

Coach says fate hinges on shots, not officials' calls

By Jeff Singer
Senior Reporter

It's full steam ahead for the Nebraska men's basketball team, according to Coach Danny Nee.

After Monday's 73-63 loss to Oklahoma State, the Cornhuskers fell to sixth place in the conference standings, although a win would have put them in a tie for second after Kansas State lost to Colorado on Tuesday.

But Nee said at his weekly press conference Wednesday that the Huskers could not look back, they could only look ahead.

"The should've beens, could've beens — we don't worry about," Nee said. "We have to take each basketball game that we play now and be ready to play, execute, play at a high level and find a way to win that game."

Nebraska will get the opportunity to put Nee's philosophy to work when the Huskers play at Missouri on Sunday.

The loss to the Cowboys dropped Nebraska's Big Eight record to 4-5 and overall mark to 16-8.

Nee said the Huskers needed to capitalize on some of their errors, mainly their free-throw woes highlighted in their two losses to Oklahoma State, in order to have success in the final stretch of the league season.

"You can't shoot 13 free throws and they shoot 71 and expect to win — we have to find

a way to get to the free-throw line and we have to find a way to stop them from getting to the free-throw line," he said. "You can't ignore it — it would be like in football getting 70 yards worth of penalties to their 13."

Beck says beating Buffaloes critical in conference race

By Jeff Griesch
Staff Reporter

Nebraska women's basketball coach Angela Beck is hoping that the Cornhuskers will pass their biggest test of the season Sunday — defeating Colorado for the second time.

The No. 22 Cornhuskers handed the No. 4 Buffaloes their only loss of the season on Jan. 31.

Nebraska, 8-3, is third in the Big Eight and needs a win to keep its chances for a conference title alive.

"We are playing good basketball, and we are still in a position to win a league title," Beck said. "It is going to be a challenge for us, but this team is the kind of team that likes big challenges."

The key to the Huskers' success this season was strong defense, Beck said, and they needed to continue playing well to beat the Buffaloes.

"Our offense has been shaky at times, but our defense has been solid," Beck said. "Our

— 66 —
I don't think officials win or lose games — I think players do it between the lines.

—Nee
NU basketball coach

— 99 —
Nee said his team had to find a way to reduce the free-throw deficit in the future, and that the referees could not be blamed for the discrepancy at the charity stripe.

"I don't think officials win or lose games — I think players do it between the lines," he said. "I don't think our record is going to deviate because of what the officials are doing."

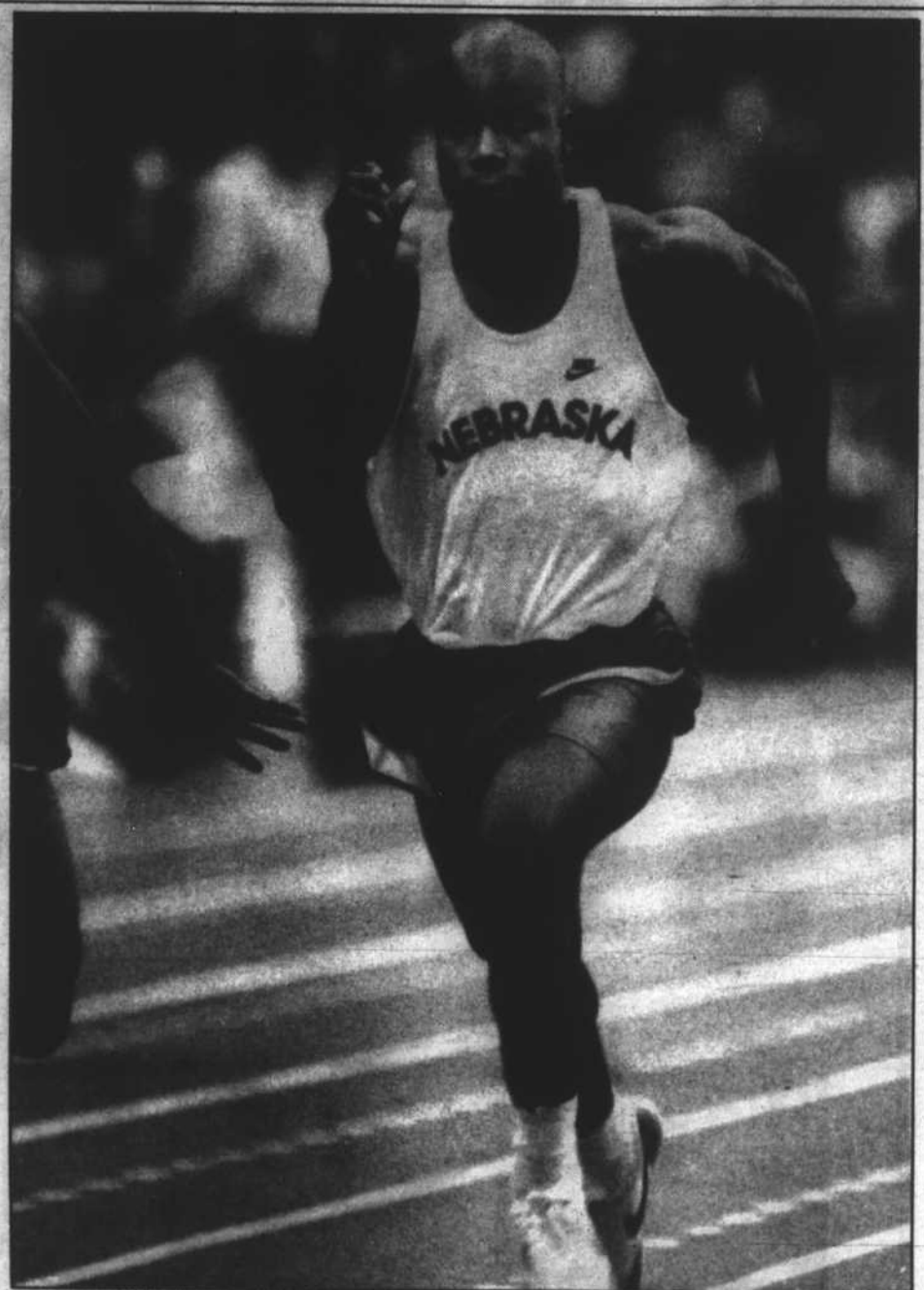
"I don't want to take away from Oklahoma State — they won the game fair and square; saying anything but that is ludicrous," Nee said.

After Sunday's game, Nebraska has one of the most favorable schedules in the conference by having three of its final four games at home.

The Huskers will play Colorado, Iowa State and Oklahoma all at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, while their only road test will be at Kansas.

Nee said Nebraska's season and postseason fate should be determined with its final five games, especially in the contests at the Devaney Center.

"I think the season has been a typical, normal Nebraska basketball season in that you're going to win some, you're going to lose some," he said. "We just have to take care of business at home the next couple of weeks."



Michelle Paulman/DN

Nebraska's Riley Washington holds a piece of the school record with a 6.17 second 55-meter dash.

Freshman bursts onto track with record-breaking times

By Chris Hain
Staff Reporter

Riley Washington has blazed onto the collegiate track scene.

Washington, a freshman who competes in both football and track, has been explosive so far during the indoor track season.

His season-best time of 6.17 seconds in the 55-meter dash ties the NU school record, and is the second-fastest time in the country this season.

While Washington may have the kind of speed that excites both track and football coaches, he is laid-back about his success.

"I don't really think about it," Washington said. "I try not to think about it."

"I just go out and do what I've got to do," he said.

Husker coach Gary Pepin, however, has been impressed by Washington.

"He's had a marvelous season to this point," Pepin said. "He has demonstrated to me and to people in the track world that he

is a bona fide talent."

Washington, from San Diego, had the third-fastest junior 100-meter dash time in the country last year.

"When you're the third best anything — piccolo player, piano player — you're special," Pepin said.

Washington said he was surprised by his success.

"I'm doing better than I thought I might do at the collegiate level," Washington said.

The Nebraska atmosphere also suits Washington well.

He said he came to Lincoln to escape the city life of San Diego.

"It's a pretty good school," he said. "It's quiet, laid-back... what I was looking for."

Washington said his main objective was to play football. A split end, he redshirted this past season.

"No one likes to sit on the bench coming out of high school, but I plan on getting on the field next year," Washington said.

Huskers vie for NCAA bid without home-game rituals

The number seven has been a traditionally lucky number for most people. But in Big Eight men's basketball circles, this numeral is more of a symbol than anything else.

Not only does seven represent the number of Big Eight teams that will be competing in this year's NCAA Tournament, but also tells how many conference schools have well-established identities in their home arenas.

As for Nebraska: It'll be able to roll a lucky seven by going to the tourney. But the Bob Devaney Sports Center has crapped out in comparison to its Big Eight counterparts.

In regard to the NCAA tourney, consensus opinion says that either four or five Big Eight teams will qualify for the Big Dance. But I think Iowa State coach Johnny Orr nailed it on the head when he said earlier this week that seven conference teams

deserved to go to the tourney.

I'll even go a step further in saying that seven teams WILL go.

The question many ask is, why would the NCAA selection committee take this many Big Eight schools after a dismal performance by the six conference teams that participated in last year's tourney?

One reason is that, come March 14, the day the NCAA committee chooses its 64 participants, seven of the Big Eight's teams — Colorado excluded — should have at least 18 wins, which is the usual magic number the committee looks for in choosing teams from a major conference.

Another reason is that among all of the leagues in the country, the Big Eight ranks second in the computer power ratings and is not far from taking the conference throne.

Nebraska coach Danny Nee said with the Big Eight's balance, the



Jeff
Singer

league should be well represented in March Madness.

"Someone has to go — I would think that the teams that are on the bubble, if they're in the Big 10, the Big East, the ACC and the Big Eight, have got a hell of a chance vs. the Big West, the Mid-American Conference and any other conference you want to consider," he said.

Nee added that another consideration was the quality in the Big Eight compared to other conferences, because "you start looking at it and see who's eligible and you try to get 64,

you've got to go pretty deep — that's a lot of teams."

But the problem that exists here in Lincoln doesn't concern the Cornhuskers, but the lack of a known identity for the Devaney Center.

All the other seven league arenas have special facets that make them unique, but the Devaney Center still has not found the niche needed to put itself on the college basketball map.

The point can be illustrated just by looking around the Big Eight.

While Kansas fans have the tradition of reading their newspapers when the opposing team is being announced at Allen Fieldhouse, Kansas State students form the Cat's Tail on the Bramlage Coliseum floor.

Missouri has the infamous Antlers, a student support group at the Hearnes Center comprised of mostly juvenile delinquents that were probably beaten as children, but can also

be entertaining.

Oklahoma has a similar group at the Lloyd Noble Center called the Rufneks — except that these guys are more obnoxious than funny and were probably beaten twice as much.

Hilton Coliseum at Iowa State does the "Heccere's Johnny" when the beloved Orr walks onto the court. Oklahoma State's Gallagher-Iba Arena is known as probably the loudest arena in the nation with its 6,381 seating capacity. And even the Coors Events Center at Colorado stands out because it sells beer.

So while the Huskers are making winning a tradition on the court, Nebraska's fans need to realize that ever since "Dead Dog Alley," the Devaney Center has had no bark.

Singer is a senior news-editorial and political science major and a Daily Nebraskan sports senior reporter.