



Shaun Sartin/DN

Nebraska All-American Frank Velazquez will lead the 11th-ranked Husker wrestlers against some of the nation's top competition this weekend at the National Dual Championships in the NU Coliseum. The championships will include eight of the top 10 teams in the nation.

Texas player accepts offer from Huskers

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

A hard-hitting defensive back from Bastrop, Texas, is the latest high school football player to verbally commit to play for the Nebraska football team next fall.

Octavius McFarlin said Wednesday he would accept a scholarship to play for the Cornhuskers. The signing period begins Feb. 2. McFarlin is the 10th athlete — seventh outside the state — to commit to Nebraska.

The 6-foot-1-inch, 180-pound safety — who high jumps 6 feet, 10 inches — is the second defensive back to commit to the Huskers.

McFarlin, who made 166 tackles, intercepted one pass and recorded five sacks last season, was named to the Fabulous 55, which recognizes the top 55 players in the Lone Star state. He was also named a member of the All-Central Texas team.

Darrell Brock, Bastrop High School's defensive coordinator, who has coached McFarlin since seventh grade, said he was pleased with his player's decision. McFarlin chose the Huskers over Texas Christian, Oklahoma State and New Mexico.

"He wanted to play for a winning program," Brock said. "I think that is what drew him to Nebraska more than anything else. They have a great tradition and, of course, Coach (Tom) Osborne is one of the best coaches in the nation."

"You can't imagine how many plays Octavius made at the line of scrimmage. He's

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Nation's finest to wrestle in Lincoln

By Tim Pearson
Senior Reporter

Nebraska wrestling coach Tim Neumann is leading his troops into battle.

Just like a general would plan an attack, Neumann is looking at strategy as his 11th-ranked Cornhuskers play host to the National Dual Meet Championships this weekend at the NU Coliseum.

Neumann said strategy always was the key in tournaments like the National Duals. That especially rang true in last year's duals, when Nebraska finished second to Penn State after upsetting top-ranked Iowa.

"We're juggling our lineup all over the place," he said. "We can weigh in 15 guys. We will adjust our lineup to the strengths of our opponents."

"Last year we moved Tony Purler to 134, and that helped us win."

Neumann said the meet, which will feature eight of the top 10 teams in the nation and nine top-ranked wrestlers, was the nation's finest dual tournament.

The rankings seem to back him up.

● Among the participants are Oklahoma State (No. 1), Iowa (No. 2), Oregon State (No. 3), Michigan (No. 4), North Carolina (No. 6), Penn State (No. 7), Oklahoma (No. 9) and Fresno State (No. 10).

● Also, five returning national champions from the 10 weight divisions will be in the duals.

● Of the 120 nationally ranked wrestlers, 83 are scheduled to wrestle in this weekend's matches.

First-round matches start at 9 a.m. Saturday. Semifinals will then be held at 8 p.m. The finals will start at 2 p.m. Sunday and will be carried live by Nebraska and Iowa public television.

Neumann said playing host to the event could only help the Husker wrestling program.

"It's a huge pain in the butt to host this thing," he said. "If it didn't cast a brilliant light on us, we wouldn't do it."

"It doesn't get any better than this until the NCAA Championships."

The event was moved to Lincoln in the summer of 1992 when Michigan pulled out as the host. Neumann was chairman of the selection committee to pick a new site. He was approached with the idea of Nebraska playing host to the duals for three years, ending next year.

Neumann jumped at the opportunity.

"It's a class event, and it truly does make the Big Eight and Nebraska look good," he said. "We got it for three years, but I want it to stay here forever."

"I'd like to make Lincoln the permanent site, but that has to be decided on by the executives of the NCAA."

But Neumann said it wouldn't look good if his team didn't do well.

And the Huskers have it tough right from the start against No. 6 North Carolina.

The Tar Heels enter their first-round match, scheduled for 9 a.m. Saturday, with six nationally ranked wrestlers.

And that worries Neumann.

"They've got a great team," he said. "Their

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— Neumann
NU wrestling coach

118-pounder is good, and T.J. Jaworsky is the defending national champ at 134. Their heavy-weight is ranked right behind (Nebraska's) Tolly Thompson.

"They counter all of our strengths. Our best wrestler is also at 134."

But winning may not happen if the Huskers don't improve from their last dual, a 19-16 win over Indiana last Saturday, Neumann said.

"We better have improvement," he said. "But we're 100 percent healthy, and mentally we're probably feeling stronger than we have all year."

"We have to get our upper weights wrestling. We're running into older, more mature people, and they're just beating us up."

NOTE:

● Husker junior Mike Eierman was chosen to participate in the National Wrestling Coaches All-Star Classic, which will be Jan. 31 in Pittsburgh.

Women to face two Big 8 teams in tough weekend

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

Nebraska women's basketball coach Angela Beck will breathe a sigh of relief when she returns home after a difficult weekend of Big Eight basketball.

The Huskers, 9-8, travel to Colorado, 13-2, for a game Friday. They follow with a 2 p.m. game Sunday at Missouri, 6-9.

"This is by far the toughest weekend for distance in travel," Beck said. "Missouri is always tough to beat, especially at home, and Colorado is Colorado. This is the toughest road swing of the season. Once we get this under our belt, (the season) looks better."

The Huskers, 1-3 in the Big Eight, can't afford to lose both games, Beck said.

"Obviously, the dream is to get both games, but that will be a difficult task," she said. "I know we need to get a split. It's going to be tough."

Nebraska is coming off a split last weekend. After being manhandled 78-57 by Kansas, Nebraska turned the tables on Kansas State with a

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Despite loss of All-American, Huskers primed for meet

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

There is no better cure for Nebraska track and field coach Gary Pepin's severe case of anxiety than the Nebraska Open Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The Nebraska Open will feature 25 teams and about 700 athletes to kick off Nebraska's indoor track and field season.

Pepin said the meet was just what his team, along with the coaches, needed.

"Most kids have been working hard since the first day the NCAA let us practice," he said. "We're all anxious

to get this started. The new kids are getting some butterflies, and us coaches are anxious to get it going as well."

Pepin said the Nebraska Open would showcase the Huskers' talent. The Nebraska men — ranked No. 7 in Track & Field magazine's dual rankings — have three returning All-Americans, including Andy Meyer (discus), Riley Washington (100-meter dash) and Peter Malasev (high jump).

The women — third in Track & Field's dual rankings — have four returning All-Americans, including Shanelle Porter (400-meter dash), Paulette Mitchell (shot put), Kwani Stewart (100-meter hurdles) and Theresa Stelling (3,000-meter run).

But Nebraska will also get its first taste of competition without the help of junior All-American Robert Thomas, a long and triple jumper.

Thomas, who holds school records

in the indoor long and triple jumps, told the Daily Nebraskan Tuesday he was leaving the team.

Pepin said Thomas' departure shouldn't have too big of an effect on Nebraska's performance throughout the season.

"Robert, for his age, was one of the finest jumpers in the world, not just the United States," he said. "You hate to lose somebody with Robert's athletic ability and potential. But Robert never scored a point in outdoor competition or in a national meet for us."

Pepin said Nebraska's strong performances in dual meets proved the Huskers would be fine without Thomas.

"Our team has never been the type of team that is built around one person or one event," Pepin said. "I think that shows in our duals. Both the men and women have been one of the better

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Pepin

dual teams in the United States. There is not any particular person this team will live or die by."

Although no team scores will be kept, Pepin said, the individual scores should provide him with a preview for the rest of the season.

"There is always some surprises in performances, especially in the first meet," Pepin said. "Of course, you're hoping there will be more positive surprises than negative surprises."

Pepin said he was hoping a strong performance would move his teams toward Iowa State, which should contend for the Big Eight title with Nebraska.

"Those are two teams that, if everyone is healthy, should be the ones battling for it," he said. "I think both our teams (men's and women's) are going to have real fine seasons. There are some marvelous athletes. We're just excited to get it started."