

CU to battle NU's height in matchup

By Cory Golden
Staff Reporter

A pair of in-state rivals will compete before a national-television audience when the Nebraska men's basketball team faces Creighton tonight.

Nebraska coach Danny Nee said he knows all about the importance of the Cornhusker-Creighton matchup. He said the game is important because it will be televised by ESPN and because the Bluejays are a natural rival.

That rivalry will be tested at 6:10 p.m. at the Omaha Civic Auditorium. The game will be televised by ESPN (cable channel 23), with Sean McDonough providing the play-by-play and Quinn Buckner providing the color commentary.

Nee, who has a 2-2 record against the Bluejays during his three-year term with the Huskers, expects the matchup to be another good one.

Creighton coach Tony Barone said one thing his team has going for it is experience. The Bluejays return

four starters from last year's team that won the Missouri Valley Conference Championship while advancing to the opening round of the NCAA tournament.

The key returnees are 6-foot-6 forward Bob Harstad and 6-10 center Chad Gallagher, a pair of juniors who average 20.7 and 16.8 points per game. Gallagher and Harstad were billed as the "Dynamic Duo" before the season began.

The remaining starters are forward Todd Eisner and guards Darin Plautz and Latrell Wrightsell. Plautz alternates with senior Matt Rogenburk -- a returning starter from last year's squad -- and senior Porter Moser.

That combination has produced wins over Montana, Cleveland State and Western Michigan this season while dropping games to Southwest Missouri State, Missouri and Coppin State. Coppin State is a Division II school from Baltimore, Md.

Barone said he isn't concerned with his team's 3-3 start. "That really doesn't bother me,"

he said. "Sportswriters and fans talk about it, but we're just trying to get geared up for the conference."

Barone said he is concerned about Nebraska's height. The Huskers' front line includes 7-2 center Rich King, 6-9 forward Richard van Poelgeest and 6-7 Lewis Geter.

"They're way too big for us," he said.

Barone said those size woes may be compounded by his team's rebounding. Creighton has been edged in rebounding by a 37.8 to 34.8 margin this year.

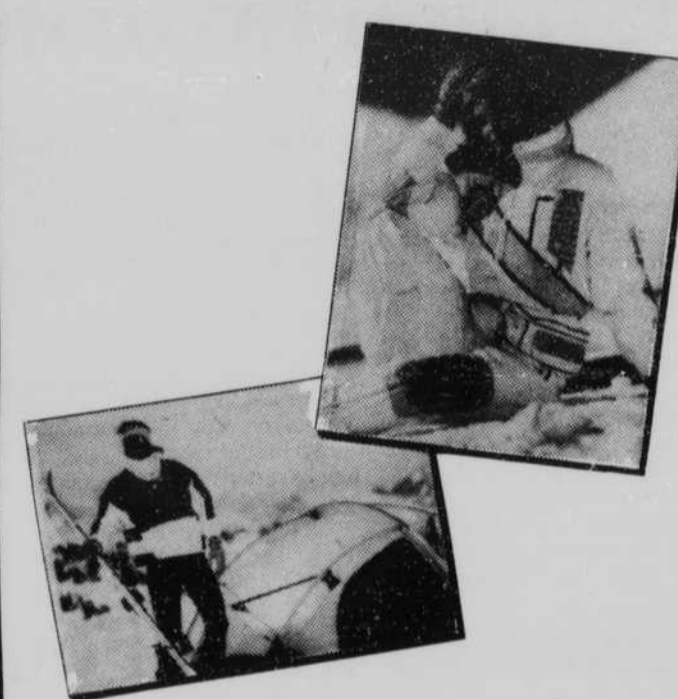
"We have to rebound," Barone said, "and that's something we're not too good at right now."

Barone said one area where Creighton excels is the free throw line. He said the Bluejays are shooting a misleading 68 percent from the charity stripe.

"Our overall percentage doesn't look good," Barone said, "but that's because we've got one guy shooting 1 for 11. Other than that, I'm happy with our shooting -- we've hit them when we've needed to."

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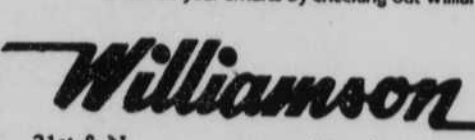
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