

## Gymnastics coach keeps high expectations

By Phil Carter  
Staff Reporter

At the beginning of this season, Nebraska men's gymnastics coach Francis Allen predicted his team had the talent and personnel to be one of the best in the school's history.

After two meets this season and the holiday break, Allen is remaining optimistic.

"We're extremely impressed as a coaching staff at the level of perfor-

mance of this team so far this season," Allen said.

"It takes a while to get back into shape," he said.

"Just like a basketball team," Allen said. "When they come back from a long layoff, they're not worth a darn for about four or five games, but we're not going to be that bad."

The Cornhuskers, who won the Rocky Mountain Open and the Big Eight Invitational earlier this season, will host Oklahoma and Iowa State in

a triangular at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on Saturday.

"We're looking forward to this Saturday getting on the floor and getting the gymnasts going again," Allen said. "I suspect Nebraska to be on about a 283 (team score) pace, which is better than ever."

The Sooners are the fifth-best team in the country, Allen said, and a thin Iowa State team will be without two key gymnasts who are out with inju-

ries.

"I would say Oklahoma is probably the fifth-ranked team in the country, and I'd say Nebraska's first," Allen said.

"Iowa State's pretty much off the pace right now. They don't have a real deep team, and two of their kids are hurt. So they're not going to do very well."

Nebraska's fast start this season can be attributed to returning almost

everybody from last year's team. That list includes Che Bowers, who was the national champion on the pommel horse last year, and Dennis Harrison, who finished fifth in the all-around competition last season.

"We have a lot of talent, but a lot of young people who are willing to work hard," Allen added. "I'm still pretty certain this team will go undefeated and possibly set a new NCAA scoring record."

## Huskers struggle, escape Hornets with narrow win

By Jeff Singer  
Senior Reporter

Nebraska's men's basketball team was given its final non-conference test of the year Wednesday night.

And the Cornhuskers passed by the skin of their teeth in an 86-70 win over Sacramento State.

Nebraska struggled all night to get on track against the Division I independent Hornets, and led by as few as five points against their 1-17 opponent halfway through the second half.

But the Huskers were able to avert the Hornet upset by registering a 16-point victory and improving Nebraska's record to 12-5 in front of 10,421 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Husker forward Eric Piatkowski, Nebraska's leading scorer this season, sat out the game as he recovered from the flu, so fellow forward Bruce Chubick had to take up the scoring slack.

Chubick, who averaged eight points per game entering Wednesday, scored 15 to lead the Huskers.

He pitched in seven of those points when Sacramento State closed their deficit to 57-52 with 12 minutes left, including a pair of dunks that helped propel Nebraska to victory. His second dunk put the Huskers up 67-54 and Nebraska never looked back.

Chubick said the reason why the Huskers took so long to put away the Hornets was a lack of enthusiasm on the part of Nebraska.

"I'm not going to lie — we didn't get up for them as much as we did Oklahoma or Oklahoma State," he said.

"That's where we're different from some of the other really marquee teams; when they get a team in like that, they destroy them by 50 — instead of us raising our level and destroying them, we played with them and if things might have gone a little differently, we might have got beat," Chubick said.

Sacramento State coach Don Newman said he could see why the Huskers weren't playing their best against his team.

"I know it is tough for Nebraska to get up for a 1-17 team like us," Newman said. "We know we didn't see the best Nebraska has tonight, but

my guys played hard and gave it everything we had."

The Hornets were able to keep the game close in part with their shooting guard Charlo Davis. He led all scorers with 17 points and helped his underdog team to just a 41-31 deficit at halftime.

With the score close throughout most of the contest, some of the Nebraska faithful booed the Huskers during the game as they struggled with Sacramento State, and Chubick said it was probably deserved.

"I felt like booing myself," he said. "The thing is when we see ourselves playing like that, we've got to be strong enough to smack ourselves on the head a couple of times and say 'hey, we look awful.'"

Nebraska coach Danny Nee said he was just happy to get another win before his team plays the remaining portion of their Big Eight schedule.

"I don't think they had a focus or played with the emotion they need to play with every night, but I think the team you're playing you react to," Nee said. "I'm pleased we accomplished what we wanted to accomplish and win the game."

Chubick agreed.

"We got the win, and that's all that really matters."

Sacramento State ... 31 39 — 70  
at Nebraska ... 41 45 — 86

Sacramento State (1-17) — Morris 3-7 3-4 9, Brown 1-5 0-0 2, Evans 2-7 0-2 4, Wallace 2-3 0-0 4, Davis 7-19 1-2 17, Colter 6-16 2-2, Stewart 1-2 0-0, Edwards 1-4 2-3 4, Whitlock 1-3 4-4 6, Damone Williams 3-11 1-2 8. Totals 27-77 13-19 70.

Nebraska (12-5) — Badgett 6-13 2-4 14, Chubick 6-10 3-4 15, Chandler 2-7 5-7 9, Boone 2-9 4-4 8, Johnson 1-2 1-2 3, Strickland 5-10 2-13, Woolridge 3-5 0-2 6, Gregory 2-6 5-6 9, Best 2-4 2-4 7, Robinson 0-0 0-0 0, Newton 0-0 0-0 0, Jaeger 0-0 0-0 0, Glenn 1-1 0-0 2. Totals 30-67 24-35 86.

3-point goals — Sacramento State 3-17 (Brown 0-2, Davis 2-10, Whitlock 0-1, Williams 1-4), Nebraska 2-7 (Badgett 0-1, Boone 0-1, Johnson 0-1, Strickland 1-3, Best 1-1). Rebounds — Sacramento State 40 (Morris 10), Nebraska 57 (Chandler 11). Assists — Sacramento State 16 (Wallace 4), Nebraska 21 (Boone, Strickland 4). Turnovers — Sacramento State 13, Nebraska 20. Total fouls — Sacramento State 24, Nebraska 15. A — 10,421.



Robin Trimarchi/DN

Nebraska's Jamar Johnson shoots a layup in the first half of the Cornhuskers' game against Sacramento State Wednesday night. Nebraska won the game 86-70.

## Best four conferences spar for No. 1 ranking

The verdict is out on what is college men's basketball's best conference, and once again it's the Big Eight.

Make that the Big Eight plus three.

You've got to give the nod to the Big 10 and Little One (Northwestern).

And yes, with the addition of Penn State to the conference, the Big 10 does earn this recognition even though it is a mathematical atrocity with 11 teams in the Big 10. (Arithmetic has never been a strong point in the Great Lakes Area).

So where does our beloved Big Eight stand against its counterparts throughout the country?

It's not the league it was last year, when it won 88 percent of its non-conference games, but it's still among the top three or four leagues in the nation (ahead of the EIGHT teams in the Atlantic 10 and the Southeastern Conference headed by Arkansas, lo-

cated in the Midwestern section of the United States).

So how will the Big Eight do now that the league, once known as the most balanced in the country, is now as balanced as the two sides in the Gulf War?

Here's how I think the Big Eight will end up, otherwise known as the good, the bad and the average:

1. Kansas — The Jayhawks won the Big Eight last year with an 11-3 record; that's about three more losses than they'll have this season. Can we say 14-0? Their Big Eight opponents will be able to say it all year long.

2. Oklahoma — Billy Tubbs has once again built a top-notch team in Norman that will be good enough to be Kansas' bridesmaid.

3. Nebraska — How can I say that a team that started league play at 0-2 will climb into third place by the end of the season? One reason is the com-



Jeff  
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ing of age of the best freshman class in the Big Eight, and the other reason is no more black socks.

4. Iowa State — People might wonder why the Cyclones weren't picked higher, with all five starters returning from last year's team.

These are the same incredibly average starters that finished with a 5-9 record in conference play last season, so fourth place is very generous.

5. Missouri — From the loss of the league's top player, shooting guard Anthony Peeler, to graduation and jail, the Tigers lost the heart and soul of their team. But you can never count out Mizzou coach Norm Stewart, so

the Tigers will head the Big Eight's second tier.

6. Oklahoma State — Oh, how the great have fallen. Two years ago the Cowboys were co-conference champions. But to say there will be some rebuilding in Stillwater following the loss of four starters from last year would be an understatement.

With 7-foot center Bryant "Big Country" Reeves returning for OSU, the Cowpokes will be kept out of the league's "Big Basement."

7. Kansas State — The Wildcats are a permanent fixture at the end of the season in the NIT (Not Important Tournament), and things haven't changed in Manhattan.

But the only thing worse than K-State's play is its fans, who, after Kansas beat the Wildcats last Monday at Bramlage Coliseum, threw a coin at Jayhawk guard Rex Walters that cut his face. This topped last year's performance by the K-State

faithful, when fans threw ice at the Kansas players.

8. Colorado — The Buffaloes have a permanent lease on the basement of the Big Eight standings, and the landlord again isn't coming this season to let Colorado move up.

One perfect irony in Boulder is that Buff coach Joe Harrington left his former school, Long Beach State, to coach a Colorado team that he thought could break into the Top 25 rankings. If you looked at this week's AP poll, it's the 49ers of Long Beach who are among college basketball's elite — the Buffs are nowhere to be found.

As for a prediction for the NCAA Tournament, the conference will improve on last year's dismal performance. Then again, how could it go anywhere but up?

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