



Jeff Haller/DN

Derrick Chandler goes up for a dunk in Nebraska's win over Oklahoma State on Feb. 5. The No. 25 Cornhuskers will try to rebound from Wednesday's loss to the Cowboys when they play Colorado Saturday at 1:06 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

NU women gymnasts back at home for dual

Team preparing for regionals

By Robert Birkeland
Staff Reporter

It is good to be home, and no one knows that better than the Nebraska women's gymnastics team.

The Cornhuskers will compete in a dual against Illinois at the Bob Devaney Sports Center Sunday at 2 p.m. It will be the third home meet of the season for the Huskers.

Nebraska coach Rick Walton said he was relieved that the team would finally get to compete at home again. Four of the Huskers' past five meets have been on the road.

Walton also said this was the time of year to get into a good position for regional competition.

He said the team's goal this weekend was to score in the 190-point range. In doing so, the gymnasts could "kick out" some of the lower scores, he said, and increase their average. Then, they could advance to post-season competition, he said.

Walton said that in last weekend's win at Iowa State, the Huskers increased the difficulty of some vault routines. If they can hit those routines this Sunday, their scores will increase, he said.

"How we score this weekend depends on the judges, to whether or not they are going to give the score if the girls hit their routines," Walton said.

Walton also said Illinois was a

quality opponent and would help boost the Huskers' scores.

"I hope Illinois comes in here and has the meet of their lives, so that we have to go out there and do well," he said.

He said the Huskers were on the right track in terms of the type of skills the gymnasts were doing right now.

"I think we are more on the way back in terms of a lot of our people that were hurt are getting a little healthier," Walton said.

Walton said he would like to see Natalie Bachmeier perform an uneven parallel bars routine. With her competing, some of the pressure would be taken off the other five athletes competing in the event, he said.

If Bachmeier competes in the bars this weekend, it will be the first time the Minot, N.D., native has done so in two years.

"We desperately need to get six or seven people up on bars to give us a buffer, so if somebody breaks a routine we will not have to count it," Walton said.

The men's team will be competing in the Big Eight Triangular against Iowa State and Oklahoma in the Bob Devaney Center at the same time the women are competing.

It will be the first time in five years that the men's and women's gymnastics teams will be competing in the same arena and at the same time.

"I think it will be a fun meet for spectators in the sense that they will get to see it all at one time," Walton said.

Huskers

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and 2.28 steals a game, has keyed the Lady Buffs' season, Beck said.

"She has had a big year for them." There are two keys to the game for Nebraska, Beck said after the Huskers went through an easy practice Thursday.

"No. 1 is we have to be relaxed and rested," she said. "No. 2 is we have to be focused."

The Huskers already have secured a second- or third-place seed in the Big Eight Tournament. That means Nebraska wouldn't have to face No. 1 seed Kansas until the Championship round.

It also means the Huskers first-round game will be against one of the bottom three teams in the league — Oklahoma State, Iowa State and Kansas State.

But for now, Beck and the Huskers are concentrating on Colorado, she said.

Buffaloes

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tough."

The upsets Nee referred to include wins over Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Missouri, all of whom were ranked when they played the Buffaloes. The upsets all occurred in Boulder, Colo.

Nee said the Huskers were lucky to get an 84-74 win at Colorado in their conference-opener in January.

"We were very fortunate to win the game out there," Nee said. "Our timing was right, because we got in and out of there and it hasn't been good pickings for anyone else going in there."

Gym

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279.80, while Iowa State scored 265.55.

Nebraska tied Oklahoma at the Big Eight Invitational at the Sports Center in early December.

Last week at the Southwest Cup in Tempe, Ariz., the Huskers outscored Oklahoma 281.50-276 to win the title in the seven-team field. The title was Nebraska's first in the Southwest Cup.

Allen said he didn't expect Sunday's meet to be any closer.

Nebraska's lineup will be bolstered

The road is a different situation for Colorado.

The Buffaloes are 0-5 so far this season against Big Eight teams away from the Coors Events Center.

Colorado coach Joe Harrington had little explanation for his team's Jekyll-Hyde performances this year.

"It's hard to explain except for that we're not playing very well on the road," Harrington said. "It's just a tough conference to win in, especially when you are playing on the road."

Two new players that have helped lead the Buffaloes to their respectable 12-12 record are Poncho Hodges and Donnie Boyce.

Hodges, a roommate of Nebraska

center Derrick Chandler when the two were teammates at Alvin Community College in Texas, is averaging 7.1 points and 6.2 rebounds per game. He is trying to replace last season's All-Big Eight performer Shaun Vandiver.

Boyce is the leading candidate for freshman-of-the-year honors of the Big Eight, as he is leading Colorado with an average of 15.3 points per game.

"Donnie Boyce has been a very valuable player to our team this year," Harrington said.

Nee agreed with his Colorado counterpart.

"Donnie Boyce has done an unbelievable job as a freshman," Nee said.

Notes:

•Tickets for Sunday's Big Eight Triangular can be picked up free at local Runza Restaurants, while supplies last.

•Sophomore Che Bowers turned in his best performance of the weekend at the Southwest Cup when he performed above his season averages in three events. Bowers posted a career-best 9.75 on the pommel horse, which is Nebraska's season-high in the event.

Husker Dennis Harrison also scored a 9.75 on the pommel horse.

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