

Wrestler accomplishes goal at national meet

Huskers finish third at NAAs

By Tim Pearson
Staff Reporter

AMES, Iowa—Tony Purler transferred to Nebraska to accomplish one thing.

He wanted to win an individual national title at 126 pounds in his last year of college wrestling eligibility.

Purler accomplished his goal in front of a Hilton Coliseum crowd of 12,007 at the NCAA Championships March 20 by defeating Arizona State's Shawn Charles 7-5 in the national

championship match.

Purler was Nebraska's sole individual champion, and he led the Cornhuskers to a third-place finish behind Iowa and Penn State.

"It's like someone took a big rock and lifted it off of me," Purler said. "I've been working toward this for a while."

Purler transferred from Oklahoma State because of the Cowboys' probation and became eligible to wrestle for the Huskers at the end of first semester.

A national championship was Purler's ultimate goal coming into the season, and he knew his chances for a title at Oklahoma State were gone.

"I had no choice (but to transfer)," he said. "I knew some guys (at Ne-

braska) pretty well, but I came here because of Brad Penrith because he had coached Charles."

Penrith, now a Nebraska assistant, served as an assistant at Arizona State for two years in 1990-1991 and had coached the Sun Devils' Charles.

Purler, who finished at 35-2, suffered his only two losses at the hands of Charles earlier this season. Purler said he was expecting to get another shot at Charles.

"I expected to meet him again here. I didn't have as many mental lapses this time," he said. "I don't know why, but I had a hard time getting psyched up for the other two matches against him."

Iowa took the team title with 123.75 points. Penn State finished second

with 87.5 points, and the Huskers finished with 79.5 points.

Husker senior John Buxton, who finished eighth at 118 pounds, said things just didn't go Nebraska's way.

"We had a couple of tough breaks," Buxton said. "We could've been higher up if a couple of matches would have gone our way."

One of the tough breaks for the Huskers was senior Matt Lindland's early exit in the first round with a 13-4 loss to Earl Walker of Boston University.

"It's not Matt's fault (that we didn't win)," Buxton said. "He wrestled well all season. He just had a tough match."

Even with the tough breaks, Buxton said the tournament wasn't a disappointment.

"We had six All-Americans. We all wrestled as well as we could," he said.

Joining Purler and Buxton as Husker All-Americans were junior Frank Velazquez, who placed seventh at 134; Mike Eierman at 142; Corey Olson at 177; and Rulon Gardner, who finished fourth at heavy-weight.

Olson finished second for the second straight year, losing to Ohio State's Kevin Randleman for the second time.

Eierman, who was a No. 11 seed, took home a fifth place finish.

He said he knew he was better than his seed, and he wanted to prove it.

"I thought I could do a lot better than what I was seeded," Eierman said. "This was pretty big for me."

Cornhuskers avoid CU sweep with win

Defensive effort stops Bluejays

By Jeff Griesch
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska baseball team made the most of its hits and avoided a series sweep with a 3-2 win over Creighton at Buck Beltzer Field on Sunday.

The Cornhuskers, 10-9, managed only two hits off Bluejay pitching, but played solid defense behind starter Brian Martin.

Martin, a senior from Longmont, Colo., scattered nine hits, struck out six, and walked four in the complete game win.

"I'm a control pitcher and I'm not going to overpower anybody," Martin said. "I just changed them up and tried to fool them."

The win salvaged the last of a four-game series for the Huskers. Creighton won a 10-4 game Friday in Lincoln and swept a doubleheader 10-2 and 9-4 in Omaha on Saturday.

Nebraska coach John Sanders praised Martin on his performance, and said Martin, 3-1, would play a bigger role than expected in the Husker rotation.

"Brian pitched well and just did a super job," Sanders said. "I think he has earned a spot in the starting rotation."

Brian O'Brien took the loss on the hill for Creighton, allowing three runs on two hits in three innings of work.

O'Brien, 2-4, cruised through the first two innings before having control problems in the third.

O'Brien struck out Husker shortstop Robert Perry to lead off the bot-



Michelle Paulman/DN

Nebraska's Marc Sagmoen slides safely into home Sunday while Creighton pitcher Brian O'Brien attempts to tag him. The Cornhuskers won the game 3-2.

tom of the third before hitting James Garcia.

Jed Dalton then hit a 370-foot fly ball that allowed Nebraska to extend the rally.

Creighton left fielder Chris Piggot had a chance to make the play on Dalton's double, but he was fooled by a swirling wind and let the ball drop just off the tip of his glove.

Creighton coach Todd Wenberg said Dalton's double was a big play in the Husker win.

"Our left fielder makes the play nine out of 10 times," Wenberg said.

"We teach them to reach for the wall with their offhand and then make the catch, but he tried to stumble into it

See **BASEBALL** on 8

Loss ends Husker season in second round of NCAA

By Chris Hopfensperger
Editor

LOS ANGELES — The longest season in the history of the Nebraska women's basketball team caught up with the Cornhuskers on the court of the USC Sports Arena on March 21, Coach Angela Beck said.

The Huskers, who kept the second-round NCAA game close throughout the first half, lost to the third-seeded Women of Troy, 78-60, in front of 1,020 people.

"I'm not making any excuses," Beck said. "I don't think this team would ever make excuses, but I know as a coach that fatigue took its toll."

The No. 22 and sixth-seeded Huskers advanced to the second round game by beating San Diego, 81-58, March 17.

Beck said the length of the season, the short rest after Nebraska's first-round win over San Diego, and the trip to the West Coast were all factors in the game.

"It got down to numbers and we're

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—Beck
NU women's coach

not as experienced down the bench," Beck said. "I don't think it got down to X's and O's. We got fatigued and got beat."

Karen Jennings, Nebraska's leading scorer entering the game, finished with a team-high 16 points, but shot just 35 percent from the floor and 33 percent from the line.

Nafeesah Brown, who scored 12 points, made only six of her 15 shots.

Sara Offringa, who was bothered by the flu, finished the game with only two points after averaging more than 10 points a game during the season.

The Huskers were able to keep the game close in the first half. With USC's two leading scorers on the bench in early foul trouble, Nebraska went on a 20-2 run to take a 12-point lead. But a technical foul on Beck and two short runs by the Women of Troy helped USC to a 31-29 halftime lead.

The Huskers struggled in the second half.

The two teams traded baskets early, and Nebraska grabbed a four-point lead. But USC's zone defense and the Huskers' lack of outside shooting soon took control of the game. The Women of Troy then went on a 17-0 run in the middle of the half to take the lead for good.

Nebraska helped USC stretch its lead to as many as 21 points in the second half. After going 11 of 14 from the free-throw line in the first half, the Huskers were only four of 14 in the second half.

"We felt that we kind of beat ourselves in the second half," Jennings

See **NU** on 8

Shock, sadness felt by NU football team

By Jeff Singer
Senior Reporter

As Nebraska's football team opens its spring season today, it will do so amid its second major distraction of the year.

After I-Back Derek Brown opted to leave the Cornhusker program in January following his junior season, former Nebraska free safety Tyrone Byrd sustained a serious back injury in a car accident last week that left him in critical condition.

Byrd, a 23-year old senior, was a four-year starter for the Huskers and helped lead Nebraska to a 9-3 record and a Big Eight title last season.

Byrd, who was apparently headed home for spring break to Chandler, Ariz., had his condition upgraded to satisfactory this weekend after the vehicle he was in overturned Monday near Grants, N.M. He is in the trauma unit at University Hospital in Albuquerque, N.M.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln student Alston Stone was killed in that accident.

Shock circulated between Husker coaches and players when they found out about Byrd's accident.

"There's sadness, first of all, that Tyrone was hurt," Nebraska linebacker Trev Alberts said. "Those things can happen, and we take a lot of things for granted."

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne said Byrd was the type of person who could overcome the tragedy.

"I think Tyrone is going to be fine," Osborne said. "I think with his character and personality, he can handle this adversity."

Defensive backs coach, George Darlington, agreed.

"We're sorry that he got involved in the car accident, but

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