

SPORTS

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Nee's team still hopes for NCAA appearance

Cyclones ready to win face-off with Huskers

By Derek Samson
Senior Reporter

Iowa State's Fred Hoiberg has started all four years and was one of four returning starters from last year's 14-13 Cyclone team.

That is exactly why Hoiberg said the Cyclones must finish their season with a win, even if it is on the road.

When Hoiberg brings his 24.5-point scoring average to the Bob Devaney Sports Center Sunday, he expects to leave with his first win ever in Lincoln.

"We have too much experience to be wondering if we can win on the road," Hoiberg said. "We've all played so many games on the road together, and we really need to win this last one. It's tough playing on the road in the Big Eight, but we can't use that as an excuse. We just need to go there and win."

Iowa State has lost four straight games to the Cornhuskers in Lincoln, but Nebraska already has lost four conference games at home this season.

Hoiberg, grandson of former Nebraska coach Jerry Bush (1955-63), said he didn't think it would matter that Nebraska hadn't won at home since its win over Oklahoma Feb. 1.

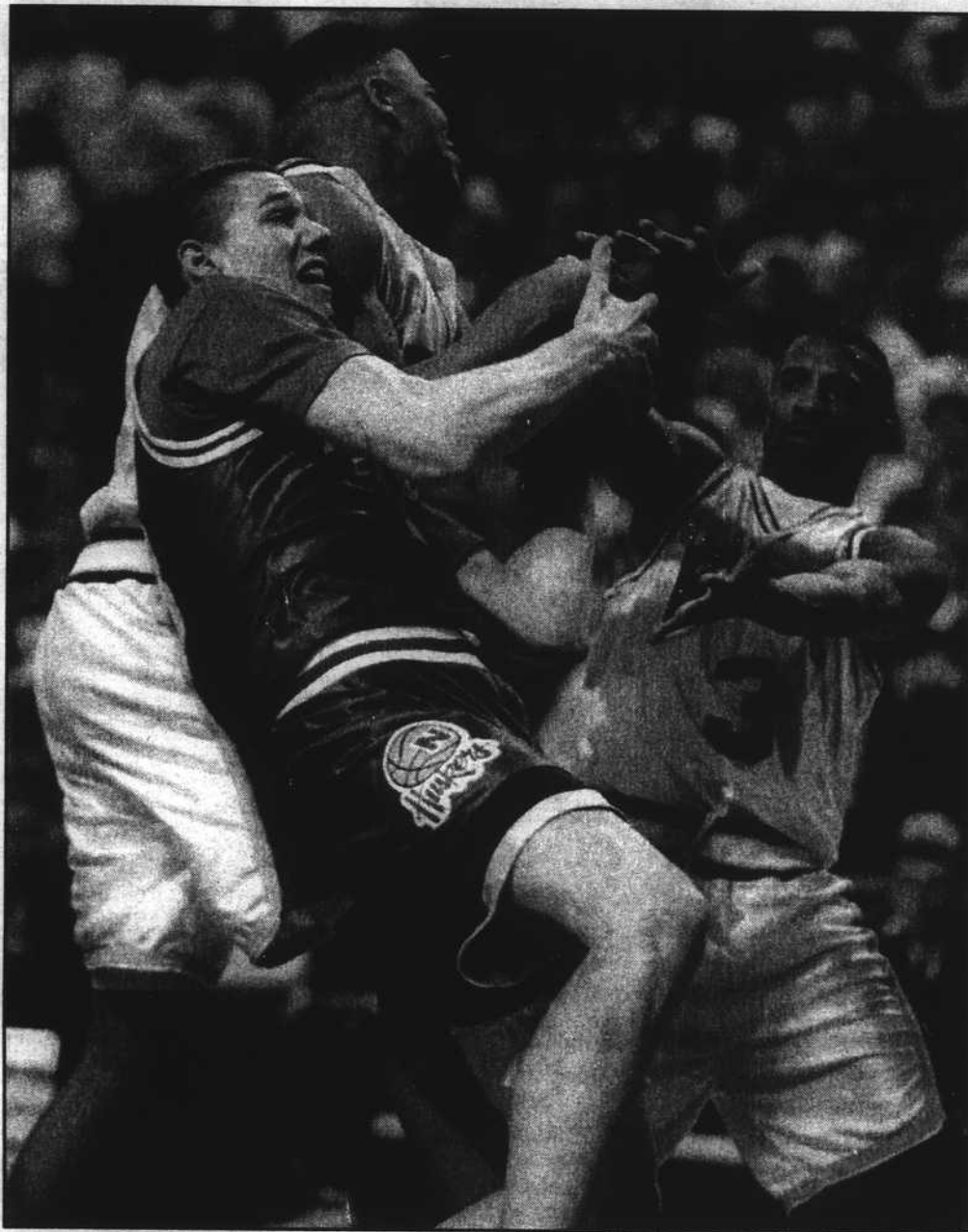
"It's tough when you lose at home," Hoiberg said. "We've lost some at home, and it's hard when your own crowd gets down on you. Then you have to try to go on the road and steal some victories. I don't think it will matter Sunday that Nebraska has lost some at home."

"It's tough playing in the Devaney Center. They have a very loud crowd, and we've never been able to win there. I think it's one of the top three or four toughest places to play in the Big Eight."

But Iowa State should have much more on the line than the Huskers.

Nebraska dropped to 17-11 overall with its

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Jon Waller/DN

Nebraska's Chris Sallee fights for control of the ball with Kansas State's Tyrone Davis, left, and Elliot Hatcher during the Cornhuskers' loss on Wednesday night in Manhattan, Kan.

Huskers look ahead to Cyclones, Big Eight Tourney

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Reporter

Back to back losses to the Big Eight's two worst teams have damaged the Nebraska basketball team's NCAA Tournament hopes, but at least two Cornhuskers aren't ready to give up.

Nebraska's top two scorers, junior guards Jaron Boone and Erick Strickland, said Wednesday night after losing to Kansas State that the Huskers could still make their fifth straight tournament appearance.

"We still got to play," said Boone, who scored 26 points against the Wildcats, the seventh time in the last eight games he has scored 20 or more points. "We still got to go forward. We still got to go for our goal to get back to NCAA."

Sunday at 12:30 p.m., the Huskers play host to Iowa State at the Bob Devaney Sports Center in a game that the Huskers need to win, Strickland said.

"We have just got to keep working," Strickland said. "We are playing hard, it's just not happening. It just seems like we can't get over the hump."

The Cyclones, much like the Huskers, have struggled in the Big Eight after a successful non-conference season. Iowa State, which lost 71-68 at home to Oklahoma on Wednesday, is 5-8 in the Big Eight and 19-9 overall.

If Nebraska beats the Cyclones, the Huskers still have a chance to finish fifth in the final league standings. A loss would secure Nebraska either a sixth or seventh seed in the Big Eight Tournament next weekend in Kansas City, Mo.

A fifth-place conference finish would pit Nebraska against Missouri in the first-round of the conference tournament on Friday, March 10.

If the Huskers finish sixth, they would play Oklahoma in the first round, and if Nebraska finishes seventh, they would play the loser of

See IOWA STATE on 8

Beck hopes her Huskers have seventh-seed magic in tourney

By Trevor Parks
Staff Reporter

Even though Colorado swept through the Big Eight undefeated, the Big Eight women's coaches agree that any team has a chance to win the Big Eight Tournament.

The tournament starts Saturday in Salina, Kan.

Last year, Missouri shocked everyone by winning the tournament as the seventh seed.

This year Nebraska is the seventh-seed, and Coach Angela Beck said she hoped that seventh-seed magic held true again when the Cornhuskers play Oklahoma Saturday at 6 p.m.

"This is a real dangerous matchup," Beck said. "I know it's not the matchup Oklahoma wants."

Beck could be right. Nebraska beat the Sooners in last season's tournament, 73-56.

This year the Sooners have beaten Nebraska twice by a combined three points.

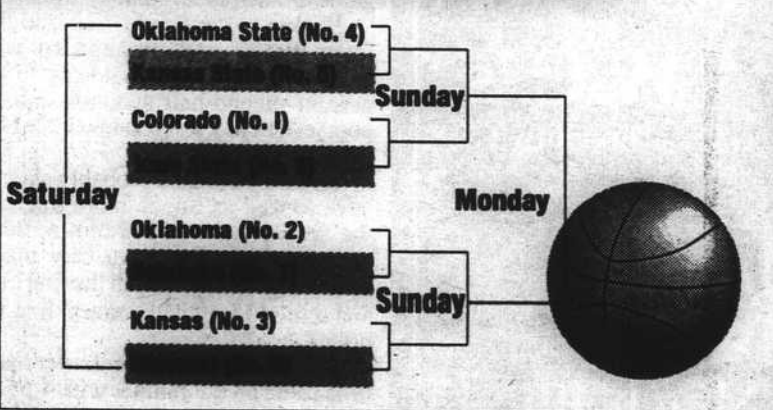
Oklahoma coach Burl Plunkett said Nebraska presented a problem for his 19-6 Sooners.

"Nebraska is scary," Plunkett said. "It's a tough draw because they have the kind of team that can win it all."

Although the Huskers have played well, Beck said things would not be easy.

"They're the type of team that if you overly focus on one player, someone else could have a great game," she

Women's Big Eight Tournament



said. If the Huskers get by the Sooners, they will continue to have their hands full.

The sixth seed and last year's champion, Missouri, will play Kansas in the first round.

Missouri coach Johann Rutherford said she wouldn't be surprised to see the lower-seeded teams like Nebraska do some damage like her team did last year.

"The parity is unbelievable in the league," Rutherford said. "If Iowa State won the tournament, that wouldn't surprise me."

If the Cyclones have any chance of doing that, they will have to defeat No. 3 Colorado in the first round.

Iowa State coach Theresa Becker, a former Nebraska assistant, said her

team could build off last year's tough 66-55 loss to the Buffaloes.

"It would take a tremendous effort from tip-off," Becker said. "We're going to have to play defense like I haven't seen before."

Colorado has sealed up a tournament bid with a 24-2 record.

Colorado coach Ceal Barry said her team was focusing on earning a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

Beck said it would be interesting to see what happened in the tournament this season.

"I think there are several dangerous matchups in the first round," Beck said. "A concern that I have is that in the last three or four contests, we have built some major leads in the first half and have not really played the quality second half that I'd like to see."

Huskers hope to pin Big 8 championship

By Andrew Strnad
Staff Reporter

With the home-mat advantage and the No. 3 ranking in the nation in its corner, the Nebraska wrestling team is looking for its second Big Eight title in three seasons.

Playing host to the Big Eight Championships at the NU Coliseum is definitely an edge for the Cornhuskers, Cornhusker coach Tim Neumann said.

The Big Eight Championships begin at noon on Sunday with preliminary matches. Semifinal matches start at 1 p.m. The championship matches are slated to begin at 8 p.m.

"We had the conference tournament here in 1990," Neumann said, "and we had either the third- or fourth-best team in the tournament and wound up finishing second."

"The crowd really was incredible that year. Having the meet at the Coliseum gets the crowd even more behind us, and our guys are getting used to winning in the Coliseum."

But second-ranked Oklahoma State is also used to winning in the Coliseum. The Cowboys defeated Nebraska there at the National Du-

als, and they enter the tournament as the favorite, Neumann said, but this year's tournament will go down to the wire.

"This is the most competitive Big Eight Tournament in recent years," Neumann said. "Oklahoma State is still favored to win, but not by as much as in the past."

Neumann's positive outlook is directly related to the fact that four Nebraska wrestlers will likely receive top seeds in their respective weight classes.

Nebraska's top-seeded wrestlers are 126-pounder Steve Baer, Temoer Terry (150), Erik Josephson (167) and heavyweight Tolly Thompson.

"If our top guys wrestle to their seeds, it's going to be hard for anyone to beat us," Neumann said. "Then we feel like we've got several guys who should also get us some key points that could put us over the top."

As well as determining the conference champion, the top three finishers in each weight class will automatically qualify for the NCAA Championships, set for March 16-18 in Iowa City, Iowa.

Neumann said he thought all 10 of his wrestlers had a good chance to qualify for the national meet.