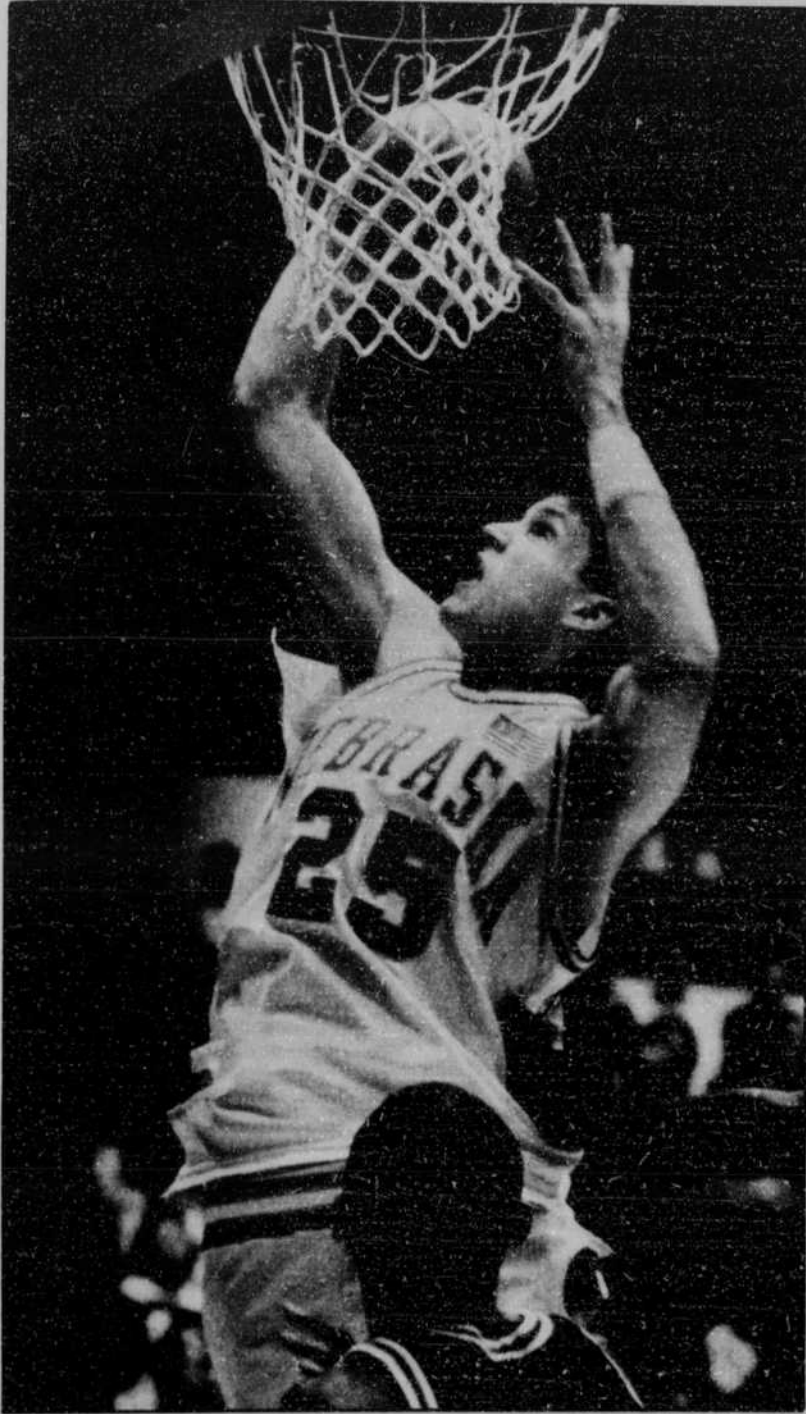


Husker hopes high

Men's basketball team two wins from title



William Lauer/Daily Nebraskan

By John Adkisson  
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's basketball team is two wins away from the jewelry store.

"It's like the rings are right there," said junior forward Carl Hayes. "If we beat Oklahoma State and Kansas, they'll be on our fingers."

The rings will be for a share of the Big Eight regular-season championship. Hayes and his Cornhusker teammates can accomplish half of their mission tonight when they play No. 12 Oklahoma State at 7:35 p.m. in Stillwater, Okla.

Nebraska, ranked 15th, enters the game one game behind the league-leading Cowboys and Kansas. Nebraska will return home to play the Jayhawks Sunday in the regular-season finale.

The Huskers, picked last in the conference in many preseason polls, can clinch a share of their first league title in 40 years with wins in both games.

Cornhusker coach Danny Nee said his team is looking forward to the challenge.

"It's like Babe Ruth," Nee said. "When you step up to bat, you take a swing. If you hit it out of the park, great. If you don't, that's OK, too."

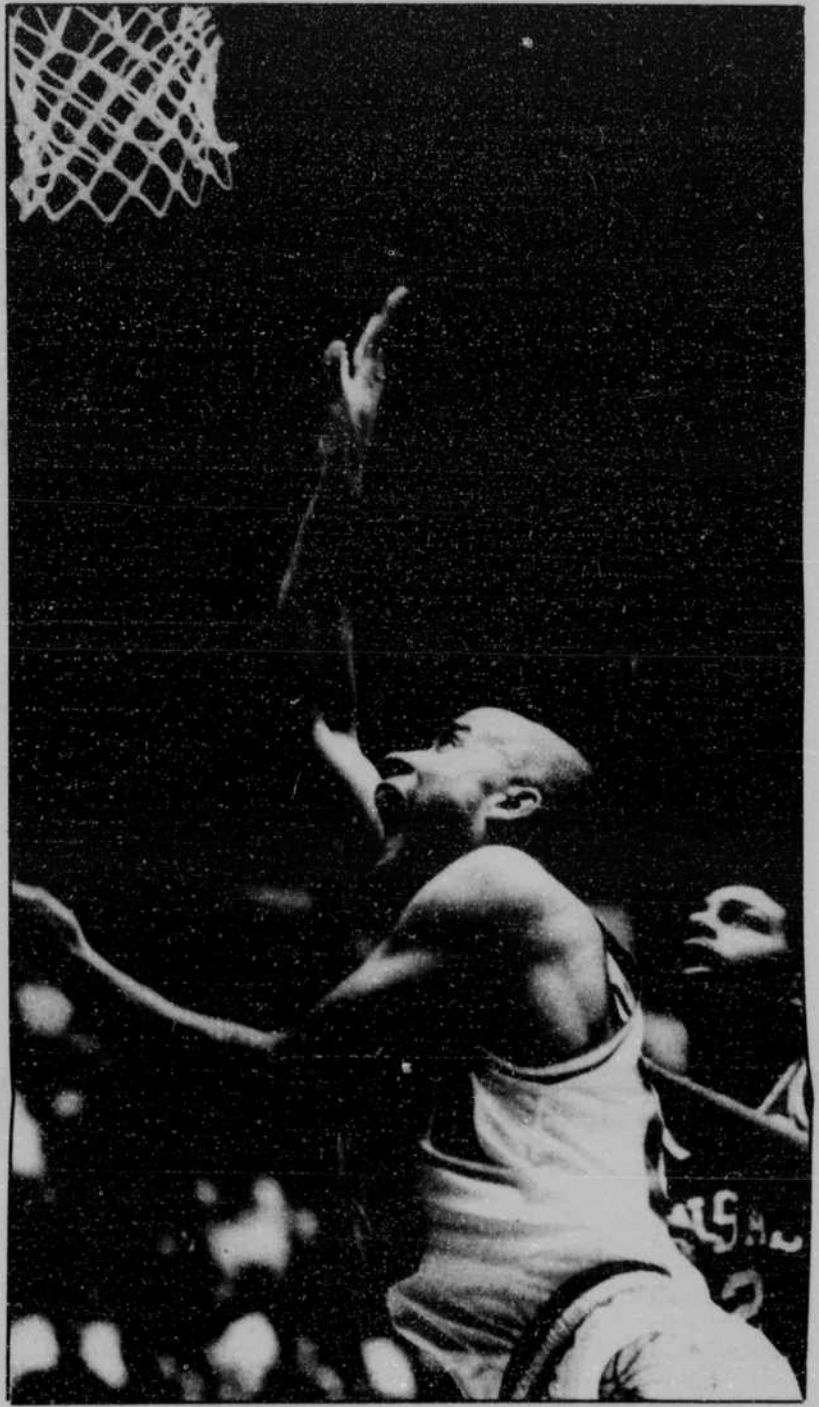
If Huskers are to win tonight, they will have to do it in a place that hasn't been kind to others.

Oklahoma State has a 12-0 record this season in games played in 6,831-seat Gallagher-Iba Arena. Nebraska has lost three straight games in Stillwater and has lost six of its last seven to the Cowboys.

Husker senior Clifford Scales said Gallagher-Iba arena is the loudest gym in the conference.

"The fans are enthusiastic for their team, and they're right down on top of you," Scales said. "And that doesn't help when you're playing a team as good as Oklahoma State."

The fans will not be as formidable an opponent for Nebraska as Oklahoma State forward Byron Houston, who is averaging 23 points per game. Houston burned Nebraska for 22 in a



Robin Trimarchi/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's Rich King goes up over Jeff Wires of Kansas State.

Clifford Scales of Nebraska avoids Kansas State's Maurice Brittan for the shot.

See RINGS on 8

OSU Cowboys taunt Big 8

A friend and I watched Nebraska's first match-up with Oklahoma State from a heavenly height.

Up in row 21 of section C-24, we sat in a utopia of uncles and aunts, fathers and sons, and other faithful boosters. I sat in this celestial section of steadfast supporters before with my dad. And I acted as respectable as the others. I clapped for opponents. I hooped and hollered for the Huskers. I even acted like I knew the words to the school song.

In short, I was full of Husker holiness.

But that Saturday was far from paradise in section C-24. Oklahoma State brought out the demons in each of those angels during the Cowboys' 81-68 victory. What started with a few feeble shouts at referees turned into hollers from hell.

Approximately one minute before halftime, center Rich King was tag-teamed by Oklahoma State's John Potter, an underweight, ungraceful forward, and Dennis Burbank an overweight, out-of-place, back-up center.

After the cheap shot, King kicked Potter and was held back by referees. Tony Farmer and Cowboy forward Byron Houston met chest to chest, and Jose Ramos was kicked out for coming off the bench.

Tempers flew among the angels, as well. My friend and I ended up in row 20 (ice cocked and aimed), two



Todd Cooper

middle-aged guys in front of us were pointing and cursing, and the rest of my section was ready to take their Husker hankies and choke the dickens out of them Cowpokes.

They brought out the worst in us.

The Cowboys had not only caused Husker players to lose their composure, they had not only caused that haven of heinous hounds (you know, Dead Dog Alley) to go crazy, they had caused the most considerate, complimentary Cornhusker fans to lose their composure all the way up in heaven.

Good teams will do that. And the Cowboys know they're good.

That Saturday confrontation was caused by the Cowboys' cocky attitude and uncomplimentary talking, King said after the game.

Nor were their actions complimentary during and after a victory against Kansas State two weeks ago on ESPN.

The Cowboys had a seven-point lead and the game wrapped up against the last place Wildcats when they scored two layups in the last 10 seconds of the game — one at the buzzer.

Oklahoma State players then were

bombarded by ice as they taunted the crowd on their way to the locker room.

Unfortunately, that ice didn't and won't cool the Cowboys.

Oklahoma State's cockiness has been almost as overbearing as its defense. First-year coach Eddie Sutton has put together one of the fiercest man-to-man defenses in the nation.

And forward Byron Houston has been one of the fiercest players in the nation as well.

The 6-foot-7, 235-pound forward has proven he's the best player in the Big Eight, bar none. Averaging 23 points and 10 rebounds per game, Houston would be a top 10 draft choice this year if he came out.

But Houston will stay. With four starters returning next year, Houston and company will win their second straight Big Eight championship.

Their first comes this week after they beat Nebraska tonight and Iowa State Saturday. Then when Nebraska beats Kansas on Sunday, the Cowboys will have the outright claim to this year's championship rings — for the first time since 1965.

They'll make the finals of the Big Eight tournament and will be the second seed in the Midwest regional of the NCAA tournament.

And they'll show everyone their success on the way.

Cooper is a freshman news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan sports staff reporter.

Husker baseball team focuses on versatility

By Nick Hytrek  
Staff Reporter

Only five games into the season, Nebraska baseball coach John Sanders is thinking about his 1991 team's increased versatility and how it will help the Cornhuskers through the bad spots.

"It appears we have flexibility, both offensively and defensively and with the pitching staff," Sanders said. "We can overcome injury and down cycles."

"Good teams need to be able to do this."

Nebraska is supposed to be a good team. Baseball America, a magazine that concentrates on collegiate and minor league baseball, picked the Huskers to make the NCAA playoffs this spring.

But Sanders wouldn't talk about postseason goals.

"Our goal is to play the best we can possibly play at all times," he said. "If we do that, winning and losing will take care of itself."

Last spring, the 42-26 Huskers finished third in the Big Eight.

The Huskers have used their versatility in starting 3-2. In the Phoenix Thunderbird Invitational last weekend in Phoenix, Ariz., the

lineups were shuffled and several players saw action at different positions. Nebraska finished third with a 2-2 record, the losses coming to nationally ranked Ohio State and Notre Dame.

"All of the new people have the ability to come in and play, and the returners seem stronger than they were last season," Sanders said.

The pitching staff will be led by All-Big Eight reliever Dave Matranga. Last year, the senior lefty tied the school record for wins with 10, had four saves and led the Big Eight with a 2.16 ERA. Junior Aaron Bilyeu and sophomore Todd Mosser will join Matranga in the bullpen.

Junior righthander Mike Zajeski was 4-0 last season before being injured. Sophomore lefthander Josh Bullock was 5-4 with three complete-game victories. Jerry Madison, a lefthanded sophomore, returns after missing last season with an arm injury. Freshman Trey Rutledge did well in his first start, defeating Dartmouth in Phoenix and making the all-tournament team.

The outfield has a lot of the experience.

See BASEBALL on 8