

Huskers leave no doubters with win

By Derek Samson
Staff Reporter

Nebraska erased any doubts about whether it should be a NCAA tournament team with an 81-58 first-round women's basketball victory over San Diego Wednesday.

"We wanted to make a statement that we wanted to be in this while longer," Cornhusker coach Angela Beck said. "We wanted to show the selection committee that we were a good pick."

Playing in their first-ever home NCAA tournament game at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, Nebraska jumped out to a 19-5 lead in the first 7:11 of the game, gradually increased the lead and headed into halftime up 46-21.

San Diego coach Kathy Marpe said her team didn't put its best foot forward.

"Nebraska made us look the way we looked," Marpe said. "I don't honestly think with the way they shot in the first half that anything we would have done would have mattered." Nebraska's Nafeesah Brown scored 16 points in the first half, including 10 straight during a five-minute span. Brown also grabbed eight first-half rebounds. "We came out so intense," Beck said. "We really banged the boards; that was one of our goals."

Nebraska outrebounded San Diego 27-14 in the first half and 51-32 for the game.

In the second half, the Huskers turned away any chance of a San Diego comeback and kept the running game going.

"Our post players were beating their post players down the court and that was getting us a lot of good



Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska's Karen Jennings drives past San Diego's Jill Shaver in Wednesday's first-round NCAA Tournament game. The Cornhuskers advanced with an 81-58 win.

See NCAA on 14

Brown saves best for Huskers' NCAA win

Player scores career-high 26

By Beau Finley
Staff Reporter

In addition to sending a message to future Nebraska opponents, Nafeesah Brown showed Wednesday that she has good timing.

Brown, a junior, scored a career-high 26 points, grabbed 13 rebounds and snagged six steals to propel the Cornhusker women's basketball team to its first-ever

NCAA tournament victory as Nebraska defeated San Diego 81-58 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

After leading all players in three different categories, Brown said she was more pleased that her effort could help the Huskers win.

"I am just glad I was able to contribute tonight," Brown said.

Nebraska coach Angela Beck said Brown's words were an indication of the way she played.

"Nafeesah usually isn't so modest," Beck said. "She's usually pretty hard on herself after a game."

Brown did do more than just

contribute. Her 16 first-half points, including a string of 10 straight, helped lift Nebraska to a 46-21 lead at intermission.

But it was Brown's rebounding that most impressed San Diego coach Kathy Marpe.

"(Brown) was awesome," Marpe said. "She is unstoppable on the offensive boards and that was a big key."

Torero center Chris Enger agreed with her coach.

"She was flying in from everywhere," Enger said.

Brown said her success wouldn't

have been possible without some help.

"Basically, I get on like that because of my teammates," Brown said. "My teammates make me successful."

That success included being the Huskers' second-leading scorer behind All-American Karen Jennings this season, as well as being an honorable mention selection for the All-Big Eight team.

Brown said remaining loose on the court is the key to continuing

See BROWN on 14

Piatkowski says team should be aggressive

By Susie Arth
Senior Reporter

It's out with the old and in with the new for Eric Piatkowski and the Nebraska men's basketball team.

Out is Kansas State and the Huskers' first-round loss in the Big Eight Tournament. In is the NCAA Tournament and the New Mexico State Aggies, who Nebraska will play Friday at Syracuse, N.Y., in the first round.

"We laid down like a bunch of dogs in the Big Eight Tournament," Piatkowski said. "We need to get up for the (NCAA) game and play intense for 40 minutes instead of for 10-minute spurts."

Although New Mexico State is quick and loaded with good athletes, Piatkowski said the Cornhuskers needed to focus on themselves rather than worry about the Aggies.

The key, he said, would be to play aggressive and intense basketball.

"We have to make sure we're fired up and play aggressively, not tentatively," he said. "We need to know it could be our only shot at it."

Piatkowski, who will be playing in his third NCAA Tournament, said he had offered some advice to the younger players.

The most important thing Piatkowski said his experience had taught him was to keep a grip on the situation.

Most basketball fans look at the NCAA Tournament and know that it is the highlight of college basketball, Piatkowski said. But the way to win is to avoid getting caught up in all the hype that accompanies the tournament, he said.

"The most important thing is to stress that the time is here, and for (everyone) to realize that they are involved in it."

Piatkowski said it was also important to keep from getting intimidated by the competition.

The Huskers, he said, were deeper and taller and probably had a rebounding advantage over the Aggies.

Both teams like a fast-paced game, he said, which was beneficial for the Huskers.

"I prefer a faster game," he said. "We'll try to get the score in the 85-90 range."

The Aggies' strength is in their athletic and quick players, he said.

Perhaps New Mexico State's biggest strength, Piatkowski said, was point guard Sam Coleman, who led the Aggies in scoring and assists this season. Coleman's nine assists per game also is leading the nation.

UNL seniors deprived of victory celebration

To: Whomever it concerns in the UNL administration department in regards to a possible tuition refund.

From: Jeff Singer, Daily Nebraskan senior sports reporter, on behalf of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's senior class.

RE: The possibility of never having been part of a postseason Nebraska victory in a major Cornhusker sport.

UNL's 1989-90 Undergraduate Bulletin, with which the majority of seniors started their days in Lincoln, says the university "ensures a level of program quality consistent with the expectations and needs of the people of Nebraska."

I take one of these expectations to mean at least one football bowl victory and/or a NCAA Tournament win by the men's basketball team.

Well, the gridiron Huskers have

lost all four bowl games during our years at UNL, and the hoopsters have had early exits from the NCAA tourney in the last couple of seasons.

This has led to the statewide saying "Those Huskers can't win the big one."

It would seem that since we can get some of our student fees back in form of a Fund A refund from student organizations, a Fund D for disappointment refund should be established as well. It would be a type of grievance pay, so we can get some of our money back for continuing postseason losses.

But Fund D can be discarded with one simple occurrence: a win by the men's basketball team in Syracuse, N.Y., Friday night.

So will Nebraska, which has a 0-3 career record in the NCAA tourney, be able to get the monkey off its back



Jeff
Singer

and give UNL's seniors one final chance of glory before hitting the real world?

The Huskers should beat New Mexico State by at least 10 points, but no matter which Nebraska athletic team is playing, the theory "to expect the unexpected" always seems to come into play for the scarlet and cream.

The "big game" disappointments started off for the seniors in the 1990 Fiesta Bowl, when what seemed to be an evenly matched contest between the Huskers and Florida State ended up in a 41-17 pounding by the 'Noles. Open the floodgates.

The next year, Nebraska was expected to beat Georgia Tech in the 1991 Florida Citrus Bowl, but the Huskers got stung 45-21 by the Yellow Jackets.

Three months later, the basketball Huskers were making their presence known as a new Big Eight power by having their best season in school history. So, of course, Nebraska ended up losing 89-84 to heavy underdog Xavier, Ohio, in the first round of the NCAA tourney.

Could the Huskers break their bowl woes against No. 1 Miami the next season in the 1992 Orange Bowl? A 22-0 shutout answered that question.

The hoopsters were once again favored in the NCAA Tournament, and we thought surely they would defeat Connecticut to end Nebraska's postseason blues — Huskies 86, Huskers 65.

OK, after sitting in front of my TV for three years on New Year's Day with my champagne ready to open after Nebraska coach Tom Osborne is thrust into the air by his players, I thought 1993 was my time to uncork the bottle. The result from the Orange Bowl was Florida State 27, Nebraska 14 — and the champagne is still chilling.

Now, the basketball team gets to end the grief and hardships of all of the UNL seniors with a win against the Aggies in blustery western New York.

Final optimistic score: Huskers 85, New Mexico State 75.

Otherwise, the champagne will be frozen and the seniors' feelings will be even colder.

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