

# SPORTS

Friday, March 10, 1995

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## Huskers hope to throw Cowboys off-balance

### Players must step forward to halt third loss

By Mitch Sherman  
Senior Reporter

Nebraska basketball coach Danny Nee didn't like the looks of Oklahoma State on Feb. 1 when the Cowboys came to Lincoln and won 82-65.

On Feb. 18 in Stillwater, Okla., Nee was not a happy coach after losing to the Cowboys by 40 points, Nebraska's worst loss in six years.



Tonight at 6:10, the 17-12 Cornhuskers meet Oklahoma State in the opening round of the Big Eight Tournament at Kemper Arena in Kansas City, Mo. And once again, Nee is not looking forward to seeing the Cowboys.

"We have a hard time matching up against any team that has a dominating center and a complimentary shooter from the outside," Nee said.

To put it another way, he said, the Huskers have a hard time matching up against Oklahoma State's Bryant Reeves and Randy Rutherford. The Cowboys' duo of All-Big Eight players are averaging 42 points per game and have led Oklahoma State to a 20-9 record and a second-place finish in the Big Eight.

"You try to get a defense for Rutherford, and you try to get a defense for Reeves," Nee said. "What they do is pass the ball around the perimeter and pound it inside. That's their first choice."

Sunday, in the game against Kansas that decided the Big Eight regular-season title, Oklahoma State's first choice was stopped cold. Reeves was held scoreless, and the Cowboys lost 78-62.

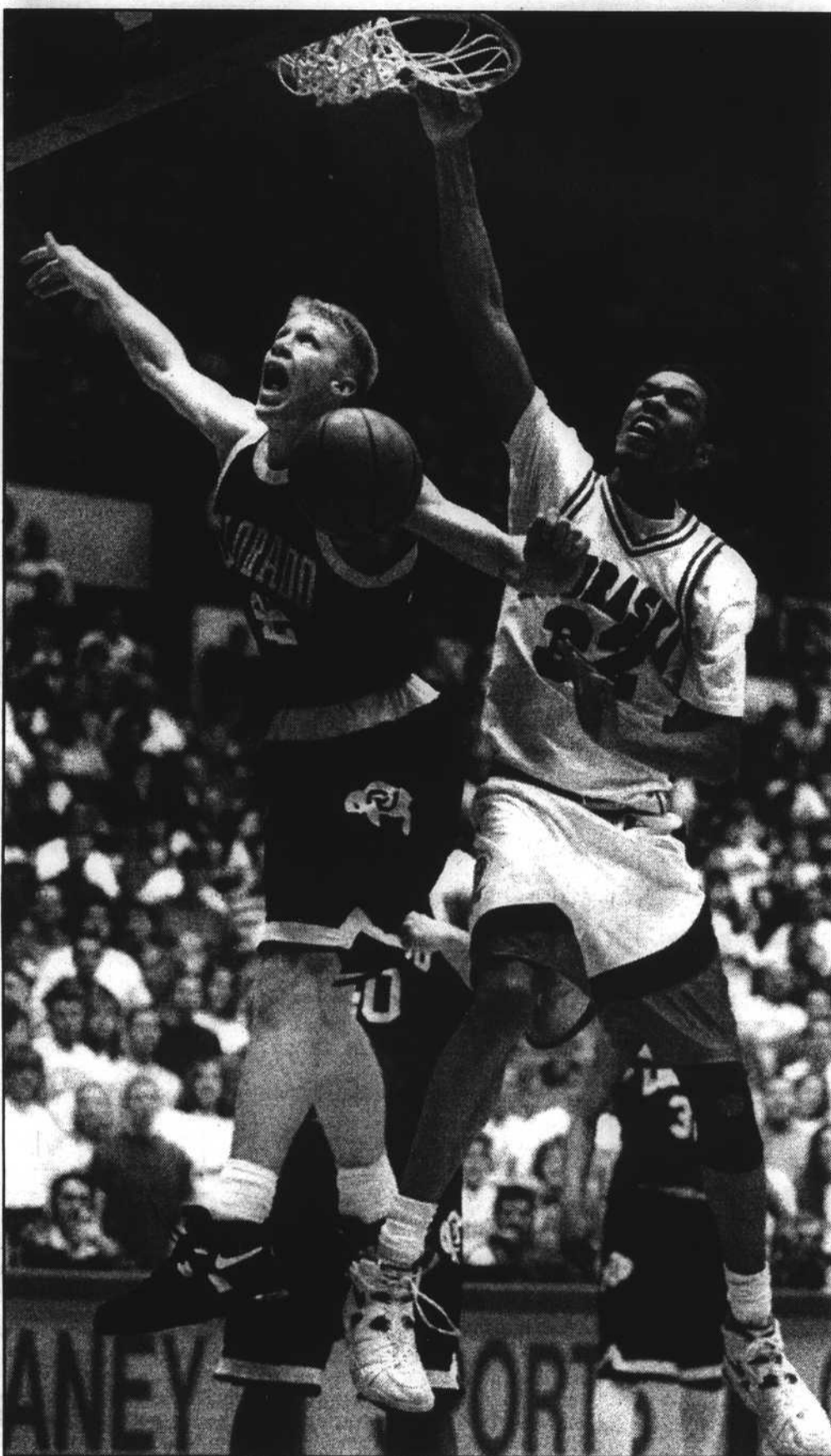
"He's mature enough that he can block that out of his mind," Cowboy coach Eddie Sutton said. "I had a long visit with him, and I think he'll respond in a positive manner. Losers dwell on an experience like he had and winners go on to the next game."

In Reeves' rare absence from the scoring column, Rutherford lit it up, hitting for 45 points. Since Nee does not want to see a repeat night from Rutherford, he said, the Huskers may shuffle things around some on the defensive end of the court.

For the most part of this season, Nebraska has used a man-to-man defense against the Cowboys. Tonight, Nee said, the Huskers are going to have to keep the Cowboys off balance.

One way to do that, he said, is to position

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Jon Waller/DN

Nebraska's Mikki Moore slams the ball over Colorado's Greg Jensen. The Huskers enter the Big Eight Tournament as the seventh seed.

## Big 8 champs not guaranteed NCAA success

By Mitch Sherman  
Senior Reporter

A good showing in the Big Eight Tournament does not necessarily prepare a team for a successful run in the NCAA Tournament, the coaches of the league's top two teams said.

In fact, Eddie Sutton, the coach of 20-9 Oklahoma State, said three straight days of intense competition at the conference tournament could damage many teams heading into the NCAA Tournament.

"The tournaments are something we will always have," Sutton said. "But in some ways they are not good for the teams that know they are going to the NCAAs."

Sutton, who has coached 17 NCAA Tournament teams at Oklahoma State, Kentucky, Arkansas and Creighton, said he had talked to coaches from the Atlantic Coast Conference who felt their league tournament overshadowed the NCAAs.

"Through the years," he said, "it has really hurt some coaches. They have told me that they exhausted so much energy that they had problems."

In the last five years, Missouri has won the Big Eight Tournament twice. Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma have each won the championship once. Those five squads, who had a combined record of 112-40 going into the NCAA Tournament, won a total of two games in the Big Dance.

Nebraska last year and Missouri in 1993 lost in the first round. Missouri's 1991 team was on probation and could not participate in post-season play. In 1992, Kansas' 27-4 team lost to Texas-El Paso in the second round. And in 1990, Oklahoma's 26-4 Big Eight Tournament championship team lost to North Carolina in the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

In contrast, teams that have not fared well in the conference tournament have a history of advancing in the NCAA Tournament. In 1993, Kansas advanced to the Final Four after losing in the second round of the Big Eight Tournament.

Two years earlier, the Jayhawks made it all the way to the NCAA championship game, losing to Duke. That year, Kansas lost to Nebraska in the second round of the league tournament.

Sutton, the coach of the Cornhuskers' first-round opponent Friday in Kansas City, Mo., said none of those statistics were a coincidence.

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## Jayhawks struggle to live up to last season

By Jeff Griesch  
Senior Reporter

The Kansas baseball team surprised the Big Eight two years ago by storming through the NCAA Regional Tournament and earning its first College World Series bid.

The Jayhawks surprised more Big Eight teams last season by challenging for the conference title up until the final week of the season, winning 40 games and earning another regional berth.

But the Jayhawks aren't surprising anybody this season.

The Jayhawks have struggled to a 2-9 record and have become a big name and a big game on opposing teams' schedules, Kansas Coach Dave Bingham said.

"We've been the biggest team on these other teams' schedules," Bingham said. "That is definitely a new experience for this team."

Bingham, who is in his eighth



season with the Jayhawks, said the atmosphere surrounding the Kansas baseball program had changed.

"I think the players are feeling a bit more pressure this season, because the expectations are higher," Bingham said. "We are asking them to maintain the excellence the players before them achieved, and that's a lot more pressure than playing with nothing to lose."

If the Jayhawks are going to turn their early-season woes around, the veterans will have to carry them.

And junior third-team All-American pitcher Jamie Splitterff will have to carry the biggest load, because the Jayhawks lost pitchers Chris Corn (9-

2, 4.42 ERA) and David Meyer (7-6, 4.03 ERA) from the rotation.

Splitterff, the son of former Kansas City Royals pitcher Paul Splitterff, was 10-1 with a 3.28 ERA last season, which improved his career record to 17-3.

But besides Splitterff, the Jayhawks' pitching staff is inexperienced and unproven.

Junior college transfer Aric Peters has been penciled in as the No. 2 starter, but will have to recover from arm surgery he had after the fall season to remove bone chips from his right elbow.

Clay Baird will be the No. 3 starter after going 4-2 with a 4.45 ERA last season.

The Jayhawks should have a strong offense to help the young pitching staff.

Senior third-baseman Brent Wilhelm returns after hitting .350 with four home runs and 51 RBI last

season.

Senior Brandon English, who hit .289 with seven homers and 30 RBI, returns at first base and bats cleanup. Dan Rude will be back at shortstop after hitting .313 and stealing 17 bases as the Jayhawks' leadoff hitter last season.

Senior Josh Igou and junior Brian Turney will try to pick up for the loss of second-team All-American Darryl Monroe.

Monroe is Kansas' all-time hits leader and hit .360 with 11 homers and 71 RBI last year.

With the losses of Corn, Meyer and Monroe, Bingham said he wasn't sure this year's Jayhawks were as talented as the 1993 and 1994 teams.

"We are not playing good baseball, and I am not sure we have the potential to play good baseball for a big stretch of the season," Bingham said. "I don't feel we are that far from becoming a good team, but we haven't been very good."

## Devaney released

From Staff Reports

Former Athletic Director Bob Devaney was released Thursday from Bryan Memorial Hospital, said Suzanne McMasters, public relations director of the hospital.

Devaney was admitted Saturday to the hospital's cardiovascular intensive-care unit after a sudden elevation of his blood pressure. He later was upgraded to good condition and moved from intensive care.

Devaney, 79, led the Nebraska football team to back-to-back national championships in 1970 and 1971. He stepped down as athletic director in 1993 when Bill Byrne was hired.