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Swim team takes defeat with class

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

Nebraska swimming and diving coach Cal Bentz enjoyed last weekend, even though his men's team finished third at the Big Eight Championships, ending its 15-year title streak. And he's hoping that he'll enjoy what he sees at the NCAA Championships.

The women's meet will be March 16-18, and the men's meet will be a week later.

Bentz said Nebraska was concentrating on the NCAA Championships now, rather than dwelling on the Big Eight.

"The question (of not repeating) is raised a lot more by the media than by the members of the team," he said. "Each of those past 16 teams are separate. It's easy to say we've had 15 in row and we couldn't get the 16th. Well, so be it."

"We had some really great performances, and we were really happy with our times. I think these guys are pumped up and happy with what they did. The team championship was only one small part of it."

Bentz said he had never experienced a more exciting finish at the Big Eight Championships in his 19 years

as the men's head coach.

The championship came down to the final event of the weekend, the 4x100-yard relay, and the Iowa State-Kansas winner would be crowned the new champion.

Despite not winning any titles during the meet, Nebraska still had an outside chance of winning its 16th straight conference title going into the last event, which Iowa State won.

"Of the 18 (Big Eight championship) meets I've been fortunate enough to be a part of, I've never witnessed anything as exciting and close as this one," Bentz said.

Bentz said Nebraska showed a lot of class in passing down the conference crown.

"Our guys jumped around when they won it and congratulated them more than anyone else," Bentz said. "That's what college athletics are all about. We had a good meet and so did Iowa State and Kansas."

The women, however, won their second consecutive Big Eight crown in Bentz's three years as their head coach.

"As they say, 'A win is a win,'" he said. "Our plan was to win the meet, and we took care of business. We had some great individual performances. So it was a great win for the women."

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Going into every meet, Martial trains all-out, she said. She said she tried to put in all the work she could before an event. This helps eliminate the fear and pressure of being the favorite to win in the big meets, Martial said.

The first thing Martial does when she steps on the runway is visualize how she wants to jump. Then she listens to the clap of the crowd cheering her down the runway.

"You become very aware of every-

thing you do, and your body just moves in rhythm with the claps," Martial said.

But regardless of how far track ends up taking Martial, she said she always wanted to keep a firm grip on her priorities.

"Track is always second to school," Martial said. "And no matter how big I get in track, I always plan on keeping it that way."

Nonetheless, Martial said her goals for track this year were to repeat as the NCAA outdoor triple jump champion, capture the NCAA indoor gold on March 10-11 in Indianapolis, Ind., and improve her personal bests in both the long jump and triple jump by a foot.

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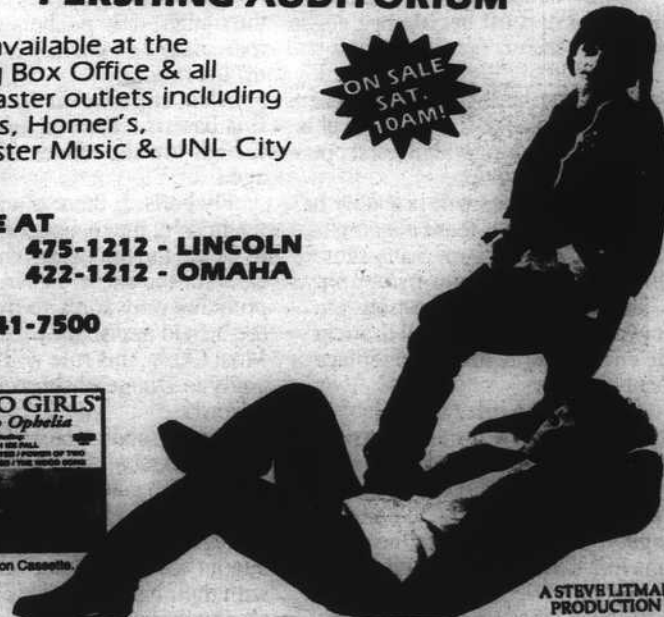


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