

# SPORTS

Monday, March 6, 1995

Page 8

## NU wins Big Eight wrestling title

By Tony West  
Staff Reporter

Nebraska wrestling coach Tim Neumann wanted to qualify as many wrestlers to the NCAA Championships as possible.

And on Sunday night at the Big Eight Championships in the NU Coliseum, the No. 3 Cornhuskers qualified nine out of 10 wrestlers for the national meet to be held March 16-18 in Iowa City, Iowa.

The Huskers also won the team title for the second time in three years by outscoring No. 2 Oklahoma State 83.5-67.5. Oklahoma placed third with 65, while No. 4 Iowa State and Missouri rounded out the competition.

"This is the first time we have beat Oklahoma State in any meet," Neumann said. "The kids just wrestled phenomenal."

When Nebraska won the conference title in 1993, Oklahoma State could not compete because of NCAA rules violations.

"It feels really good to win today," 158-pounder Jason Kraft said, "because we legitimately won the Big Eight title with every team here."

Erik Josephson was the only Husker wrestler who didn't qualify for the national meet because he didn't place in the top three at 167 pounds. He placed fourth after being defeated by Oklahoma's Zach Randall in his first match.

But Josephson may still qualify for the national meet as one of the five wild-card wrestlers, who are chosen by the conference coaches at a later date.

"Iowa will probably be the only other team to have a chance at sending all 10 wrestlers to the national meet," Neumann said.

The Huskers had four individual champions in the conference meet: Nebraska's only senior, Steve Baer, in the 126-pound weight class, Temoer Terry at 150, Kraft at 158 and Tolly Thompson at heavyweight.

Neumann said that being at home played a major role in the Huskers' success.

"It's that Coliseum magic," he said.

However, Baer said the momentum gained by the Huskers after they won five of six third-place matches spurred him on to the championship.

"I went in there with a lot of confidence because everyone was winning their matches," Baer said. "It seemed like everything was meant to be."



Jay Calderon/DN

Nebraska coach Tim Neumann, at far right, celebrates Jason Kraft's victory in the 158-pound championship match. The Huskers won the Big Eight title Sunday night.

Kraft defeated Oklahoma State's Hardell Moore, who had beaten Kraft twice this season, with a last-second takedown to advance to the finals.

"It really felt good to beat the guy that beat me twice this season," Kraft said.

True freshman Kenny Mbah, who placed

third in the 177-pound weight class, said that Neumann had a big role in sparking that momentum with his talk before the semifinal round.

The Huskers were trailing Oklahoma by one point going into the round.

"Coach told us as long as we win every match that we have left, we still have a chance," Mbah

said.

And after the meet, Neumann said that this year was only the beginning of a possible Big Eight Championship streak for the Huskers.

"With nine returners, it's looking pretty good for the future," Neumann said.

## Huskers finish basketball season with last-minute loss

By Derek Samson  
Senior Reporter

Julius Michalik's jumper with three seconds remaining in Iowa State's 79-77 win over Nebraska Sunday typified the Cornhuskers' roller-coaster season.

Nebraska's regular season came to an end on Michalik's game-winning shot just seconds after Melvin Brooks, in his final game at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, tied the game with a 3-pointer in front of 13,112 fans.

"I think Nebraska did everything possible under the circumstances," Nebraska coach Danny Nee said. "I just felt it wasn't to be. I thought my players played hard. I thought they played together .... we just weren't able to find a way to win it."

The Huskers will face Oklahoma State in the first round of the Big Eight Tournament Friday in a 6:10 p.m. game.

Nebraska looked as if it might be able to avoid ending its season with another disappointing loss.

Trailing 75-71, Erick Strickland hit a 3-pointer to bring the Huskers to within a point with 44 seconds left. After two Fred Hoiberg free throws with 38 seconds remaining, Nebraska called timeout to set up a game-tying 3-pointer.

When the Huskers threw the ball in, Strickland took a long-range shot with about 30 seconds remaining. Tom Wald rebounded the miss and kicked the ball out to Brooks, who nailed a 3-pointer with 21 seconds left to tie the game at 77.

After working the ball around, the Cyclones found Michalik wide-open on the baseline for the game-winning shot.

Brooks' desperation shot at the buzzer didn't come close and Nebraska dropped its third straight game.

Strickland, who led Nebraska with 22 points, said Nebraska was trying to keep the ball away from Hoiberg and Loren Meyer on Iowa State's final possession.

"We knew they were trying to set up a play, and we were trying to trap them a little bit," Strickland said. "They found Michalik open down there. We would give him that shot 100 times over. It was going to have to be someone other than Meyer or Hoiberg that would beat us."

Late in the first half, Nebraska began to break open a back-and-forth contest.

Brooks, who matched his career high with 16 points, hit two consecutive 3-pointers to help the Huskers go on a 10-0 run to end the first half and hold an 42-35 advantage at intermission.

Meyer and Hoiberg combined to score 29 of the Cyclones' 35 first-half points.

Meyer, who finished with a game-high 31 points and 15 rebounds, scored 11 points in the first 10 minutes of the second half as Iowa State rallied to tie the game at 56.

Two consecutive baskets by Chris Sallee gave Nebraska a 62-58 lead with just under seven minutes left, but the Huskers could not hold on.

With four minutes remaining and

the Cyclones on top 65-64, Hoiberg took over.

The senior from Ames, Iowa, hit back-to-back 3-pointers and scored the Cyclones' final 12 points until Michalik's basket with three seconds left.

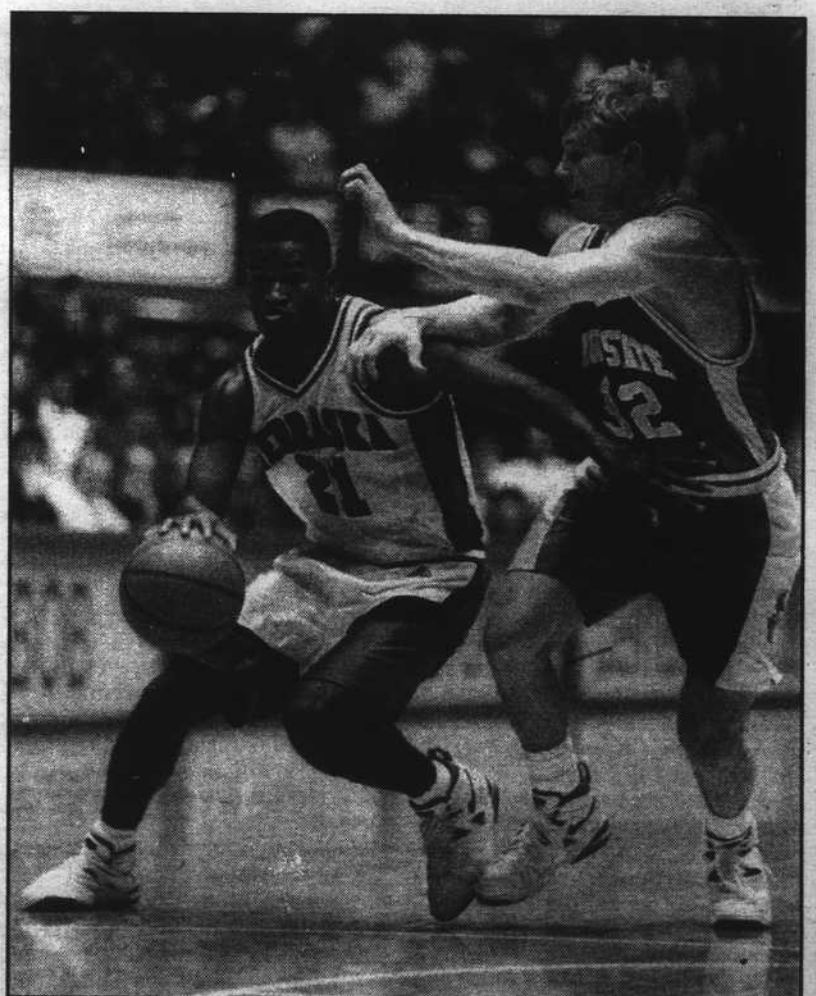
"Hoiberg is a great player," Nee said. "He's an all-league player. He made some fantastic shots — two of them fading away, falling down. I've always felt Fred Hoiberg was a great basketball player. The last eight minutes of the game, I thought he stepped up and played really solid."

The loss gave the 17-12 Huskers a seventh-place conference finish with a 4-10 Big Eight record. It is the Huskers' worst conference mark since the 10-18 Huskers of 1989-90 also went 4-10.

"Our goal was to try to win this last game and finish off strong," Nee said. "We weren't able to do it. But I told the kids I was very proud of their effort, their desire and how they played hard. We just didn't have enough to beat a good team today. Iowa State hit the shots when they needed to."

### NOTE:

● Tickets for possible National Invitational Tournament games will go on sale Tuesday and Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the South Stadium Ticket Office. Tickets will cost \$5 per round; seats will be located on the floor until all floor seats are taken. Tickets may be purchased for any combination of the three rounds Nebraska may possibly play host to in the NIT.



Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska's Erick Strickland drives past Iowa State's Fred Hoiberg during the Huskers' 79-77 loss to the Cyclones Sunday. Strickland scored 22 points to lead Nebraska.