



Al Schaben/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's Jason Kelber grimaces in pain while competing against Oklahoma State's Kendall Cross at the Big Eight championships. Cross defeated Kelber 14-7 to claim the conference's 126-pound crown.

# Neumann: Top four finish won't be easy

By **Chuck Green**  
Senior Reporter

Finishing 17th at last year's NCAA wrestling championships didn't sit well with Cornhusker coach Tim Neumann. It would sit even worse this year, he said.

Neumann, finishing his fifth season as Nebraska's coach, has set the goal of having his No. 4-ranked team finish among the nation's top four at the NCAA Wrestling Championships on Friday through Sunday in College Park, Md.

But, he said, it won't be easy. "We are going to have to wrestle

extremely well to be in the top four, but we've been there all season long," Neumann said.

"Obviously, we're looking to finish higher, because we've pushed ourselves all season long against the best teams in the country and have done very well."

Nebraska has been ranked fourth in the Amateur Wrestling News and National Wrestling Coaches' Association polls since early December.

Neumann hopes to maintain that ranking past this weekend's competition.

"But," he said, "being ranked fourth was a dual ranking. When you

get to the national tournament, you have to look at getting people into the finals. If we're going to finish that high, we have to get at least two people into the finals and get great performances from the others if we're going to make any kind of serious run."

The Huskers made a serious run at the Big Eight championship March 11. But Oklahoma State, ranked No. 1 for much of the season, won the conference title for the fourth consecutive year. The Cowboys topped Nebraska 80.25-70.50.

Oklahoma finished third (67.50), Iowa State fourth (57.75) and Mis-

souri fifth (18.50).

The second-place finish was Nebraska's best since 1950, and the runner-up status broke a string of six consecutive fourth-place finishes in the conference.

Neumann said the Big Eight championship meet showed how far Nebraska's program has advanced in the last few years.

"I think by placing second in the Big Eight and being as close to Oklahoma State as we were shows how close we are to reaching our potential as a team and with the program," he said.

But, Neumann said, the Huskers'

performance could have been better.

"We had a couple of letdowns that hurt us in the conference meet that we need to remedy if we are going to make a serious run at the championship," he said. "That's what we were doing all season long."

One of the letdowns came in the 126-pound championship, in which Nebraska's Jason Kelber lost 14-7 to Oklahoma State's Kendall Cross. Kelber had beaten Cross three times earlier this season.

Kelber, who was slowed by a knee injury during the conference tourna-

See **HIGH HOPES** on 17

<b>JOHN BUXTON</b>	<b>JASON KELBER</b>	<b>D.V. DROGENMULLER</b>	<b>PAUL HERRERA</b>	<b>TODD ENGER</b>	<b>SCOTT CHENOWETH</b>	<b>COREY OLSON</b>	<b>CHRIS NELSON</b>	<b>JOE MALECEK</b>
<b>WEIGHT</b> 118	<b>WEIGHT</b> 126	<b>WEIGHT</b> 134	<b>WEIGHT</b> 142	<b>WEIGHT</b> 150	<b>WEIGHT</b> 167	<b>WEIGHT</b> 177	<b>WEIGHT</b> 190	<b>WEIGHT</b> Heavy Weight
<b>NCAA SEEDS</b> 10	<b>NCAA SEEDS</b> 2	<b>NCAA SEEDS</b> None	<b>NCAA SEEDS</b> 6	<b>NCAA SEEDS</b> None	<b>NCAA SEEDS</b> 8	<b>NCAA SEEDS</b> 7	<b>NCAA SEEDS</b> 4	<b>NCAA SEEDS</b> 3
<b>DUAL RECORD</b> 15-8-2	<b>DUAL RECORD</b> 18-2	<b>DUAL RECORD</b> 11-11-2	<b>DUAL RECORD</b> 19-5	<b>DUAL RECORD</b> 11-6	<b>DUAL RECORD</b> 15-2	<b>DUAL RECORD</b> 17-5	<b>DUAL RECORD</b> 21-2	<b>DUAL RECORD</b> 21-7-2

Source: Nebraska Sports Information Office.