

# Gymnastics coach says 8th title likely

By Jeff Singer  
Staff Reporter

When it comes to winning national championships, there's one Nebraska sport that comes through unlike any other.

The Cornhusker men's gymnastics team has won seven national titles during Coach Francis Allen's 22 years at Nebraska, and Allen is confident that number eight isn't far away.



Allen

Allen, whose team will compete in the Big Eight Invitational this weekend in Lincoln, said this year's Huskers might be the best he has coached.

"We have a very good chance of going undefeated this year," Allen said. "With our balance and depth, the whole team complements each other well and could be one of the best ever in college gymnastics."

Nebraska opened its season last weekend by winning the Rocky Mountain Open in Colorado Springs, Colo. The Huskers' team score of 279.90 is the highest opening-meet score in Nebraska history.

Allen said last weekend's victory was evidence that Nebraska is one of the top teams in the nation.

"Our win last weekend means that the team is either a barnburner or way ahead of the rest of the competition," he said. "I think we're a combination of the two."

All-American Dennis Harrison is one of five sophomores returning. Allen said he considers his sophomores to be the best class assembled in the history of college gymnastics.

Harrison, who won the all-around championship last weekend in Colorado, will team with Sumner Darling, Che Bowers, Burkett Powell and Randy Simonson in this group of underclassmen.

Two other key members returning this season are juniors Louis Ball and Josh Saegert. Saegert was doubtful to see action this season after suffering a broken leg in last year's Big Eight Invitational, but has beaten the odds to return to the lineup.

Saegert, the only remaining member from Nebraska's 1990 National Championship team, has received praise from his coach on returning so soon after his injury.

"Saegert's comeback is an inspiration to the team," Allen said. "Some doctors said you may never see him again in athletics, but now he's back here competing just as hard as before."

The Huskers also have two freshmen competing this season: Richard Grace and Richard Kieffer. Allen said

## Nebraska men's gymnastics

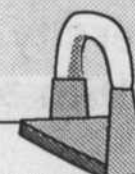
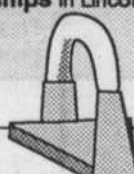
### SCHEDULE

Dec. 6-7 Big Eight Invitational\* in Lincoln.  
Jan. 25 Oklahoma & Iowa State\* in Norman, Okla.  
Feb. 1 Ohio State in Lincoln.  
Feb. 8 USGF Winter Nationals in Colorado Springs, Colo.  
Feb. 15 Minnesota in Minneapolis.  
Feb. 22 Southwest Cup in Tempe, Ariz.  
Feb. 29 Iowa State & Oklahoma\* in Lincoln.  
Mar. 7 New Mexico in Lincoln.  
Mar. 14 UCLA in Los Angeles.  
Mar. 27-28 Big Eight Championships\* in Ames, Iowa.  
Apr. 23-25 NCAA Championships in Lincoln.  
\*Big Eight meet

### ROSTER

Louis Ball	Jr. 5'6"	of Papillion
Che Bowers	So. 5'9"	of Atlanta
Sumner Darling	So. 5'9"	of Sarasota, Fla.
Richard Grace	Fr. 5'0"	of Omaha
Dennis Harrison	So. 5'7"	of Omaha
Richard Kieffer	Fr. 5'6"	of Longview, Texas
Burkett Powell	So. 5'6"	of Lincoln
Josh Saegert	Jr. 5'5"	of Austin, Texas
Randy Simonson	So. 5'6"	of Kearney

Francis Allen, coach



Amie DeFrain/DN

the two were a tribute to Nebraska's ability to recruit some of the country's top gymnasts.

"We had four freshmen that any team would kill for last year, and now we've got two more just like them," Allen said.

Defending national champion Oklahoma will compete in this week-

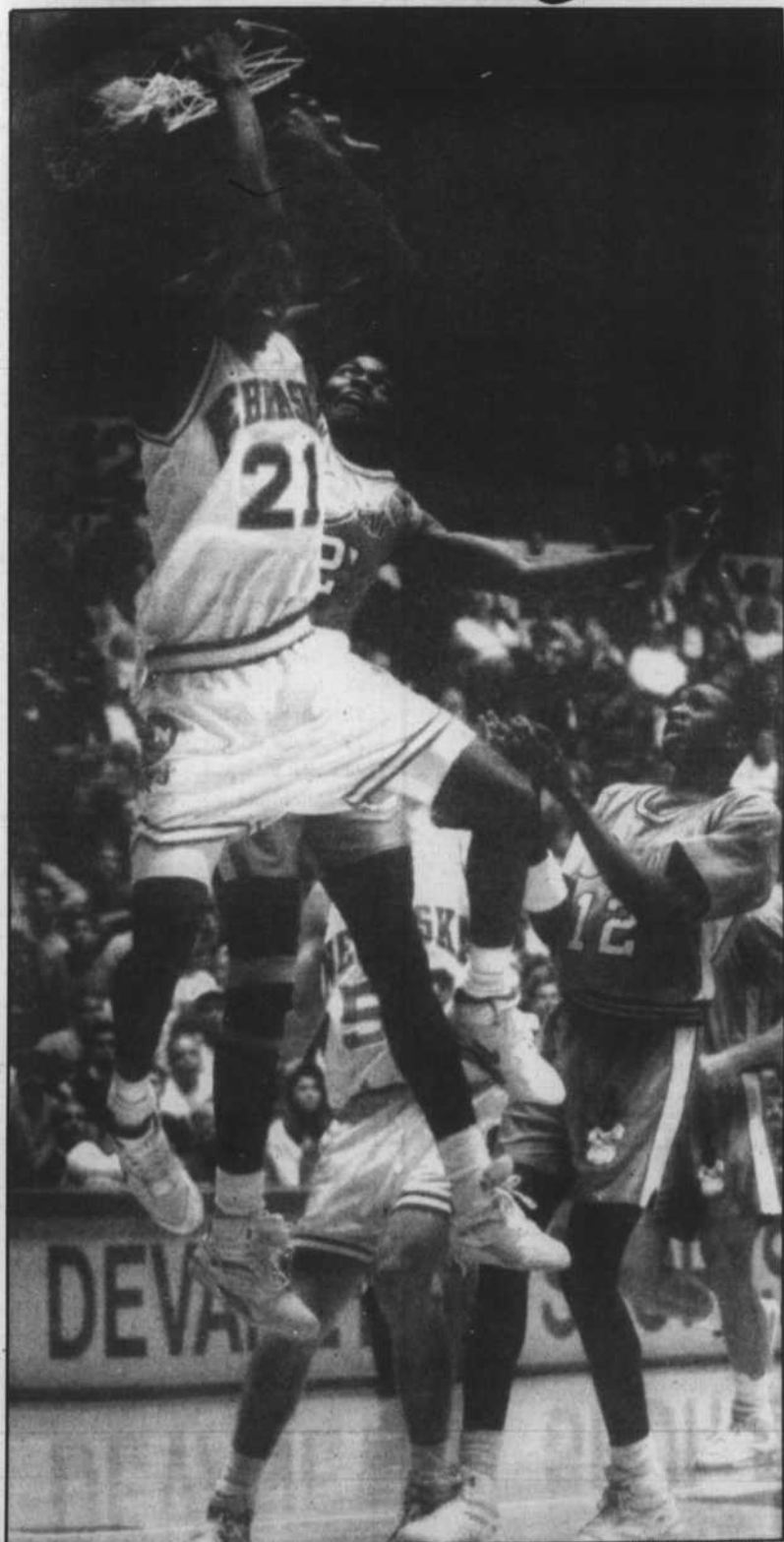
end's invitational, but the Sooners and the rest of the country won't be much of a challenge for the Huskers as long as Nebraska is injury-free, Allen said.

"As long as we stay healthy, we're going to overpower our competition," he said. "We're going to be one of those teams that's hard to beat."

As for Allen's mission to coach his eighth national championship team, the Nebraska coach is confident about his young team's chances in bringing home the title in April.

"I'd say we're going to win it all," Allen said. "You're only as good as the people you have on your team, and we have a damn good team."

# NU foe tough without superstar



William Lauer/DN

Nebraska forward Carl Hayes dunks on a fast break in Monday's win over The Citadel. Hayes will lead the Cornhuskers against No. 22 Michigan State tonight.

## NU men's probable starters

NU v Michigan State Wed. Dec. 3, 7 p.m. at East Lansing, Michigan

Nebraska (4-0)		PPG	RPG
F 21 Carl Hayes	6-8 Sr.	17.0	6.0
F 00 Dapreis Owens	6-8 Sr.	11.5	7.5
C 34 Derrick Chandler	6-10 Jr.	12.5	6.5
G 52 Eric Piatkowski	6-6 So.	17.5	8.5
G 12 Jamar Johnson	6-0 So.	9.5	3.8

Michigan State (3-0)		PPG	RPG
F 35 Matt Steigenga	6-7 Sr.	9.3	5.3
F 31 Dwayne Stephens	6-7 Jr.	6.3	5.7
C 54 Mike Peplowski	6-10 Jr.	11.3	8.3
G 11 Mark Montgomery	6-2 Sr.	11.3	6.7
G 24 Shawn Respert	6-3 Fr.	19.0	1.7

Brian Shellito/DN

By Todd Cooper  
Senior Reporter

Believe it or not, Michigan State, the Nebraska men's basketball team's opponent tonight, might be better without former All-American guard Steve Smith.

Last season, Smith, a first-round NBA draft pick who averaged 25 points a game, propelled the Spartans to a 19-11 record and the second round of the NCAA tournament. But by the second week of December last year, the Spartans were just 1-2, including a 71-69 loss to Nebraska.

This year, the Spartans are 3-0 and have vaulted into the Top 25 with a 15-point win over Arkansas (then ranked No. 2) in the championship of the Maui Classic.

And they've done it without Smith. "So far, they've played better without him," Husker guard Eric Piatkowski said. "Last year, it was pretty much the 'Steve Smith Show' — everything basically revolved around him. This year, everybody is more involved in their offense. From what I saw, it seems like they're really having a lot more fun playing this year."

Nebraska, 4-0 and off to its best start since 1984, will find out just how much fun the Spartans are having when the two teams tip off at 7 p.m. tonight in East Lansing, Mich.

By their statistics, the Spartans have been spreading the joy. Three players are averaging double figures in scoring, while three others average just under 10 points a game.

And that's helped the Spartans in more ways than one, Cornhusker Coach Danny Nee said.

"With the team morale and unity and pulling together, I definitely think it has helped," Nee said.

Nebraska has done some pulling together of its own. Five Huskers average double-figure scoring, led by Piatkowski and senior forward Carl Hayes, who are averaging 17 points per game.

Still, Nee said the Huskers need improvement to beat the Spartans at home. The Huskers are shooting just 55 percent from the free throw line.

The Spartans, who were 12-2 in East Lansing last year, will be making their first appearance at home this season.

"Their fans are going to be really excited because it's their first home game after winning the Maui Classic," Piatkowski said. "It's going to be a great atmosphere to play in."

And a tough one for the Huskers, Piatkowski said.

"If we win it, it's going to be a great accomplishment," Piatkowski said. "If we don't win it, we know it's not the end of the world because it's a tough road game."

## Husker women defeat Drake, continue streak

From staff reports

The Nebraska women's basketball team kept its record perfect by defeating Drake 62-56 Tuesday night in front of 510 fans at the Drake Fieldhouse.

Nebraska upped its record to 4-0 with the win.

Cornhusker coach Angela Beck said the team was glad to escape with a win in its first road game of the season.

"We're 4-0 and really happy we did what we had to do to get the win," Beck said.

The Huskers were led by juniors Karen Jennings and Nafeesah Brown, who scored 21 points apiece.

In her first start as a Husker, Brown also grabbed a team-high nine rebounds and six steals.

"She contributed in all areas," Beck said. "She just played a monster."

The Bulldogs held Jennings, Nebraska's leading scorer and rebounder, to one offensive board.

After jumping out to a 35-20 halftime lead on 50 percent shooting from the floor, Nebraska faltered late in the game.

The Huskers were eight of 21 from the floor in the second half, but eight of 11 from the free throw line.

"I'm pleased the way we hit free throws down the stretch and the way we stayed composed," Beck said.

Drake fought back behind the "inspired" play of guard Janet Mecker and forward Kriste Kinne, assistant Brenda VanLengen said.

Mecker scored 16 points and grabbed eight rebounds and Kinne scored 20 to pace the Bulldogs.

The Bulldogs never cut the Husker's lead below six.

"We hit some key shots and really protected our lead well," VanLengen said. "We really seemed to keep our cool."

Nebraska's next game is Sunday against Wisconsin-Green Bay. The Huskers meet the Phoenix at 2 p.m. in the Bob Devaney Sports Center.