

Huskers hoping to put bite on Huskies

By Nick Hytrek
Senior Editor

Although the Nebraska men's basketball team has never played Connecticut, the Huskies should look familiar, Cornhusker coach Danny Nee said.

"They're a great transition team," Nee said. "They're a lot like Oklahoma as far as that goes."

The two teams open NCAA Tournament play tonight at Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum. The game will begin 30 minutes after the Ohio State-Mississippi Valley State game, which starts at 7:35 p.m. The game will be televised live by CBS.

Nee said the 19-9 Huskies would give his 19-9 Huskers all they can handle.

"I think we have to play really good," Nee said. "I won't say our best, but it has to be pretty good."

Nee said he found few weaknesses in Connecticut's team.

"They're really a quality, athletic team," he said. "They're big. They're strong. They play aggressive defense."

"They're just a good solid basketball team."

Nee said Connecticut's defense concerned him.

"The No. 1 key is that we have to handle their pressure and their press and not turn the ball over. Two, we have to be back on defense and allow

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Nee
NU men's basketball coach

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them only one shot and just play a high level of defense.

"But the thing that bothers me most is their experience. They've got some veterans who have been around."

The most notable of those veterans are guard Chris Smith and forward Scott Burrell.

Smith is a senior All-Big East Conference selection this season and leads Connecticut in scoring, averaging 21.6 points a game. Burrell earned second-team All-Big East honors this season. The 6-foot-7 junior averages 16.5 points per contest.

Those two form the backbone of a team that has plenty of NCAA Tournament experience, Nee said. The Huskies reached the final eight two years ago and made it to the "Sweet 16" last season.

Connecticut, however, will be without the services of Rod Sellers, the Huskies' third-leading scorer.

Sellers is serving a one-game suspension for fighting in an NCAA Tournament game last season.

What Connecticut possesses in NCAA Tournament experience, the Huskers lack, Nee said.

Only three players on this season's team — Carl Hayes, Dapreis Owens and Eric Piatkowski — saw action in last year's first-round NCAA loss to Xavier. Chris Cresswell and Bruce Chubick didn't play in the game.

"There's only four or five of them that were there so we're hoping to get the example from Carl and Dapreis and Chris, our seniors," Nee said.

Last Friday, the Huskers were eliminated by Oklahoma in the first round of the Big Eight Tournament, 107-85. Last season Nebraska advanced to the championship game where it lost to Missouri.

But this season's early exit from the Big Eight Tournament should help Nebraska, Nee said.

"We had two days off, so we're fresh," Nee said. "Last year at this time we came back and we were very physically and mentally tired, so we're rested."

"We feel good about that."

This season the Huskers enter the tournament as a lower seed. Nebraska is the No. 8 seed in the Southeast Regional; Connecticut is No. 9. Last season Nebraska was the No. 3 seed in the Midwest Regional.

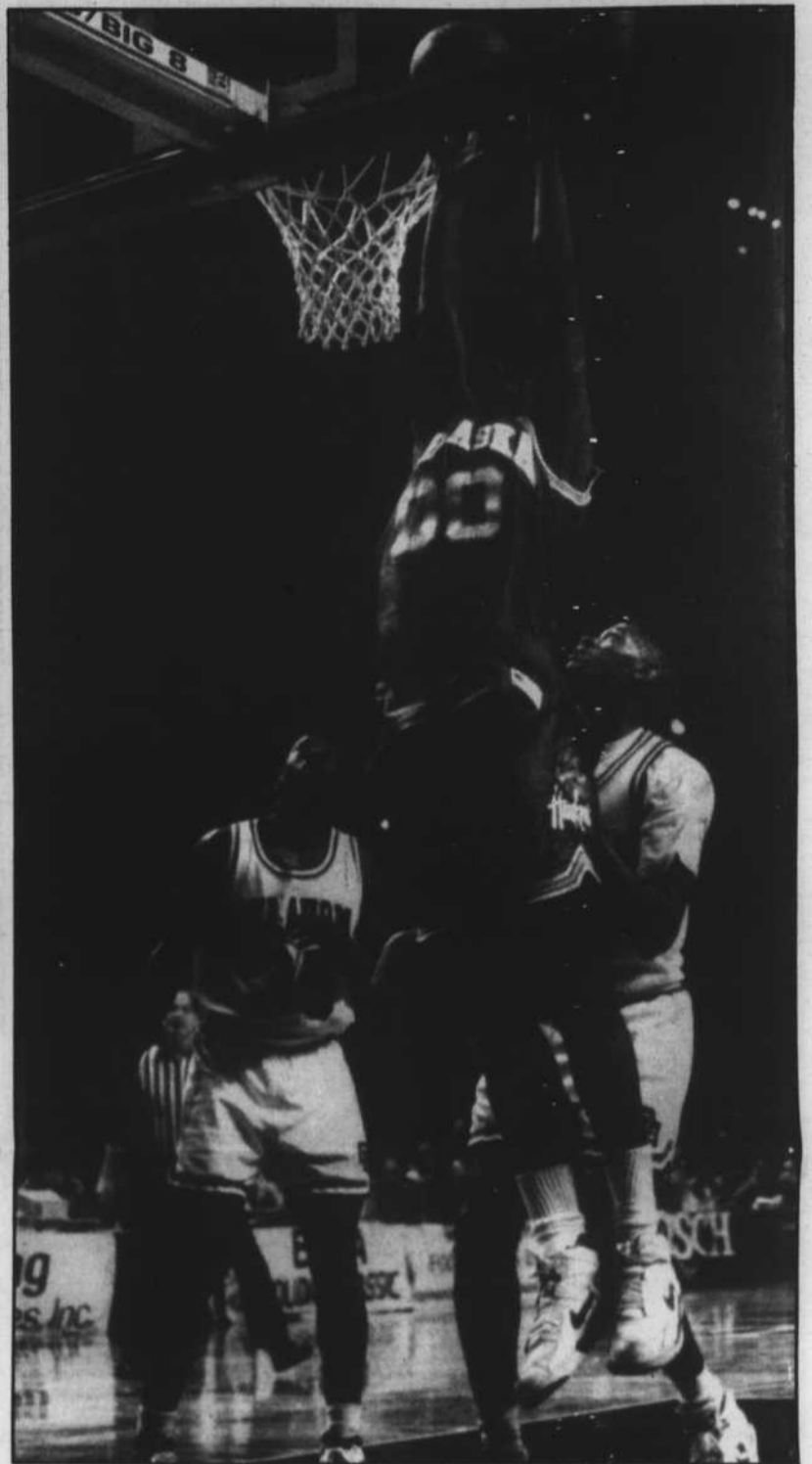
Nee said the seeding has nothing to do with Nebraska's chances to advance in the tournament this year.

"We're so new to this that it's just a number to us," he said. "When the ball goes up, those numbers really go out the window."

Notes:

- Nebraska is 0-3 in games that have been played in Cincinnati. The Huskers lost 64-46 to Cincinnati during the 1948-49 season, lost to the eventual national champion Bearcats again in 1960-61, this time 75-60, and lost to Xavier, 58-57, in the second round of the 1984 National Invitation Tournament.
- This will be Nebraska's third

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William Lauer/DN

Nebraska's Dapreis Owens attempts a dunk in last week's game against Oklahoma in the Big Eight tourney. Nebraska will play Connecticut in the NCAA tournament tonight.

NU men's probable starters

NU vs. Connecticut Thurs., 9 p.m. Riverfront Coliseum, Cincinnati



Nebraska (19-9)				PPG	RPG
F	44	Bruce Chubick	6-7 Sr.	7.2	5.6
F	21	Carl Hayes	6-9 So.	12.0	5.6
C	34	Derrick Chandler	6-10 Jr.	12.2	8.1
G	12	Jamar Johnson	5-11 So.	11.5	3.6
G	52	Eric Piatkowski	6-6 So.	14.7	6.4
Connecticut (19-9)				PPG	RPG
F	24	Scott Burrell	6-7 Jr.	16.5	6.0
F	21	Toralno Walker	6-7 Jr.	6.8	7.5
C	42	Donyell Marshall	6-9 Fr.	10.8	5.6
G	13	Chris Smith	6-3 Sr.	21.6	3.3
G	34	Brian Fair	6-3 Fr.	6.5	2.5

Brian Shellito/DN

NU's 'Fall Guy' looking for NCAA title

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Corey Olson is a man with a gift. Even is he doesn't know what exactly it is.

Olson, 22, Nebraska's top wrestler at the 177-pound weight class, is ranked fifth in the country and has a 27-6 record. Of those 27 wins, 16 have come by pins.

That feat has earned him the nickname "Fall Guy" among his coaches and teammates.

Olson, a junior from Rochester, Minn., has had little trouble pinning his opponents since he started wrestling when he was 7.

But he can't put his finger on why. "My whole life, it's been like that," he said. "In high school, our team wasn't real good, so our coach depended on me for pins and a lot of points. I guess it just carried over to Nebraska."

During his prep career at Hayfield High School, Olson posted a record of 122-8, including a 68-0 run his last two seasons and three consecutive state titles.

Of those 122 wins, 109 were pins. "(Nebraska coach) Tim (Neumann) and I were trying to figure that out the other day," Olson said. "I'm not really sure why I've been able to do that so well in the pin category. I just don't know."

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Wrestling team full of surprises, NU coach says

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

So far, it's been a surprising season for Tim Neumann and his Nebraska wrestling team.

The Cornhusker coach is hoping the surprises continue this weekend at the NCAA Wrestling Championships in Oklahoma City.

Nebraska, ranked eighth by the final Amateur Wrestling News dual ratings, enters the meet with a 13-4 dual record. The Huskers are picked to finish 11th in the tournament by the magazine.

Nebraska qualified eight of its 10 starters for the NCAA meet.

The tournament will begin today at 11 a.m. at the Myriad with the preliminary matches. The quarterfinals and semifinals will be Friday, while the consolation finals and championship matches will be Saturday.

Nebraska's dual record this season surprised even Neumann, since more than half of his 10 starters were either freshmen or junior college transfers.

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William Lauer/DN

Nebraska's Corey Olson pins a wrestler from Northern Iowa last month at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Olson is one of the top contenders in the country to win the 177-pound individual championship this weekend in Oklahoma City.