

Big Eight in the bag, NU big dance bound

Team effort ropes in 'Pokes

By Tim Pearson
Senior Reporter

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Jamar Johnson jumped into Eric Piatkowski's arms. Nebraska coach Danny Nee pumped his fists into the air as a salute to the Kemper Arena crowd of 14,283.

Nee and those two seniors had seen the good and bad of Nebraska basketball.

On Sunday, they saw the best display of Cornhusker basketball yet as the Huskers disposed of No. 23 Oklahoma State 77-68 to take home Nebraska's first-ever Big Eight tournament title.

"This run has been the best basketball I've seen at Nebraska," Nee said. "This is a big step for the Nebraska basketball program."

"It was a team effort. There is not one player on our team who did not contribute to our win."

The fourth-seeded Huskers defeated Oklahoma 105-88 behind Piatkowski's tournament-record 42 points in the first round, and they downed the third-ranked and top-seeded Missouri 98-91 to get to the championship game.

Jaron Boone said Nebraska basketball has reached new heights. Boone's 15 points and three steals Sunday helped place him on the All-Tournament team with Bruce Chubick and Piatkowski.

"This is one of the greatest things to happen to Nebraska basketball since the first NCAA appearance," he said. "This means that we've accomplished two of our goals — 20 wins and a Big Eight Tournament championship."

But Bryant Reeves and Oklahoma State were determined not to allow the Huskers an easy trip to the title.

Nebraska, 20-9, countered Reeves' size, using its run-and-gun style of play to its advantage.

"What we were trying to do was run the entire game," Nee said. "We thought that if we would play an up-tempo game that Big Country (Reeves) would show some fatigue."

Reeves scored 18 points but was held to five points in the first half. He didn't score until the

All-Tournament Team			
Player	Tournament Avg.		
F Eric Piatkowski Nebraska	ppg	rpg	
	25.3	5.7	
F Bruce Chubick Nebraska	ppg	rpg	
	15.3	12.0	
C Bryant Reeves Oklahoma State	ppg	rpg	
	22.0	10.3	
G Brooks Thompson Oklahoma State	ppg	apg	
	12.7	5.3	
G Jaron Boone Nebraska	ppg	apg	
	15.7	3.0	
Tournament MVP - Eric Piatkowski, Nebraska			

DN graphic

6:47 mark in the first half.

"I got off to a rough start," Reeves said. "In the first half Nebraska did a better job on the boards and outrebounded us."

"We didn't execute well or shoot the ball well."

The Cowboys didn't have their big gun firing, but neither did the Huskers, as Piatkowski, named the tournament MVP, scored 10 points on 4-of-16 shooting.

Oklahoma State came into the game intent on not letting Piatkowski beat the Cowboys, guard Randy Rutherford said.

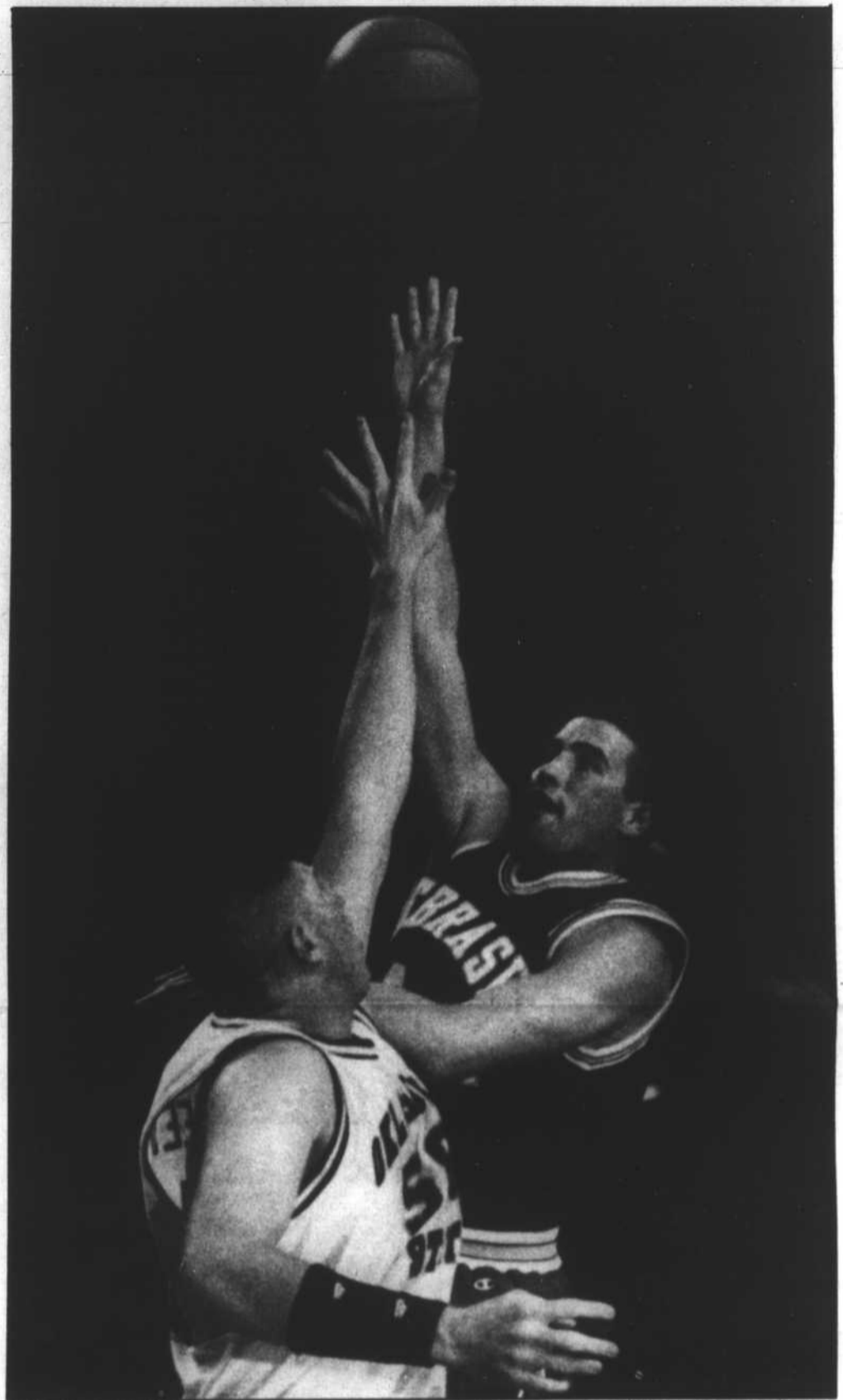
Rutherford kept the Cowboys in the game with 21 points, 18 of those from 3-point land.

"I thought we did a good job of guarding Piatkowski," he said. "We tried to drive him into the baseline."

"Their other guys stepped up and did a good job."

Even though Piatkowski was cold, the Huskers weren't ready to fold.

See CHAMPS on 8



William Lauer/DN

Nebraska's Bruce Chubick throws up a hook shot over Oklahoma State's Bryant Reeves during the first half of the Huskers' Big Eight Tournament win Sunday.

Huskers hope to shake Penn

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

Just 10 minutes into Nebraska, Danny Nee knew his team was headed to New York.

On their way back to Lincoln after winning the school's first Big Eight Tournament championship in Kansas City, Mo., the Huskers stopped in Nebraska City and discovered the destination and opponent for their fourth consecutive NCAA tournament trip.

"We pulled into a McDonald's and a little boy ran up to me," Nee said, "and slobbered something about Penn."

The young Husker fan was referring to the 24-2 Pennsylvania Quakers. The Ivy League champions will be Nebraska's first-round opponent in the NCAA Tournament Thursday at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Long Island, N.Y.

As the No. 6 seed in the East regional, the Huskers will probably play Thursday afternoon. Tip-off time will be announced Monday.

Nee said he was thrilled with the performance of the Huskers in the Big Eight tournament.

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— Chubick
NU men's basketball forward

— 99 —
"It's wonderful," he said. "It's so gratifying to get something you worked so hard for eight years and when it's so unexpected."

Nebraska guard Jaron Boone said he was pleased with the Huskers' position in the tournament. If the Huskers beat Penn on Thursday, they will play either James Madison or third-seeded Florida on Saturday in Long Island.

"We got a good seed," Boone said. "If we go in there and play the way we have been playing, we'll be victorious."

Point guard Jamar Johnson said Nebraska's seeding didn't matter as long as the Huskers

were able to play well.

"Personally, I was satisfied with the seed," Johnson said. "I don't just want to go to the tournament this year and turn around and get back on the plane."

The Huskers were in the NCAA Tournament each of the last three seasons but lost in the first round each time.

"I can't explain to you how incredible this is," forward Bruce Chubick said to the approx-

imately 5,000 fans who greeted the Huskers at the Bob Devaney Sports Center Sunday night. "We are not satisfied with getting to the tournament. We want to win some games. We want to do some damage."

In order to do damage, Johnson said, a change of attitude is necessary.

See SEED on 8

No. 1 Buckeye gymnasts 'slip' into win over NU men

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

All year, the Nebraska men's gymnastics team had been pointing toward Sunday's meet with Ohio State at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The Cornhuskers considered the Buckeyes, 21-0 and ranked No. 1 in the nation coming into the meet, their main hurdle in a run at their eighth national title in the last 15 years.

Nebraska couldn't overcome that obstacle — at least not yet.

Ohio State squeaked by the No. 2 Huskers 284.85 to 284.55.

"They were everything we thought they would

be," Nebraska coach Francis Allen said. "We knew, coming in, we would have to hit about 80 to 85 percent, and we only hit 75. But we handed it to them."

Through four of the six events, the Huskers led 190.55 to 189.05 and were in position to cruise home with a victory. But the Buckeyes came back — aided by two Nebraska slips on the parallel bars — to hand the Huskers their first loss in a home dual since 1989.

"We hit any one of our two misses on the parallel bars, and we could've won the meet," Allen said. "So it was close. We could have ran away with it if we could have finished the parallel bars and the high bars."

Ohio State, led by Blaine Wilson and Drew Durbin, outscored Nebraska, 13-3, by 1.8 points in the two events.

"We gave it away," Allen said. "We had them right where we wanted them, and we just gave it to them."

Individual and all-around medal winners for Nebraska included Dennis Harrison, Richard Grace, Ric Kieffer and Jason Christie.

Allen said he couldn't remember how it felt to lose at home.

"It has been a while," he said. "Hopefully it will be a while again. Those national championships (in Lincoln, April 21-24) are going to be great."

As the Nebraska men lost, the Husker women returned the favor by defeating the Buckeye women 192.325 to 186.75.

The Nebraska women's score was the second highest of the season and the seventh highest in

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school history.

Nicole Duval led the 10-5 Huskers by winning the all-around competition, the floor exercise and the vault. The junior from Lincoln also placed third in the uneven bars and second on the balance beam.

Nebraska coach Dan Kendig was pleased with the Husker victory but was more excited about their return to early-season form.

After starting the year 7-0, the Huskers dropped to 9-5 after two meets on the road.



Allen



Kendig