

Wrestlers owe OSU piece of potential prize

By Tim Pearson
Staff Reporter

If the Nebraska wrestling team wins the NCAA title, the Cornhuskers should give part of the championship trophy to Oklahoma State.

The Cowboy wrestling program was put on probation earlier this year, keeping Oklahoma State out of the NCAA Championships.

Because of the probation, Tony Purler transferred to Nebraska, giving the Huskers another All-American wrestler along with senior Corey Olson.

Purler will try to gain even more than All-American honors this year at the NCAA Championships on Thursday, Friday and Saturday in Ames, Iowa.

Purler, ranked second in the nation, has compiled a 30-2 record at 126 pounds, includ-

— 66 —

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—Neumann
NU wrestling coach

ing six pins.

Husker coach Tim Neumann said Purler gave the Huskers another weapon in the lineup.

"He has increased the intensity in our lower weights," Neumann said. "He's the best wrestler in the nation at 126."

The addition of Purler meant the Huskers had two wrestlers with NCAA Championship experience wrestling at 126 this year.

Before the arrival of Purler, senior John

Buxton wrestled at 126.

Buxton was the Big Eight champion at 118 his freshman year, and he was named a Second-Team Amateur Wrestling News Freshman All-Star behind Purler, who then wrestled for the Cowboys.

With both Buxton and Purler at 126, Neumann was faced with a pleasant problem.

During the second half of the season, Purler wrestled at 126, and Buxton moved down to

118 for the Big Eight Championships and the NCAA Championships.

Neumann said Buxton's move to 118 would help the Huskers in their quest for their first national title.

"If Tony wouldn't have come here, Buxton would not have moved down to 118," he said. "Having both Buxton and Purler in the lineup makes us 15 or 16 points better."

Purler found out about Oklahoma State's probation in the middle of October, Neumann said, and he selected Nebraska over Iowa State and Oregon State.

"He came here because of Brad Penrith, who is the best lightweight coach in the country," he said. "Two seniors gave up parts of their scholarships to let Tony in, because they know that with him, it gives us a better chance to win a national title."

Team should value chance, Beck says

NU women prepare for NCAA tournament

By Derek Samson
Staff Reporter

As the Nebraska women's basketball team draws nearer to its NCAA tournament first-round game with San Diego tonight, Coach Angela Beck is trying to turn nervousness into excitement.

"I told the players it should be one of the most exciting things in their lives. We've worked hard to get to this point," she said.

"If you don't have a smile and feel good about it, something is not right. These opportunities don't come very often, you need to enjoy it," she said.

The only other time the Lady Huskers have been in the NCAA Tournament was in 1988. That year, the team finished 22-7 and lost in the first round to Southern California 100-82. Beck said her 1993 Huskers, also 22-7, had a chance of making some noise in the tournament.

"I've learned a lot about this team. We stay in any game and the never-say-die attitude is tremendous," Beck said. "They practiced really hard today. They practiced extremely physical."

San Diego, 16-11, will have to play the Lady Huskers in Lincoln, which Beck said added to the enthusiasm.

"It's a great feeling to be able to be at home. The thrill is a lot greater," Beck said. "That also means a lot to our seniors."

Because the pairings were just announced Sunday, Beck said she had not been able to study San Diego in depth.

"It's hard because we haven't been able to get any real meat-and-potatoes information. We just know some of the general information," she said.

Beck said the team would have to work harder on defense.

"We're going to have to be a lot more



Nebraska's Karen Jennings drives past a Kansas defender in the finals of the Big Eight Tournament. The Huskers will play an NCAA Tournament first-round game tonight against San Diego.

Michelle Paulmar/DN

aggressive on defense and put more pressure on them," she said.

Beck said Husker guard Sara Offringa said, "It's nice that we get to decide when our season ends and not a committee."

"That's true, but this team has never let anyone decide their own destiny. They knew what they had to do to get in and they did it," Beck said.

Nee hopes NU will overcome losing streak

By Jeff Singer
Senior Reporter

No matter what happens on Friday, Nebraska men's basketball coach Danny Nee wants Cornhusker fans to remember seven years, not one day.

Nebraska plays New Mexico State at 6:30 p.m. Friday in Syracuse, N.Y., with the Huskers looking for their first-ever win in the NCAA Tournament.

But while Nee has led Nebraska to a school-record third-straight NCAA tourney berth, he said he thought the progress of the program needed to be looked at when evaluating the Huskers.

"We think our program is reaching a new level," Nee said. "We've had three consecutive NCAA appearances — we think that's a monumental accomplishment."

Nee said now that Nebraska had become used to postseason play, he hoped the Huskers could break their losing streak in the NCAA tourney.

"We think we've grown, we think we've improved. We're ready to take the next step, and the next step is to try to win a game in the NCAA," he said. "Once we win one game, our goal will be to try to get to the Sweet 16, the Final Four or the next step. But first we have to do what we're ready to do and we're going to try to win games."

But, Nee said, it's amazing how people's goals for the Huskers have changed during his tenure in Lincoln.

"This program seven years ago wouldn't think about playing in three NAAs in a row," Nee said. "The mentality of you guys was the NIT or a winning season, and we've changed that."

Nebraska finished this season in a second-place tie in the Big Eight standings to accompany its 20-10 record.

But regular-season accomplishments are usually forgotten come postseason, according to Nee.

"What has happened with the media is that all the accomplishments of the teams that got into the tournament seem to go out the window and you're judged on the tournament," he said. "That's just how it is, and we're going to have to deal with that."

Huskers need guts, not glitz to win NCAA Tournament

OK, Cornhuskers: Want to find out how to win your first NCAA Tournament game against New Mexico State Friday?

Just take a look at the upset stomach you had after last week's Kansas State fiasco and after at least eight of your nine other losses this year.

Go ahead, take a gander at your guts.

Now spell it with me.

Guts. G-U-T-S. Guts.

No, Coach Nee, not glitz. No, Pike, not glamour. Guts.

You said it yourself, Coach, after the Kansas State loss, that the Huskers lacked any grit or guts, as if they were in a pickup game.

Recess is over, gentlemen.

Get guts, and you'll have a chance for a victory over New Mexico State. Leave your guts on the Bob Devaney Sports Center floor — no doubt still craving for more after a gutsy win

over Oklahoma — and you might as well take the red eye and your red faces home from Syracuse Friday night.

So do all Nebraska fans a favor and leave the gimmicks, glitz and glamour at home.

That means dropping the new NCAA warm-ups Nee unveiled earlier this week off your charter plane today and letting them melt away with the snow somewhere out east.

I know, I know, Coach. The shirts and warm-ups are designed to provide a fresh, upbeat attitude going into the NCAA Tournament.

But if your team needs new clothes to get up for a game, get out of the tournament and let Oklahoma in.

And give the gimmicks a rest, Coach.

You've never seen Duke, Kentucky, Evansville — or any of the other 60 teams in the field, for that



Todd Cooper

matter — have to use new shirts and warm-ups to get focused for an NCAA Tournament game.

You won't see the Kansas Jayhawks, who struggled just as much in their last game against Kansas State, coming out in black uniforms when they play Ball State on Thursday.

In the NCAA Tournament, glamour gets teams about as far as a diamond-studded mink on Madison Avenue.

As a native New Yorker, Nee, you should know that better than anyone. Fans in the Carrier Dome aren't going to be impressed by neat warm-

ups or fancy T-shirts.

In fact, if you want to impress New Yorkers, come out in chains and combat boots.

Another lackluster loss like the last two years and you can expect to hang up an NIT banner — speaking of gimmicks — if you're mediocre again next year.

With some guts and some glory, you can put up a worthwhile banner — one that says "First-round winners" or "Round of 32" or something really glitzy.

And if you're not going to play with some grit — if you're willing to watch New Mexico State out-rebound and out-hustle you as you let Kansas State — do us all a favor:

Give us a call. That way we won't waste our time watching you in your nifty warm-ups and shirts.

Instead, we'll be able to rest up and watch two teams that are sure to have

some intestinal fortitude this weekend:

The Husker women (after they earn Nebraska's first-ever NCAA Tournament win tonight) and the Husker wrestlers.

With Karen Jennings, Sara Offringa, Meggan Yedsena, Rissa Taylor and Nafesah Brown, there will be guts galore on the women's side.

And with Corey Olson, Tony Purler, Matt Lindland, Rulon Gardner, John Buxton and the rest of the Husker wrestlers, grit will be game in Ames, Iowa, for the NCAA Wrestling Championships.

But will a gutsy, gritty group of Huskers show up in Syracuse, N.Y.? My gut instincts say they better.

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