

Gymnastics coach: NU has right stuff to beat Stanford

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's gymnastics team is out for revenge this weekend.



Allen
Nebraska has finished runner-up to

The 8-1 Cornhuskers travel to Palo Alto, Calif., to participate in a five-team invitational Saturday at 5 p.m.

But the No. 6 Huskers will be focused primarily on two-time defending national champion Stanford.

the No. 2 Cardinals at each of the last two NCAA meets.

Nebraska coach Francis Allen said the Huskers, who play host to No. 1 Ohio State on March 13, were heading into an important part of the season.

The University of California-Berkeley, San Jose State, and Western Michigan will also compete in this weekend's meet.

"These next two meets are pretty critical," Allen said. "If we go out and beat Stanford and come back home and beat Ohio State, we are in great shape."

Allen said the Huskers were not in great shape during last week's victory over New Mexico. Despite scoring 280.05 points, Nebraska's second highest total of the year, Allen said the Huskers hit on just 64 percent of the opportunities.

"That should be higher," he said. "It should be around 80-85 percent, and for the big meets it's around 90 percent."

The Huskers, who fell four spots in the ratings since last week, have the capability to beat Stanford, Allen said.

"Stanford is going to be tough at home," Allen said, "and Berkeley is

“ I have the best team in the nation. But they have to perform. ”

— Allen
NU men's gymnastics coach

psyched, too. But if we can do what we are capable of doing, we can win."

He said the Huskers had the capability of scoring in the range of 285 points. Nebraska's highest total of the season so far came on Feb. 19 in Norman, Okla., when the team scored 280.25 points. Oklahoma won the meet

with a score of 283.95.

"If you take all the teams," Allen said, "and put them out on the floor, I have the best team in the nation. But they have to perform. I can sit here and say that all day, and it doesn't mean a thing if they don't go out there and win."

SPORTS BRIEFS

Gymnasts to look for wins in Oregon

From Staff Reports

The Nebraska women's gymnastics team heads into Friday's six-team Shannico Invitational in Corvallis, Ore., looking to bounce back from their first losses of the season.

The 8-2 Huskers lost to Utah and Arizona in Salt Lake City on Feb. 19.

On Friday, Nebraska gets a second chance at Arizona. The Wild-

cats scored 187.375 points in Salt Lake City, while the Huskers totaled 186.850.

Oregon State, Washington, Penn State and Minnesota also will participate in the meet.

Husker coach Dan Kendig said Nebraska should be in top form Friday.

"We are looking forward to the meet," Kendig said. "It will be a big meet for us because there are six quality teams participating."

NU baseball team has next six at home

From Staff Reports

The Nebraska baseball team begins a six-game homestand on Saturday with a doubleheader against Western Illinois.

The 2-5 Cornhuskers will face the Leathernecks, 12-28-1 last year, in a 1 p.m. doubleheader on Saturday at Buck Beltzer Field.

Track competitors to get last shot at NCAAs

From Staff Reports

Members of the Nebraska men's and women's track and field teams will have their final chance this weekend to qualify for the NCAA Championships on March 11-12.

Coach Gary Pepin said Thursday that many of the sprinters and hurdlers went to the Florida Last Chance in Gainesville, Fla.

On Friday, Nebraska's distance runners and distance medley relay team will compete at the Cyclone Last

Chance in Ames, Iowa.

On Saturday, the Cornhuskers will play host to the final indoor home meet of the season.

The Husker Last Chance starts at 10 a.m. in the Bob Devaney Sports Center track area. Pepin said most of the Nebraska team would compete in the event.

NOTES:

● Nebraska's Shanelle Porter was named the women's Most Valuable

Performer at the Big Eight Championships last weekend. Porter won the 400-meter and 200-meter dashes and anchored the 4-by-400-meter relay.

● Husker shot putter Paulette Mitchell was named the Big Eight women's track performer of the month for her string of wins in February. Mitchell, who won the shot put in every Nebraska meet during February, broke her own school record twice and set a conference record during the Big Eight Championships.

Expand

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the new conference but has not eliminated the possibility of joining another league.

"We are not going to sign a lifetime deal with anybody," he said. "The responsible thing to do is keep our doors open to any options that may come our way."

The growth of the Big Eight, Plati said, will cause teams other than the Buffaloes to spend significant amount of time traveling to road games.

"We have always had problems with travel," he said. "Not with the football and basketball teams — they're always going to fly—but with

the nonrevenue sports. They have to pile into vans. Now the other schools will know what we have to do."

Other than travel considerations, Plati said, Colorado has been pleased with the merger.

"The way college sports is going," he said, "it is going to help tremendously. The Big Eight went out and did what it had to do. They got it done before everybody else did, and I think they really shocked conferences like the Big 10 and the Southeastern Conference."

"Plus, you are gaining four solid programs. If you look down the line, they will add something to just about every sport."

No official plan has been drawn up yet, but some have speculated that the

new conference will be split into two divisions. Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, along with the four Texas schools, would make up the south division, while the remaining six schools would make up the north division.

Plati said the north-south split may not be a good idea.

"North-south makes the most sense, but you want to keep rivalries alive," he said. "I am sure that Nebraska wants to play Oklahoma every year. We certainly want to play Oklahoma, too."

"So I'm not sure if that is the best way to do it. If some kind of an east-west split could be made, that might be better."

Wrestling

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a 28-7 record, will have to get by both fourth-ranked Joey Wildasin of Oklahoma State and Iowa State's Eric Akin, ranked second in the country.

"He's facing a tough road, but he's capable," Neumann said.

And Gonyo said he was confident. "I think I can win," he said. "I'm not the favorite, but I think I have the ability to win."

Velazquez, ranked third in the country with a 22-2 mark, said his Big Eight title last year made him the favorite at 134 pounds again this year.

“ Oklahoma State should have seven in the finals. If we get some help from Oklahoma, Iowa State and Missouri, winning is definitely not out of the question. ”

— Neumann
NU wrestling coach

"You have to think you're going to win, or else you're not going to," he said.

Judging by the seedings, Neumann said, the Huskers should get seven wrestlers to the finals. Freshman Ryan Tobin, who will be seeded fourth at 177 pounds, could put the Huskers over the top, Neumann said.

"Oklahoma State should have seven in the finals," he said. "If we get some help from Oklahoma, Iowa State and Missouri, winning is definitely not out of the question."

"Tobin is capable of winning his weight class. He could be the guy who gives us the points we need to fall in place."

NEBRASKA Track & Field

Catch the UNL Track & Field athletes in action as they attempt to qualify for nationals at the Husker Last Chance meet.

SATURDAY
March 5
10 a.m. (Field events)
Noon (Running events)

Bob Devaney Sports Center
Indoor Track

Free admission



NEBRASKA Baseball

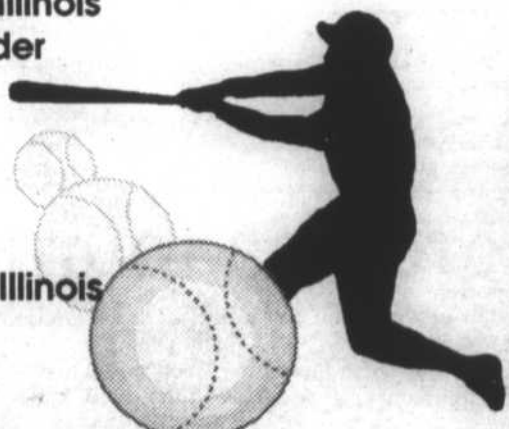
Catch the Nebraska Baseball Team in action this weekend.

SATURDAY
March 5
vs. Western Illinois
Doubleheader
1 p.m.

SUNDAY
March 7
vs. Western Illinois
1 p.m.

MONDAY
March 7
vs. Northern Iowa
Doubleheader
Noon

Buck Beltzer Field
\$2 - general admission



Tigers

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And Nebraska is riding a three-game winning streak, including wins over Oklahoma State and Kansas, both rated in the Top 25.

Eric Piatkowski said the turnaround was a result of the Huskers staying positive during the slump.

"People have just doubted this team and doubted this team all year," Piatkowski said after the win over Oklahoma State Wednesday. "The only ones that believed in us are in that locker room. The coaches, the players and everyone with this team believed in us."

Despite Nebraska's recent success, guard Eric Strickland said, the Huskers can still put together a more complete game on Saturday.

"We're capable of a lot more," Strickland said. "(Oklahoma State) was our best defensive game, but as far as offensive effort is concerned, it wasn't anything like Kansas. We need to put them both together."

"We're a very good road team. I think that will be a big key, along with our unity."



Jeff Haller/DN
Cornhusker guard Jaron Boone, left, puts the pressure on Oklahoma State's Bryndon Manzer during Nebraska's win Wednesday.