.

The Buffaloes never recovered from their cold first-half shooting.

A three-point basket by Buffalo guard Reggie Morton cut Nebraska's lead to 66-43 with 10:33 remaining. But the Huskers scored the next 10 points en route to winning their second-straight home game.

The Buffaloes' shooting improved little in the second half, as Colorado connected on 33.8 percent of its shots in the game. Nebraska finished the game connecting on 61 percent of its shots from the field.

Nebraska was led in scoring by forward Beau Reid. Reid tallied a game-high 21 points, 15 of which came in the decisive first half. Forward Ray Richardson was the only other Husker to hit double figures.

'Flat' second half dooms NU

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Beck said she was especially impressed with Colorado guard Bridget Turner. She said Turner played a key role in throttling Nebraska's defensive changes by forcing the Buffaloes to adjust.

Beck said Nebraska's various defensive changes worked for a while,

Players: Coach wins off-field

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from home," Sirak said, "and I know many other players feel the same way."

Sirak and Ramos said Sanders also works hard to develop good baseball skills.

Ramos, who transferred from Otero (Colo.) Junior College, said Sanders helped make his transition to Division I baseball a smooth one. He said Sanders worked with him on hand placement and opening his stance so he could hit faster pitchers.

"He's the best coach I ever had without a doubt," Ramos said.

but eventually caved in largely because of the presence of Turner.

"That comes from leadership," she said. "I thought our defensive changes helped a while but we couldn't hold it. I credit Turner."

Nebraska's next game is on Saturday, when the Huskers face Iowa State in their final regular season game of the year. That game begins at 1 p.m. at the Hilton Coliseum in Ames, Iowa.

Sirak said Sanders takes time out before and after practice to throw batting practice to any player who wants to work on hitting.

"He'll even come in on his day off," Sirak said. "Not many coaches will do that."

Sanders said he attributes much of his coaching success to his family and friends who have supported him during his life -- not the least of which is Devaney.

"I've learned a lot from Coach Devaney as a friend, as a professional colleague, and just watching the way he works," Sanders said. "We're very fortunate as a coaching staff to have him as a reference."

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