

Seven Cornhuskers qualify for NCAAs

By Sara Bauder
Staff Reporter

In a race fast enough to qualify the top three places to the NCAA Indoor Championships, Cornhusker Fran tenBensel said she knew the finish would be close.

It was close enough to bring the Frank Sevigne Husker Invitational crowd to its feet Saturday as tenBensel fought her way to a first-place finish over Iowa State University's Jacqui Parker and Michelle Taylor of the University of Southern California.

TenBensel said the finish was so close, she wasn't sure if she actually won.

"I had to ask if I had won," she said. "I was just so happy to see the time and that I had qualified."

With her time of 2:07.69 minutes, tenBensel was one of three Husker

women to reach national qualifying marks Saturday. Joining tenBensel as qualifiers to the national championships March 9-10 in Indianapolis were Ximena Restrepo in the 200-meter dash and Yvonne van der Kolk in the mile run.

On the men's side, Husker national qualifiers were Tamas Molnar in the 400 and the 400 relay (Molnar, Jerry Marsee, Bobby Jelks and Mark Jackson).

TenBensel said she knew that if she wanted to qualify for the national meet, Saturday was the time to do it.

"This was the meet for me to get a national qualifying time," she said. "The best runners were here, and this was just the place to do it."

After running a preliminary heat in the 800, tenBensel wasn't sure she would make the finals.

Jay Dirksen, who coaches the Husker distance runners, said he was

very pleased with her time Saturday.

"She didn't run very well Friday night, but she came back from it," Dirksen said. "She's just a great competitor, and she is much stronger this year than last."

Restrepo ran two qualifying times in the 200, one Friday night in the semi-finals and again Saturday while winning the finals. Restrepo's semi-final time of 23.75 seconds set both Husker Invitational and Bob Devaney Center Track records, breaking the mark of 23.89 set by Alabama University's Pauline Davis in 1989.

Restrepo also anchored the women's 400 relay that took third place and set a provisional qualifying mark for the national championships. Provisional marks are set so that if not enough athletes reach the NCAA's qualifying standard, there will still be a full slate of competitors at the national meet.

Restrepo already had qualified for the national championships in the 400. She said she will have to decide which event, the 400 or the 200, she will enter at the national meet.

"Our relay team is really close to going to the meet," she said. "I can't run in both individual events at the national meet because they are too close together and it would be too much."

Restrepo said her favorite event is the 200.

"I'm a 200-meter runner," she said. "The 400 is getting too long for me."

Nebraska coach Gary Pepin said Restrepo may be one of the most versatile sprinters in the nation.

"I don't know if another female sprinter in the country has demonstrated the range that she has," Pepin said. "We started her out this year

with the 600, which she has run very well, and then she ran the 400, and now she has a very fast 200 as well."

In addition to the relay team of Kim Walker, Ethel Edwards, Beth Webster and Restrepo, four Husker women set individual provisional marks Saturday. Provisional qualifiers were Edwards in the 55-meter dash, Walker in the 200, Sammie Gdowski in the 3,000 and Meredy Porter in the high jump.

Porter already has qualified for the national meet in the high jump, and Gdowski has qualified in the mile run.

Five Husker men set provisional qualifying marks Saturday. They were Stephen Golding in the 55 hurdles, Kevin Coleman in the shot put, Jacques van Rensburg in the 3,000 run and James Cobb and Bob Jelks in the 200.

Race has many meanings for NU's Jelks and family

By Robert Richardson
Staff Reporter

Bobby Jelks looks focused, as he readies himself for the final in the 200-meter dash at the Frank Sevigne Husker Invitational.

He paces on the track telling himself to run his own race, warming up with his headset playing the latest rap music.

His whole attitude is that of confidence. The front of his shirt reads "BJ is Live on Stage." On the back, the words "Bye-Bye" appear for the benefit of out-ran opponents.

As he takes off his sweats and his two gold chains, his last words before the race are "this is it."

"I'm more nervous than he is," says his younger brother Chris.

With the sound of the starting gun, Jelks is slow out of the blocks. He makes up for it on the second turn. Down the stretch, his high-knee style is smooth as he jets to the finish line.

This was a special race for Jelks. He ran against Kevin Little, a three-time All-American from Drake.

Jelks relishes the rivalry. "It's a friendly competition, but today was a grudge match," he said. Little agreed.

"We've always been real close. We're fierce competitors," Little said. "That's what I love about this meet."

The finish was a blur of three individuals crossing the line within .19 seconds of each other. Little finished

first in 21.36, followed by Jelks (21.54) and Nebraska's James Cobb (21.55).

Chris knows what the loss means to his brother.

"He's gonna be pissed the rest of the night," Chris said. "You don't know him like I know him."

The race is a mirror image for Bobby.

"It was the same circumstances as last year," he said. "Me and Little were in the same lanes. He passed me in the same spot."

Jelks doesn't have much time to be disappointed. In two hours, the 1,600-meter relay will be run. Jelks is the third leg.

"I had three other guys depending on me so I couldn't let that stop me," he said.

And he didn't. The finals of the 1,600 relay ended with Cornhuskers in the winner's circle. Jelks, along with Tamas Molnar, Ken Waller and Mark Jackson, qualified for nationals and set a meet record and an indoor complex record with a time of 3:08.72 minutes.

Jelks felt good about his relay performance. So good, in fact, that he more than forgot about his earlier disappointment.

"This mile relay more than made up for it," he said.

The meet was a special one for Jelks. His parents, Robert and Wanda, traveled from Decatur, Ill., to watch him run.

See JELKS on 8

Catcher leads Nebraska to season-opening victory

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

Sean McKenna didn't waste any time making a name for himself on the collegiate baseball scene.

McKenna, a freshman catcher from Woodbury, N.J., hit two doubles and scored three runs to lead the Nebraska baseball team to a season-opening, 18-4 victory against Kearney State on Sunday before 389 fans at Buck Beltzer Field.

Nebraska baseball coach John Sanders said he was impressed by McKenna's performance. He said McKenna's contribution was a big one because it shows that the former USA junior team member is capable of playing a key role this season.

Sanders said McKenna is one of three catchers who are competing for playing time. He said the other two are juniors Charlie Colon and Brian Arntzen.

"We've got a lot of good catch-

ers," Sanders said. "I've been impressed by the depth at that position."

Sanders said catcher is a good position to have depth because of the vigorous physical demands involved in it. He said he is sure all three players will get plenty of playing time this season.

Sanders said McKenna earned the start Sunday because of his performance throughout the fall.

"He's been solid," Sanders said. "He's a freshman, but he's interesting in that he gives us some real pluses."

Sanders said McKenna's best asset is his natural ability, which he flashed against Kearney State. McKenna said after the game that he credited his success to confidence.

"I was pretty confident," McKenna said. "I've been in tougher situations, so I really wasn't worried."

See DEPTH on 7



Northern Iowa's Greg Herber displays a toothless grin while competing against Nebraska's Chris Nelson. Nelson defeated Herber 3-2.

NU wrestlers show fatigue, but edge out Northern Iowa

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

It took five years as Nebraska's wrestling coach, but Tim Neumann finally beat Northern Iowa.

But the 26-10 Cornhusker win Saturday night at the Bob Devaney Sports Center -- the first Nebraska win against the Panthers since 1984 -- didn't please Neumann as much as he would have liked.

Something still bothered him. "The biggest thing that bothered me is that we got tired," he said. "We showed a lot of fatigue, and that's an easy way out for a wrestler."

"That's something we've got to work on this week." Still, Neumann said he was happy to get the win.

"It was satisfying, because (Northern Iowa) is an awfully good team," he said. "They're a step above Notre Dame and some of the other teams that have wrestled here."

Nebraska beat then-No. 13-ranked Notre Dame 30-8 three weeks ago. The Huskers, ranked fourth in the nation, have won all four home

duals this season and are 17-3-1 in duals this season.

A fifth-consecutive loss for Nebraska seemed possible after Saturday's first match, when third-ranked Mark Schwab beat John Buxton 12-6 in the 118-pound weight class.

The Huskers won the next three weights, but Northern Iowa's Jamie Byrne won a major decision over Nebraska's Dan Harrison at 158 to regain a 10-9 team lead.

Four points are awarded in major decisions -- a win by 8 to 14 points -- instead of three points for a normal fall.

But that was the last weight the ninth-ranked Panthers would win. The Huskers won two major decisions and a default in the final four classes to ensure the win.

The win was only the third for Nebraska in 32 matches with Northern Iowa.

Neumann said the Huskers will begin practicing twice a day Feb. 19 in preparation for the Big Eight championships, which will take place at the Sports Center on March 11.

"We're in good shape, but we

need to tone down and get into the best shape we can," he said. "We can't wrestle fatigued in a tournament the way we did tonight."

Nebraska will face Minnesota on Wednesday in Minneapolis, then will return home Saturday to take on Oklahoma at the Sports Center.

Saturday's results:

118 -- Mark Schwab (UNI) decided John Buxton, 12-3.

126 -- Jason Kelber (NU) decided Duaine Martin, 8-2.

134 -- Dave Drogemuehler (NU) decided Pat Hamilton, 4-2.

142 -- Paul Herrera (NU) decided Steve Hartle, 4-2.

150 -- Gary Steffensmeier (UNI) decided Todd Enger, 8-7.

158 -- Jamie Byrne (UNI) major decision over Dan Harrison, 12-3.

167 -- Scott Chenoweth (NU) major decision over Greg White, 12-3.

177 -- Corey Olson (NU) won by default over Rich Powers, 6:15. Olson was leading 12-5.

190 -- Chris Nelson (NU) decided Greg Herber, 3-2.

Hwt. -- Joe Malecek (NU) major decision over Greg Berg, 13-3.