

Coach's view remains 'cautiously optimistic'

By Darran Fowler
Staff Reporter

If the Nebraska softball team does not want to let down its coach, then it must win the 23-team Florida State invitational this weekend.

Nebraska softball coach Ron Wolforth said the three-day tournament, which starts today in Tallahassee, Fla., is one the Cornhuskers should win.

"If we're going to be a good team we got to start winning tournaments like this," Wolforth said. "If we don't get one (first place), I'll be very disappointed."

A first-place finish for sixth-ranked Nebraska won't be easy, as the tournament's field includes ninth-ranked Southwestern Louisiana, 15th-ranked Missouri and 20th-ranked Florida State.

Indiana, Illinois State, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Stetson, Furman, Northern Iowa, Bradley, New Mexico, Florida A&M and Georgia State also will compete. The tournament's field also includes North Carolina, South Florida, Southern Illinois, Nicholls State, Miami of Ohio, Iowa State, Oklahoma and Adelphi College of Garden City, N.Y.

Wolforth said his expectations for the weekend are not derived from

Nebraska's second-place finish in a tournament last weekend at Texas A&M. He said they also are not derived from the fact that the Huskers went from being ignored in the pre-season ratings to being the sixth-ranked team in the country after the Texas A&M competition.

Before the season began, Wolforth singled out the Florida State Invitational as one Nebraska could win.

He said the strong showing at Texas A&M has done little to change his outlook for that tournament. However, he said he still remains "cautiously optimistic" about the rest of the season.

"We need tons and tons of improvement," he said.

To bring home the championship this weekend, Nebraska must hit better and needs strong pitching from Stephanie Skegas and Marie Bowie, Wolforth said.

In tournaments last year, Bowie would pitch well while Skegas would be off, or vice versa, he said.

"For us to win, both pitchers have to have a solid tournament," he said. "That's as big a key as anything, to have both pitchers on at the same time."

"We need a balanced pitching staff."

Nebraska won its five games at Texas A&M despite hitting .152. Four of those victories were by 1-0 scores. Husker opponents hit .220.

"That just proves how little stats mean," Wolforth said. "The most important thing sometimes is that you find a way to win and these kids did."

The Huskers capitalized on 16 errors and 15 stolen bases in posting their 5-2 record.

"The only thing we did extremely well was run the bases," Wolforth said. "That in itself is not going to be enough. We need to do better. We no longer can count on winning games 1-0 like we have been."

NU coach looking for higher score this time

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Despite an 10.65-point win against Houston Baptist earlier this season, Nebraska men's gymnastics coach Francis Allen is expecting a closer match this weekend.

And a higher score. Top-ranked Nebraska will travel to Houston on Saturday to face the Huskies, who the Cornhuskers beat 278.20-267.55 on Feb. 18. The meet

is the final dual for Nebraska before the Big Eight championships on March 23-24 in Norman, Okla.

The Midwest Regional Championships also will be at Norman on April 7.

In the first meeting with Houston Baptist this season, Nebraska senior All-American Patrick Kirksey posted a 57.60 all-around score to lead the Huskers.

Allen said the Huskers need a higher score this weekend to get back into

prime form as the championship season draws closer.

"We plan on going down to Houston and scoring high," Allen said. "We need to get back up above 282 and 283 (in team scoring). I think we have the ability to be a 283-pace team."

Nebraska has an 18-0-1 overall record this season, and a 6-0-1 dual mark. Houston Baptist enters the meet facing the Huskers with a 1-5 dual record.

Nebraska's goal of an undefeated

season came to an end Saturday night when No. 2-ranked Minnesota battled to a 281.65 tie in Minneapolis.

Despite the tie with the Golden Gophers, the Huskers remained at the No. 1 spot in this week's NCAA rankings. Nebraska's three-score average of its best three meet scores this season is 282.54, compared to Minnesota's 281.83.

Houston Baptist's 265.43 average makes this year's team the 26th-best in that school's history.

Allen said he isn't worried about

this weekend's competition, especially with the Big Eight and NCAA championships on the horizon.

"Houston Baptist has a couple decent all-arounders, but our guys will want to do well," he said. "We need to start getting ready for Big Eights and regionals. This should give us a chance to polish our routines."

The 1990 NCAA Men's Gymnastics Championships will be in Minneapolis on April 19-21. The Huskers have won the title six times, their most recent coming in 1988.

NU baseball team attempts to heal wounds after loss

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

The Nebraska baseball team will try to heal its wounds when it faces a pair of non-Division I foes this weekend.

Nebraska coach John Sanders said the Cornhuskers are looking forward to their games against Briar Cliff College of Sioux City, Iowa and Tarkio (Mo.) College because they are stinging from their loss to St. Cloud (Minn.) State. Nebraska, 13-7, concluded a four-game series against the Division II Huskies by dropping a 16-14 decision last Sunday.

Sanders said the loss may help Nebraska because it shows the Huskers that they cannot afford to take any opponent lightly. He said Nebraska has to enter its double-headers against Briar Cliff and Tarkio in a positive frame of mind.

The Huskers will face Briar Cliff at noon Saturday. Nebraska will face Tarkio, who like the Chargers is a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, at 1 p.m. Sunday.

The action at Buck Beltzer Field features free admission for all University of Nebraska-Lincoln students who present their student ID cards.

Sanders said Nebraska has not forgotten about its loss to St. Cloud State.

"We were stung in the last game

against St. Cloud State," he said. "You have to say that when you have 21 hits and score 14 runs that shouldn't happen."

"But it did, and it was a let-down."

Sanders said the most surprising aspect about the St. Cloud State loss was its timing. He said losses against non-Division I opponents are more prone to occur during the Big Eight season because teams may suffer a letdown after psyching themselves up for conference competition.

Sanders said Nebraska needs to improve its consistency if it is going to prevent losses like those against St. Cloud State from reoccurring.

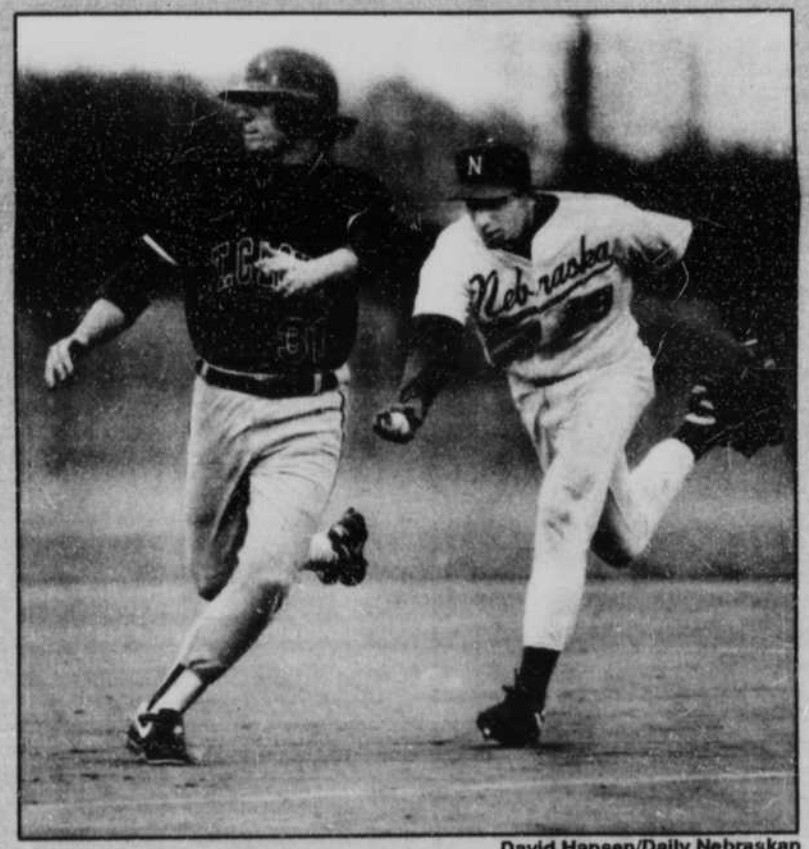
The Huskers have been inconsistent this season, as they have suffered three losses against non-Division I opponents and also defeated top-ranked Wichita State.

In addition to losing to St. Cloud State, Nebraska's losses against inferior competition were to Hawaii Pacific. The Sea Warriors, who also are NAIA members, defeated Nebraska twice.

Sanders said the losses to Hawaii Pacific were part of a difficult Hawaii trip in which Nebraska compiled a 1-6 record.

"The Hawaii trip -- that bummed us out," he said. "That upset us."

Sanders said Nebraska quickly reversed its fate by defeating No. 1-ranked Wichita State 4-2. The Huskers effort against the Shock-



David Hansen/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's Vince Di Grandi chases St. Cloud State's Paul Remsley.

ers was led by pitcher Mike Zajeski, who hurled seven strong innings on his way to picking up the win.

Sanders said Nebraska cherished its win against Wichita State.

Sanders said Nebraska has to avoid psychological pitfalls if it is

going to stay away from the peaks and valleys it has encountered.

Sanders said Nebraska will need that focus against Briar Cliff and Tarkio. He said he expects both teams to provide the Huskers with

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NU golfer Brooks leads team to a sixth place finish

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

Nebraska golfer Joanne Brooks broke out of a season-long slump by recording a record-setting performance.

Nebraska women's golf coach Robin Scherer said Brooks broke the hex that has plagued her throughout the spring by finishing second at the Peggy Kirk-Bell Invitational in Winter Park, Fla. Brooks finished second at the three-day competition by recording a 221 mark, which set a school record.

Brooks' performance helped Nebraska tie Wake Forest for sixth place in the team standings with a 952 total. Brigham Young won the team title with a 920 mark, followed by Duke (925), North Carolina-Wilmington (930), Kansas (932) and North Carolina (938).

Trailing Nebraska and Wake Forest were Longwood College of Farmville, Va., which finished eighth with a 959 mark, and Jacksonville, which finished ninth with a 965 total. Rollins College of Winter Park, Fla., Penn State, Northern Illinois, Metro College of Denver, Iowa State, Illinois State and Purdue rounded out the tournament's field.

Scherer said Nebraska used the performance of its top three golfers to tie Wake Forest for sixth. In addition to Brooks' 221 mark, the Cornhuskers received a 237 total from Susan Dougherty and a 240 mark from Ann Guiberson.

"Our first three players played very well," Scherer said. "Overall, we played really well."

Scherer said she particularly was pleased by the performances of Brooks and Guiberson. While Brooks was rolling to her record-breaking performance, Guiberson overcame a back injury that prevented her from competing in the pre-tournament practice round to finish with her 240 mark.

"Even with a bad back," Scherer said, "she did all right."

Nebraska's next competition is March 24, when the Huskers travel to Columbia, S.C., to compete in the three-day South Carolina invitational.

Tennis team to play Wichita State, Tulsa

By Paul Domeier
Senior Reporter

Nebraska men's tennis coach Kerry McDermott said his team has had a good week of practice according to the vocal-cord meter going into dual matches against Wichita State and Tulsa this weekend in Wichita, Kan.

"The less I scold, the better practice is going," he said. "It sounds kind of silly, but the less I have to scold them about throwing rackets and telling them to act like adults on the court, the better I think we're practicing."

The Cornhuskers realize they have a chance to win the Big Eight championship, McDermott said, so they have been practicing hard and putting in extra time. The players have been intense throughout recent practice matches, he said.

The Huskers will play Wichita State Friday. McDermott said the Shockers will be much like fellow Missouri Valley team Drake, a team the Huskers defeated 8-1 last week.

"Down the line, we're better," he said.

McDermott said he wants to win by about 7-2 over Wichita State with fewer three-set matches than Drake

offered.

Saturday, the Huskers play Tulsa, another Missouri Valley team.

"They're kind of a scary team; they're good in spots," he said. "As a whole, they don't have as much depth."

McDermott said he will break up his normal No. 1 doubles team of Matthias Mueller and Ken Feuer for the matches. Mueller will stay at No. 1 and play with Anthony Kotarac, he said, and Feuer will team with Dave Moyer at No. 3. Mueller, the 74th-ranked player in the country, and Feuer are the top players in the Huskers' single line-up.