

Tigers crash Huskers' party

By John Adkisson
Staff Reporter

KANSAS CITY, MO. — Just when it looked as if the Nebraska men's basketball team would cap its weekend party with a Big Eight title, Doug Smith and Missouri came crashing in.

The Cornhuskers, who pulled out two dramatic wins in the first two rounds of the Phillips 66 Big Eight Tournament, finally fell as the Tigers took a 90-82 win in the championship game at Kemper Arena Sunday.

Missouri, which is on probation and barred from the NCAA Tournament, got a 31-point farewell performance from Smith, who was named tournament Most Valuable Player for the second time in three years.

In their first Big Eight tournament final ever, the Huskers played even with Missouri for much of the game. But after leading 59-58 with 13:32 remaining, Missouri got hot from the field and free-throw line to win an unprecedented fifth Big Eight Tournament title.

Nebraska coach Danny Nee, whose team fell to 26-7, said the key to the game was Missouri's style of play.

"I thought Missouri played a very physical game, a very smart game," Nee said. "And their three-point shooting was a significant factor."

After falling behind by as many as nine points in the first half, the Huskers battled back to trail 46-41 at halftime. Opening the second half, the Huskers went on a 16-7 run and took a 57-53 lead with 14:44 remaining.

Then the Tigers heated up, with freshman guard Melvin Booker hitting three three-point goals in the next seven minutes to put Missouri

ahead 74-69 with 7:59 remaining. From there, Nebraska played catch-up. The Huskers got to within 83-80 with 2:05 left, but a three-point goal by Missouri's Anthony Peeler with time running out on the shot clock put the Tigers up by six with 2:05 remaining.

"The biggest shot of all was when Anthony hit that one from the corner," said Nebraska guard Clifford Scales. "I think that broke our backs."

Nebraska forward Beau Reid, who scored 15 points in the loss, said Missouri simply outplayed the Huskers.

"I don't think we played that bad," Reid said. "It's just that on this given day, we got beat by a better team."

The loss came after two Nebraska victories in what the Kemper Arena public address announcer called "the most exciting Big Eight Tournament in history."

On Friday against Oklahoma, the Huskers erased an 11-point deficit with three minutes left in regulation to tie the game and eventually win 117-113 in overtime.

Keith Moody's 22-foot jumper with five seconds remaining sent the game to the extra stanza.

Saturday against the second-seeded Kansas Jayhawks, the Huskers pulled away from a halftime tie to win 87-83. Nebraska employed a fouling strategy at the end of the game and watched the Jayhawks miss two of their last four free throws to win.

Two Huskers were named to the All-Tournament Team: Forward Tony Farmer, who scored a career-high 26 against Oklahoma and 56 on the weekend, and senior guard Clifford

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Michelle Paulman/Daily Nebraskan

Missouri's Melvin Booker tries to stop Nebraska's Keith Moody from going to the basket during the Big Eight Conference final game in Kansas City's Kemper Arena Sunday.

NU coach downplays Big 8 title

By Vicki Burge
Staff Reporter

A record and a dozen championships, and the coach didn't care.

The Nebraska men's swimming and diving team set a meet scoring record and won its 12th straight Big Eight title at the conference championships Thursday through Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The Cornhuskers won with 688 points, followed by Kansas with 590, Iowa State with 379 and Missouri with 222.

But that is all insignificant, said Nebraska coach Cal Bentz.

"What's important is that we made several NCAA qualifying times," Bentz said.

Seven Huskers qualified for the NCAA championships. The most surprising qualifier, Bentz said, was freshman Jonathan Kerr, who won the 400-yard medley.

"I think Jonathan had the furthest to go," Bentz said. "But certainly (distance coach) Rick Paine had confidence in him all along."

Kerr, who won the 400 medley in 3 minutes, 54.72 seconds, and made optional NCAA entry times in the 200 medley and 200 backstroke, will compete in the 400 medley at the NCAA meet with teammate Kyle Seebach, who made his qualifying mark in December.

"(Qualifying) just felt like a huge burden lifted off of me," Kerr said. "I wanted to do good for the team. I think making the cut might have been inspiring."

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Huskers eye NCAA Top 16 chance again

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The Nebraska men's basketball team is going to make its second NCAA tournament appearance as a favorite to reach the Sweet 16.

The Cornhuskers, ranked 13th in last week's Associated Press poll, are the third seed in the Midwest Regional, behind Big 10 champion Ohio State and Atlantic Coast Conference runner-up Duke, last year's national runner-up.

Nebraska will play 21-9 Xavier on Thursday in the first round at the closest first- and second-round site: the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome in Minneapolis, Minn. If Nebraska wins, the Huskers will play the winner of the Louisiana State-Connecticut matchup on Saturday.

As the third seed, 26-7 Nebraska is favored to win those games, increase its record season victory total and reach the regional semifinals in Pontiac, Mich.

Conference rivals Kansas and Oklahoma State also were named third seeds, but the Jayhawks and Cowboys were shipped out to other regions after semifinal losses in this weekend's Big Eight tournament.

Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma State, the only Big Eight schools in the field, were at-large picks because probation-ineligible Missouri won the tournament and voided the automatic berth.

Kansas and Oklahoma State also will be playing their first-round games Thursday. The No. 12 Jayhawks, 22-7, will face New Orleans, 23-7, in the Southeast Regional. The No. 14 Cowboys, 22-7, will face New Mexico, 20-9, in the East Regional.

Oklahoma State coach Eddie Sutt-

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NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP 1991

