

Basketball team wants one more first

By John Adkisson
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's basketball team wants to nail down one more first before seeing the last of its season.

More specifically, the 11th-ranked Cornhuskers will be seeking the first NCAA Tournament win in school history when they play Xavier in the opening round of the Midwest Regional in Minneapolis.

Husker coach Danny Nee, whose team is seeded third in the Midwest, said he is optimistic about Nebraska's chances entering the 9:30 p.m. matchup at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome.

"Our philosophy is that we're going to concern ourselves with winning the first game," Nee said. "I'm confident. We're playing well, and we're playing a team we know something about."

Husker center Rich King said



Nebraska is not happy just to be in the tournament.

"I think we could go a long way," King said. "We don't want to sell ourselves short. We're just like any other team, we're trying to make it to the Final Four."

Nebraska has won three of its last four games, including a second-place finish in the Big Eight Tournament last weekend. The wins and a 26-7 overall record, have the Huskers taking momentum into tonight's game, Nee said.

"How we are playing is of a very quality level," Nee said. "We're playing our best basketball of the year right now."

The Huskers will need a quality effort to defeat 21-9 Xavier, which brings a five-game winning streak of its own into the game. The Musketeers have not beaten a team in the NCAA Tournament, but last week won the Midwestern Collegiate Tournament with a win over Saint Louis in the final game.

More than anything, however, Xavier's NCAA history concerns Cornhusker coaches and players.

Last year, the Musketeers played spoiler by knocking off Kansas State and Georgetown, and advanced to the tournament's Sweet 16. Xavier was beaten by eventual national cham-



Michelle Paulman/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's Tony Farmer falls back onto Oklahoma's Bryan Sallier after attempting a shot at the Big Eight tournament. Farmer was named to the all-tournament team after scoring 56 points in the three games.

pion Michigan in 1989, and lost to tourney winners Kansas in 1988.

King conceded that Xavier has an edge over Nebraska in tournament experience.

"We have to be aware that their guys have been there before," King said. "They're not worried about their season, and I expect them to play with that type of confidence."

Guard tandem Jamal Walker and

Jamie Gladden and forward Michael Davenport are Xavier's leaders. The trio averages a combined 44 points a game.

On paper, the Huskers match up well with the Musketeers. Xavier's tallest starter, 6-foot-9 forward Aaron Williams, is five inches shorter than King.

But Nee said since Xavier is a team that likes to run (the Musketeers

are scoring an average of 82 points a game), the Huskers' height advantage won't be a major difference in the game.

"They're a mini-Oklahoma — they like to score and get up the court," Nee said. "When you're playing a team like that, matchups are irrelevant."

With a victory, Nebraska will play the winner of the Louisiana State-

Connecticut game at 6:30 p.m. Saturday. Although Nee said Nebraska will scout both teams, King said he and the team are focused on Xavier.

"I know it's a cliché, but we're taking one game at a time," King said. "The five seniors are going to try and lead by example. If we lose, we're out of the tournament. That's the tone we're trying to set for the whole team."

Neumann likes wrestlers' chances at NCAA s

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Thus far, the 1990-91 wrestling season has been one of injuries, unmet expectations and uncertainty for the Cornhusker wrestling team.

But Nebraska coach Tim Neumann is hoping his seventh-ranked Huskers can answer questions, silence critics and even finish high in the final team rankings at this year's NCAA wrestling championships in Iowa City, Iowa.

The meet will begin Thursday and end with the championship finals Saturday night.

Nebraska heads into the championships ranked ninth in the final Amateur Wrestling News coaches' poll and in the NCAA Division I Tournament poll. Iowa, the Big Ten champion, is ranked No. 1 with a 25-0-1 dual record. Big Eight champion Oklahoma State is second.

"Iowa and Oklahoma State are heavy, heavy favorites for first and second," Neumann said. "But I think any one of six or seven other teams have a good chance to finish third through sixth, including us. The team that gets a couple

of guys into the finals and gets the All-America performances is going to end up third our fourth.

"I like our chances."

Nebraska has qualified nine wrestlers for the meet, the same number as last year when the Huskers finished fifth. Jason Kelber at 126 pounds, Scott Chenoweth at 177 and Chris Nelson at 190 are returning All-Americans. Kelber finished second last year.

One All-American who won't be returning to the NAAs is Corey Olson, the regular starter at 190 who underwent knee surgery last month. Last season as a freshman, Olson finished third.

Neumann said that motivation is not a problem.

"Because this is the NCAA championships, I'm really anticipating this to be our best meet of the year," he said. "Where that puts us in the final standings, I don't know. I don't think we have had a bad performance all year, and I do know that this team is ready to show what it is capable of doing."

"There is no better place to do this than at the national championships."

Neumann said Olson's absence cost the Huskers some points at the Big Eight championships, where Nebraska finished third.

"We may have lost a little spark in the team," he said of Olson's absence. "But at the national championships, it becomes every man for himself, and I anticipate a good showing because of our experience."

Much of that experience was hampered throughout the season by injuries. At one point in the dual season, only four of the Huskers' original 10 starters were in the lineup.

But despite the injuries, Neumann said, Nebraska still is a team of high expectations.

"I was looking at the Big Eights as a chance for redemption to show where I thought we should've been throughout the season," he said. "I don't think we were quite ready then. The guys who had been hurt did a reasonably good job at the Big Eights, but now, I'm expecting their performance to be better."

Neumann also said that while it is important

for Nebraska to get repeat performances from the returning All-Americans, a lot of the team's success will depend on the luck of the draw for the unseeded Huskers.

Those draws will be made today. "If we get decent draws — not great ones — we'll be fine," Neumann said.

Iowa, Oklahoma State and Penn State top the meet's list with 10 qualifiers each, while Nebraska and Iowa State each have nine. This is the third consecutive season Nebraska has qualified nine wrestlers in the 10 weight classes for the NCAA championships.

Nebraska's NCAA qualifiers:

- 118 — John Buxton (21-5-2, ranked No. 8 in the country)
- 126 — Jason Kelber (29-2, No. 2)
- 134 — Dave Droegemueller (18-7, No. 10)
- 142 — Layne Billings (10-6)
- 150 — Todd Enger (21-14-1)
- 167 — Tommy Robbins (12-12-5)
- 177 — Scott Chenoweth (12-4-1, No. 11)
- 190 — Chris Nelson (18-4, No. 7)
- Hwt. — Sonny Manley (18-9-2)