

SPORTS

Monday, April 9, 1995

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Women gymnasts qualify for NCAA meet

By Trevor Parks
Staff Reporter

After losing its first home meet since 1992, the Nebraska women's gymnastics team couldn't be happier.

Nebraska earned an at-large bid Sunday for the NCAA Championships at Athens, Ga., after finishing second at the Midwest Regionals.

The Cornhuskers will be seeded ninth out of 12 teams when the meet begins on April 20.

Nebraska coach Dan Kendig said he wasn't worried about his team's seed.

"We're just happy to be there, and (we'll) give it our best shot," Kendig said.

And to get to nationals, the Huskers finished behind defending NCAA champion Utah at the Midwest Regional Saturday in front of a crowd of 2,141 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Utah won the regional with a score of 196.625, while Nebraska's school-record score of 194.725 was good for second.

Brigham Young finished third with a score of 194.05, followed by Arizona State, 193.25, Arizona, 192.875, Utah State, 191.95 and Oklahoma, 191.05.

Kendig said he would take the results even though his team lost at home for the first time since he came to Nebraska.

"It's the first time we've been beat at home since I've been here, but I think I'll suck it up and take that," Kendig said. "We showed we belong on the floor with the best teams in the country."

The last time Nebraska had an other-than-first-place finish was a fourth-place finish behind Arizona, Oregon State and Alabama in the Masters Classic, Feb. 16, 1992.

But this time the Huskers performed much better in defeat.

Nebraska needed at least 47.275 points to overtake BYU for second place on the final rotation, and the Huskers got that and more on the balance beam.

The Huskers scored a 48.4 to wrap up the second-place finish.

And the Husker seniors stepped up. The balance beam began well for Nebraska as senior Kristi Camp set a career-best with a score of 9.825.

But sophomore Kim DeHaan fell after Camp, and the pressure was back on Nebraska.

Kendig said the Huskers responded well after DeHaan's fall.

"The first girl rocks, and it takes a little pressure off people," Kendig said. "Then Kim misses, so the pressure's back on."

But Nebraska responded when senior Martha Jenkins landed a season-best 9.7 and senior Nicole Duval earned a 9.725.

Then sophomore Shelly Bartlett fell off the beam for the first time this year, receiving a score of 9.4.

But junior Joy Taylor followed her with a 9.75.

Taylor, who had a career-best score of 39.075



Jay Calderon/DN

Nebraska gymnast Jennifer Hawkinson competes in the vault at the Midwest Regionals on Saturday. Hawkinson scored a 9.85 in the event while helping the Huskers to their first NCAA appearance since 1991.

for a sixth-place finish in the all-around, said she didn't want to become too tentative in her final event.

"Being last in the beam lineup is tough because if a couple of people have fallen, then you have to hit," Taylor said. "I've been in that position to get that type of a score before and usually it comes out OK."

Before the balance beam, Nebraska set a season-best team score on the uneven bars with

a 48.825.

DeHaan led the team with a 9.825, and Duval set a season-best with a score of 9.8.

The Huskers started the night off well with a 48.425 in the floor exercise.

Bartlett led Nebraska and finished fourth in the event with a score of 9.8.

The Huskers followed that with a meet-high score of 49.075 on the vault. Senior Jennifer Hawkinson contributed a career-best 9.85, and

Taylor also had a 9.85.

Duval also tied a career-best with a 9.8.

Nebraska hadn't qualified for nationals since 1991, and Kendig said no one wanted the season to end without a trip to the NCAA Championships.

"We have something started now that we're going to try to keep going," Kendig said. "That's something they've strived for, and they did not want their season to end tonight."

Husker homers help team get weekend win

From Staff Reports

The Nebraska baseball team salvaged the final game of a three-game series with No. 1 Oklahoma State in Stillwater, Okla., with an 11-7 win Sunday.

Jed Dalton's two-run homer — his second home run of the game — in the eighth inning broke a 7-7 tie. Two batters later, Darin Erstad hit a two-run homer of his own to give reliever Jonas Armenta a four-run cushion.

Erstad's 11th home run of the season capped a four-homer day for the Cornhuskers. Todd Sears added a three-run home run in the seventh inning.

Armenta, 5-1, shut down the Cowboys in the eighth and ninth innings to move the Huskers to 8-7 in the Big Eight and 19-13 overall. The Cowboys fell to 11-3 and 31-5.

Bob Courter started on the mound for the Huskers and pro-

vided Nebraska's best start of the series, allowing six runs and four walks in 5 1/3 innings.

Courter, Armenta and Justin Gomes combined to walk six Cowboy hitters Sunday, showing Nebraska's best control of the series.

Jeff Strasser lasted just 1 2/3 innings, walked eight and hit two batters in a 9-0 loss to the Cowboys Friday. Oklahoma State ace Jason Bell threw a three-hitter to improve to 8-0.

Nebraska pitchers were even wilder Saturday, walking 16, hitting one batter, throwing three wild pitches and giving up 26 hits in a 37-18 loss.

Oklahoma State's 37 runs were the most ever scored by the Cowboys, and the most ever scored by a Big Eight team.

Mel Motley gave the Huskers their only highlight Saturday. The junior center fielder went 4 for 4 with a home run and five RBIs.

Third place just enough to earn Husker men spot at NCAA meet

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Reporter

Five good events and one bad one Saturday night at the NCAA West Regional in Norman, Okla., were enough to earn the Nebraska men's gymnastics team its 18th-consecutive trip to the NCAA Championships.

Barely. The third-ranked Cornhuskers, whose score of 227.125 was good enough for third place, drew the fifth spot in the six-team NCAA Championships April 20-22 at Columbus, Ohio.

Joining Nebraska at nationals are West Regional qualifiers Stanford and Oklahoma, as well as the East Regional's Penn State, Iowa and Ohio State.

The Huskers, who finished 2 points behind Oklahoma and more than 1.5 points behind Stanford, edged out New Mexico, which scored 226.725.

Nebraska coach Francis Allen said he was not surprised that New Mexico, ranked No. 1 in the nation, did not

qualify for nationals.

"I said that they weren't as good as their scores," he said of the Lobos, who had beaten Nebraska three times this season. "They had been blowing everyone out and never had any pressure on them until regionals."

Allen said the Huskers were in position to win the meet before their last event, the pommel horse.

"We were leading," he said. "We were just cruising right along. When we got to horse, we crashed, and Stanford burnt it up on rings."

Allen said four Nebraska gymnasts fell from the horse, and only senior Richard Grace hit his routine.

"I don't know what we are going to do," he said. "In practice, we have been hitting our horse routines. But we lost a lot on pommel horse. We have been working on some little changes on horse. I thought we were unbeatable."

The Huskers, he said, hit on 79 percent of their routines Saturday night. Before the pommel horse, they were in the mid 80s. A year ago at

nationals, Nebraska hit more than 90 percent of its routines and captured the national championship.

Two weeks from now, Allen said, the Huskers could do it again.

"I think if you look at all the teams," he said, "and said all of them had to hit, Nebraska would win."

Allen praised the work of Nebraska's support crew, made up of Ted Harris, Ryan McEwen, Lev Scheiber, Jim Koziol and Don Kinison.

"Our support crew did a better than the all-around crew," he said. "They did a great job keeping us in there. They were performing. Whenever we were down team-wise, they were doing the right thing."

Grace, Nebraska's stop-all-arounder, finished fourth with a 57.30. Junior Jason Christie placed fifth in the all-around, scoring a 56.85.

Huskers who placed in individual events included Grace (second in the parallel bars), Christie (fourth in high bar and fifth in the floor exercise) and senior Rick Kieffer (first in the vault).