

NU gymnast says title caps season, career

By Erik Unger
Staff Reporter

Lisa McCrady's second Big Eight women's gymnastics all-around championship in three years added some pressure while taking some away.

McCrady, a senior for Nebraska, went to the 1989 championships with no pressure to win. Not so for this year's event, March 23 in Columbia, Mo.

"When I won two years ago, it was a nice surprise," McCrady said. "This year, I had more to lose. I would have been disappointed if I wouldn't have (won)."

But she scored 38.85 points to edge Julie Dorn of Missouri, who had 38.75 points. McCrady tied for first in the uneven bars, tied for third in the balance beam and vault and tied

for fourth in the floor exercise.

As a team, Nebraska was second behind Oklahoma. The Sooners beat the Cornhuskers 191.15 to 189.90.

McCrady said winning the title capped off her season and her career.

"No matter what happens, I won't leave my senior year empty-handed," she said. "I know I have a championship under my belt."

McCrady said she was more focused at the Big Eight championships than she was in the past.

"I just woke up that morning feeling confident," she said. "I was prepared, everything else had fallen in place and I was healthy."

McCrady said consistency had been a problem all year and it was good to finally put four good routines together.

"I was glad I could compete under pressure," she said. "In the past, I was predicted to win, but I came up short."

She said the added pressure made this Big Eight title better than her first one two years ago.

She still hasn't reached her ultimate goal, though, she said. She would like to compete for a national championship and have a chance to be an All-American.

McCrady said being a senior creates some extra pressure.

"In the past, I could say, 'Maybe next year.' Now if I don't do it, I will never have another chance," she said.

She said staying focused is the key to reducing some of the pressure and making her last chance her best.

"If God wants me to, I'll be an All-American," McCrady said. "All I can do is try my best, relax and stay focused."

McCrady said Nebraska's second-place finish in the Big Eight meet puts the team in a good position going into the Huskers' NCAA regional this weekend in Tucson, Ariz.

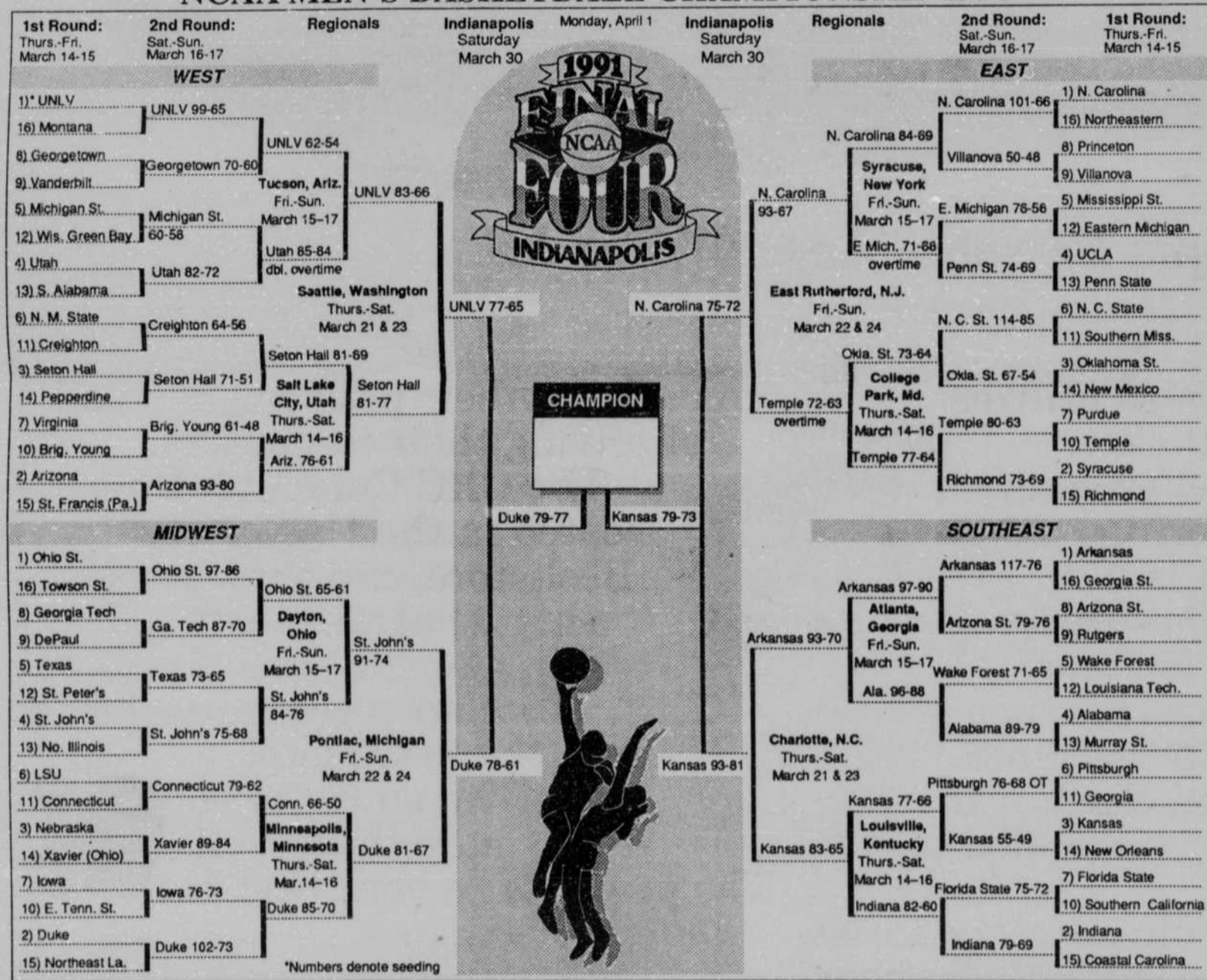
"We are going into regionals with nothing to lose. We aren't defending a title and have less pressure," she said.

She said the Huskers' strong finish, above 189 in their last two meets, now puts pressure on the regional favorites. It also puts them in a good position to qualify for nationals. McCrady said this is what separates this year's team from last year's team, which was expected to finish in the top 10.

"This year, if we make nationals, it would be a success in itself," she said.

Blue Devils hope ninth time's a charm

NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP 1991



INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—So what now, Duke?

With UNLV and one horrible memory out of the way, will it be a championship at last or a championship game disaster again?

A year ago, Duke came up flat after a tough, up-tempo, full-court semifinal win over Arkansas and lost by 30 points to UNLV 48 hours later.

The Blue Devils (31-7) turned the tables on the Runnin' Rebels on Saturday night with a 79-77 victory, but UNLV did not give up its chance at a repeat title and undefeated season without an intense, physical 40 minutes.

Now the opponent for the NCAA men's basketball championship game tonight (8:10 p.m. tip-off on CBS) will be Kansas (27-7), a 79-73 winner over North Carolina.

Can it happen again? Did the Blue Devils just lay out too much to get a chance at cutting down the nets?

Duke's stars, Christian Laettner and Bobby Hurley, both played the whole game, and Laettner was so dehydrated afterward that he needed an hour and 15 minutes to provide a drug-testing urine sample.

"Yesterday was an even harder game because Vegas was better," Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said. "They were just so good, but our team is different. They're more resilient. It has listened even better."

Duke has made more Final Four appearances without a title than any other school — eight. Its ninth trip and fourth in a row has brought its fifth championship game appearance and third since 1986.

"The accomplishments of this team have been great," said senior forward Greg Koucek, the only player to appear in four Final Fours. "This is my last opportunity to do this and we are going to have to be focused and we are going to be ready. What happened the last three years will not have any effect at all on this year's final."

Results as of 10:20 p.m. EST Saturday

AP

See BLUE DEVILS on 9

Tennessee takes win in overtime

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Dena Head made two free throws to tie the score at 60 in regulation, then hit five more in overtime to give Tennessee a 70-67 victory over Virginia and the NCAA women's championship.

It was the third NCAA championship for Tennessee, which won it in 1987 and 1989, was runner-up in 1984 and tied for third in 1988 and 1986. Tennessee also lost in the AIAW championship game in 1980 and 1981.

AIAW was the women's athletic federation that preceded the NCAA. Virginia led 60-55 with 1:25 to go in regulation when Head was fouled by Tonya Cardoza and converted a three-point play.

Tammi Reiss and Dawn Staley both missed with 48 seconds remaining in regulation, but Tennessee couldn't get the ball across midcourt against the Virginia press and had to

call timeout, barely beating the time clock.

With seven seconds left in regulation, Staley fouled Head, who made both free throws to tie it.

Cardoza gave Virginia a brief lead in overtime, but Head hit two more free throws, Peggy Evans scored on a rebound, and Head made a free throw to make it 66-62.

After Cardoza's basket, Virginia (31-3) got its only points from Staley, an offensive rebound and basket off her own miss with 1:01 left and a three-pointer with four seconds remaining.

Tennessee trailed for 16 minutes in the first half, falling behind 23-14 at the 7:44 mark, after a dazzling performance by Virginia's Staley, Player of the Year in women's basketball.

Staley, 5-foot-5, twice went inside against Daedra Charles, 6-foot-4, and Kelli Casteel, 6-2, and came away with points — once on a spin move around her taller opponents and again on a behind-the-back dribble along the left baseline.

The Volunteers took the lead with 1:56 to go in the half. Charles then hit the front of a one-and-one, making it 25-24, and Casteel hit a rebound off Charles' missed free throw.

Head led Tennessee scoring with 28 points. Charles had 19 points and seven rebounds.

Staley scored 28 points for Virginia, Cardoza had 11, and Heather Burge had 10.

Virginia was ranked No. 2 in the final poll and Tennessee was No. 4.

Tennessee (30-5) is 6-1 over Virginia in postseason play, including a loss in the AIAW tournament in 1981.

Graf wins hardcourt title, feels confidence returning

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Steffi Graf took a step toward regaining the top women's tennis ranking on Sunday with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over top-ranked Monica Seles to claim the U.S. Women's Hardcourt Championship title for the third time.

It was Graf's first tournament victory since November's Virginia Slims of New England and her first over Seles since 1989.

Graf, ranked No. 2 in the world, had last met Seles in the 1990 French Open finals, which Seles won 7-6, 6-4. Graf maintains a 4-2 career lead over Seles.

Seles, 17, ascended to the No. 1 world ranking on March 11, after Graf's record reign of 186 weeks. Because the U.S. Women's

Hardcourt Championships is only a 32-player draw, Graf will not overtake Seles in the computer rankings.

But Graf, 21, acknowledged that she hoped her victory Sunday would be a turning point.

"I think I'm on the right way now," a smiling Graf said. "I think I made her play. That's a good feeling to have."

Graf said the ranking matters less than the return of her confidence that had waned in the last few months.

"The way I played the last few matches makes me feel better, and I look forward to the next few matches," Graf said.