

# Coach predicts dual to be 'best of the year'

## Meet will show Olympic talent

By Matt Woody  
Staff Reporter

Gymnastics fans are in for a treat this weekend when fourth-ranked Minnesota journeys to Lincoln for a dual against No. 1 Nebraska. The meet, scheduled for 2 p.m. Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, will be the best dual of the year in the United States, Nebraska

coach Francis Allen said. The dual is a must-win for Minnesota, he said. Nonetheless, Allen said Nebraska would prove itself worthy of its ranking and the Gophers would leave Lincoln with a loss. "I expect a win," he said. Allen predicted Nebraska to win by a score of 281 to 279.5 points, saying that Minnesota would not be able to overcome the Cornhuskers' depth. Last season, Minnesota finished third at the NCAA Championships behind second-place Nebraska and

national champion Stanford. This year, the Gophers are led by two-time NCAA all-around champion John Roethlisberger, who last year

— “  
I expect a win.  
— Allen  
NU gymnastics coach  
— ”  
placed in the top six of four individual events.

Allen said he was looking forward to seeing the 1992 Olympian again. Allen was the coach of the United States gymnastics team that competed in Barcelona. 1992 Big Ten Freshman of the Year Kerry Huston and All-American Rob Hanson are also main contributors for the Gophers. Minnesota's top three gymnasts are the heart of the Gophers' attack, Allen said. But the Cornhuskers' top three should be able to stay with them, he said. The rest of Nebraska's lineup should "mop up" and allow the

Cornhuskers to pull away for a two-point victory, Allen said. Nebraska is coming off a dual win two weeks ago against Ohio State. Allen said he expected everybody on the team to perform well Saturday, adding that Nebraska can have "one guy have a bad meet" and still win against Minnesota. The meet will be a showcase for great talent, and is an opportunity for people to see future U.S. Olympic gymnasts, he said. "I think the students should go out and see this thing. They ain't going to see a better one," he said.

## Huskers hope TV coverage paves way to NCAA tourney

By Jeff Singer  
Senior Reporter

Three years ago, playing on national television and talking about the NCAA Tournament would be foreign ideas around the Nebraska men's basketball team.

But things have certainly changed. At Tuesday's press conference, Cornhusker coach Danny Nee's main topic of concern was what Nebraska needed to do to make school history in a third-straight trip to the NCAA Tourney.

"If we win our home games, I think we'll get in," said Nee, whose Huskers are 3-4 at the midpoint of the Big Eight season, and will play four of their final seven league games at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"I think the next 15 to 20 days, all the questions that you wonder about us will be answered as to what's going to happen," Nee said.

Recently, what has been happening for Nebraska has been registering Big Eight victories. The Huskers have won three of their last four conference games, including Sunday's upset of No. 3 Kansas at the Devaney Center.

The 68-64 win over the Jayhawks, which improved Nebraska's record to 15-7, was shown regionally by ABC-TV, and the final half-minute of the game was picked up live around the country.

Nee said the coverage was great for getting Nebraska national recognition.

"You couldn't put a price tag or buy this weekend," he said. "To put it in perspective, three years ago Nebraska wouldn't have even dreamed of being in that position."

The Kansas win wasn't only good for TV exposure, but it should have put the Huskers in a group of Big Eight teams competing for a postseason position.

Nee said at least five teams would make it into the NCAA tournament, even though many people believe after a dismal performance by the six teams in last year's tournament the NCAA Committee might not pick that many this season.



Nebraska's Rissa Taylor battles Colorado's Abby Wirfs for a loose ball. The Buffaloes and Oklahoma State are atop the Big Eight with 8-1 records.

Staci McKee/DN

## Three teams narrow race for Big Eight championship

By Tim Pearson  
Staff Reporter

With more than half the Big Eight women's basketball season gone, the conference race is still up for grabs.

At 8-1 in the conference, both Colorado and Oklahoma State appear headed for a Feb. 26 showdown in Stillwater, Okla., to determine the regular-season league champion.

Nebraska follows the co-leaders with a league record of 6-3.

Kansas, the defending conference champion, is tied with Missouri in fourth place with a 5-4 record.

Although the Big Eight regular-season champion doesn't get an automatic NCAA tournament berth, it will receive a No. 1 seed for the conference tournament, which will be held March 6-8 in Salina, Kan.

Oklahoma State assistant coach Jack Easley said Colorado was the favorite to win.

"Colorado is awfully tough, and they're an experienced team," he said.

The Buffaloes are ranked No. 4 in the country with a 20-1 record. Colorado's only loss was against Nebraska in Lincoln on Jan. 22.

Although Colorado — a team that starts four seniors — may be the conference favorite because of experience, Buffalo coach Ceal Berry said she didn't want to put her team in that role going down the stretch.

"I think that Oklahoma State, Nebraska and Colorado all have a shot at the regular-season title," Berry said.

Berry said for a team to win the title, it would have to go undefeated for the rest of the season.

"I think in order for us to win the regular season, we need to win the rest of our games," Berry said. "I think Nebraska and Oklahoma State also need to win the rest of their games to win."

Nebraska has home games remaining this weekend against Kansas and Kansas State. The Cornhuskers will travel to Colorado and Missouri before wrapping up the season at home against Iowa State.

Earlier in the season, the Jayhawks defeated the Huskers in Lawrence 69-62.

See BIG EIGHT on 8

See NEE on 8

# Vitale's comments could be as important as his pep talk

By now, most people have heard that Dick Vitale gave the Nebraska Cornhuskers an ego-squashing, team-inspiring pep talk before Sunday's 68-64 victory over Kansas.

And, baby, Nebraska delivered after his speech.

With those results, I have just a few questions for the man who never met a sentence he wanted to complete:

Is a trip to Manhattan, Kan., and another pep talk for the Huskers before their matchup with Kansas State too much to ask?

Come on, master motivator, what do you say?

Never mind, I think we already know.

Vitale's comments during and after Sunday's game could be as valuable for Nebraska as his pep talk obviously was.

His thoughts:

● On Husker coach Danny Nee's polka-dotted tie Sunday: Lose it.

Vitale panned the sideline from "Dapper Dan" Roy Williams to Nee and in one trip of his tongue shouted:

"Ohhh Danny Nee... I don't like his tie. He's got the ugliest tie in the biz."

So it wasn't so dapper, Dick, but it was dang lucky Sunday.

● On Nee's 10-player rotation:

"They're so young and they rotate so many players. It's difficult to really develop the consistent rhythm with the young freshman. I think down the stretch, he'll start to reduce those minutes."

I hope you're right, Dick.

● On Derrick Chandler's two happy dances after Jamar Johnson's opening basket and after he dunked over Kansas' Eric Pauley:

"A little showboating right there by Mr. Chandler. A little dance, a little body English, a little duck walk.

"He always wants to showboat after a score. He just has to play strong



Todd Cooper

and play some basketball and forget about doing the little disco routine. John Travolta he doesn't have to be."

But he does have to be a scorer.

By scoring 17 points and pulling down 14 rebounds after Vitale called him a "role player," Chandler proved that he's also a player on a roll.

● On point guard Jamar Johnson's play:

"He's having an up and down kind of year — like a Dow Joneser."

But before Johnson made his key three-pointer to put Nebraska up by two with 58 seconds left, Vitale was shouting his number.

"Even though Johnson's struggling,

I really believe you want the experienced guys to shoot it during crunch time."

● On Eric Piatkowski, after he dove for several loose balls:

"I'm telling you he's a real scrapper. Tom Osborne wants him right now. He's sending a helmet down."

Hold up, Dickie. Call him, as you did, the Polish Rifle. Call him, as you did, a slasher.

But don't ever steal the nickname "blue collar," as you did, from Dr. Floorburn himself, Bruce Chubick.

● On Erick Strickland, after his dive into the scorer's table:

"Ohhh... great athletic ability, what agility. He shows why he could be a great defensive back, too."

● On Jaron Boone: "Remember that name. He's going to be a special player here at Nebraska."

● On Terrance Badgett: "He's a slasher, very active. And

he's aggressive on the rebounds."

The common denominator in all of the gusts of wind about NU players?

Hustle. If Nebraska is going to ride a magic carpet to the NCAA tournament on Vitale's hot air, the Huskers will have to continue the defensive hustle he preached.

As he said, "The defense — it's awesome, baby."

● Speaking of that, one last Vitale comment:

After cameras panned to a fan wearing a basketball on his head and holding a sign that said "Awesome Baby Cornhuskers."

"Steal my saying 'It's awesome baby?' Come on. He can't do that. Get him outta here."

Amen. And get Vitale down to Manhattan as quickly as possible.

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