

Strong finish



Nebraska's Julia Russell competes in the breaststroke during the Huskers' win against Kansas.

Travis Heying/DN

Swimmers anticipate championship titles

By Andrew Strnad
Staff Reporter

If you are looking for surprises at the Big Eight Conference Swimming Championships in Oklahoma City, Okla., this week, don't expect to find any.

The Nebraska men's and women's swimming teams both expect to return to Lincoln with a conference championship.

"We expect to win the Big Eight Tournament for the 16th year in a row," sophomore Conny Wennberg said. "We don't have a doubt about it."

Wennberg helped lead the men's team to its 15th straight conference championship last season by winning the 100 and 200 breaststrokes. He was named the Big Eight Newcomer of the Year for his performance.

The women's team will be going for its second straight title.

Coach Cal Bentz, in his 19th season at Nebraska, said that both teams were ready for the challenge.

"We feel that we have prepared well for the conference meet and will look to improve on all that we've accomplished thus far," Bentz said.

The men's team has four returning Big Eight champions. All four look to repeat.

Wennberg, who holds the Big Eight record in the 200 breaststroke with a time of 1:59.13, hopes to move on to the NCAA Championships and make an impact.

"Last year I finished fifth," Wennberg said, "and when you are in a tournament, anything can happen."

Juniors Justin Finney, Chris Ford and Francois Boshoff also hope to repeat as Big Eight champions.

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CONNY WENNBERG

Nebraska men's swimmer

The Nebraska women's team also expects a performance like last year's.

Nebraska is led by NCAA qualifiers and conference champions Melanie Dodd, Jane Glazebrook, Penny Heyns, Julia Russell and Mikaela Lauren.

Nee: Team needs more experience

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Reporter

With four regular-season games left on its schedule, the Nebraska basketball team needs to grow up in a hurry, Coach Danny Nee said Tuesday.

If they don't, he said, tonight's 7:05 contest against No. 14 Missouri at the Hearn Center in Columbia, Mo., could look painfully similar to the Cornhuskers' last two outings.

The Tigers are 18-4 overall and 7-3 in the Big Eight. Nebraska is 16-9 and 3-7 after a 91-68 loss to Kansas and a 93-53 loss to Oklahoma State last Saturday.

"I've said it to their faces, and I'll say it to you," Nee said. "We have got a very immature group. That's the only word I can use. Sometimes they don't know how to handle situations."

The Huskers have a particularly hard time with situations at the end of games, Nee said. In losses to Kansas and Iowa State, Nee said he could pinpoint moments in the second half when Nebraska gave the game away.

"I don't think we know how to handle it at the end," Nee said. "That comes from experience. Last year's team and the year before's team, we have had seniors. That was the crust or the heart of our team."

"In defense of my team, the only thing I can say is that a lot of my players were role players a year ago. A lot of my players were not in Division I a year ago."

The defending Big Eight Tournament champions lost seniors Eric Piatkowski, Jamar Johnson, Bruce Chubick and Tom Best from last year's team. In their absence, Nebraska has relied on junior guards Erick Strickland and Jaron Boone for leadership, Nee said.

"It has not been from the senior, Melvin Brooks," Nee said. "Boone and Strickland are capable. But have they done enough? Not yet."

Nee said Boone, who is averaging 20.5 points per game, had responded well. But, he said, Strickland has been struggling. The junior from Bellevue scored a season-low five points in Saturday's 40-point loss at Oklahoma State.

Strickland has not been able to stay out of foul trouble in several Big Eight games, Nee said, but is learning slowly.

Nee said a perfect example occurred at the end of the first half against the Cowboys. With 4:30 remaining in the first half and the Huskers trailing 31-24, Strickland picked up his second foul and Nee replaced him with freshmen Chester Surles.

In less than four minutes, the Cowboys scored 18 points to build a 20-point halftime advantage.

Against the Tigers, Nebraska will need to execute on all cylinders if they intend to escape with a victory. A year ago, the Huskers lost by two points in Columbia, and in 1992, Nebraska beat Missouri at the Hearn Center.

"It's a building where we have competed," he said, "just like Iowa State. Can we compete in there again? I don't know. But we are certainly trying to create the atmosphere of positiveness."

Missouri guard O'Liney does his talking on the court

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

Missouri guard Paul O'Liney wasn't saying much about Nebraska Tuesday.

Instead, he wanted to let his actions do the talking Wednesday night when 16-9 Nebraska travels to Columbia, Mo., to take on the 18-4 Tigers.

O'Liney didn't want to predict that he would duplicate his 31-point, nine-rebound performance against the Huskers Jan. 7.

Nor would he say whether he thought the Tigers would duplicate the 82-74 victory they earned that same night.

Then again, O'Liney didn't say it

wouldn't happen, either.

"I don't play any different against certain teams," O'Liney said. "I try to play hard every night. I guess at Nebraska, I had a lot of good looks at the basket and my shooting percentage was pretty good. That might be different, I guess."

O'Liney, who is fifth in the Big Eight in scoring with an average of 19.9 points a game, scored 24 points in the second half to help Missouri pull away in its first meeting with the Huskers.

The 6-foot-2 senior from Pensacola, Fla., said he expected to see a different Nebraska team after Missouri won at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"I think they'll probably be pretty fired up," O'Liney said. "They'll try to play better than they did in Lincoln, and they probably will. I think they'll come out aggressive and take it right to us."

But will that even be enough for a team that has lost its last two games by a combined 63 points to upset Missouri in Columbia?

"I hope not," O'Liney said. "I don't know. We'll just have to wait and see."

The 14th-ranked Tigers, 7-3 in the conference, dropped a 94-89 decision at Oklahoma Saturday after winning five straight and eight of their last nine.

Meanwhile, Nebraska has lost

three consecutive games and six of its last eight, falling to 3-7 in the Big Eight.

O'Liney said even though the teams had opposite Big Eight records, the situations were the same.

"We kind of slipped up in our last game and lost to Oklahoma," he said. "So we have to step it up a notch. We're going to play hard. Nebraska has lost a few, so they'll be wanting a win. They'll have to step it up, too."

O'Liney said Missouri also shared something else in common with the Huskers.

"We're both guard-dominated teams," he said. "They don't go inside too much. There is always a lot of running when we play Nebraska,

which is the kind of basketball I love. We like to run, and we know Nebraska does."

With a win, Missouri will move to a half-game behind Kansas, and an Oklahoma State loss tonight would put the Tigers and Cowboys into a tie for second in the conference.

The Tigers' game at Kansas Saturday would then be for the Big Eight's top spot.

O'Liney said he wasn't worried about Missouri looking ahead to Kansas.

"I know I won't look past them, and I doubt anyone else will," he said. "To be a good team, you have to take it one game at a time. I think we're a good team, so I'm not too worried that we'll look past them."