

# SPORTS

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## Nebraska gymnasts head into NCAA meets

### Coach confident, but cautious

By Mitch Sherman  
Senior Reporter

Francis Allen was not his normal self this week.

The colorful coach of the Nebraska men's gymnastics team, usually full of bold predictions, was uncharacteristically cautious heading into the NCAA Championships this weekend.

The meet begins 6 p.m. today at the St. John Arena in Columbus, Ohio.

Individual and team qualifying competition will be held today, with team finals on Friday and individual event finals on Saturday.

Three teams will advance from today to Friday's final round. Also the all-around champion will be crowned today.

Allen, who has won eight national championships in 17 trips to the NCAA

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### NCAA Gymnastics

Men's and women's gymnastics teams' NCAA finishes since 1987

	Men's	Women's
1987	2nd	10th
1988	1st	10th
1989	2nd	4th
1990	1st	5th
1991	7th	-
1992	2nd	-
1993	2nd	-
1994	1st	-

### Gymnasts looking to improve

By Trevor Parks  
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska women's gymnastics team has kept improving all season.

Now the Cornhuskers look to finish up this improvement at the NCAA Championships today.

The ninth-seeded Cornhuskers begin competition at noon in the first session of the meet at Athens, Ga.

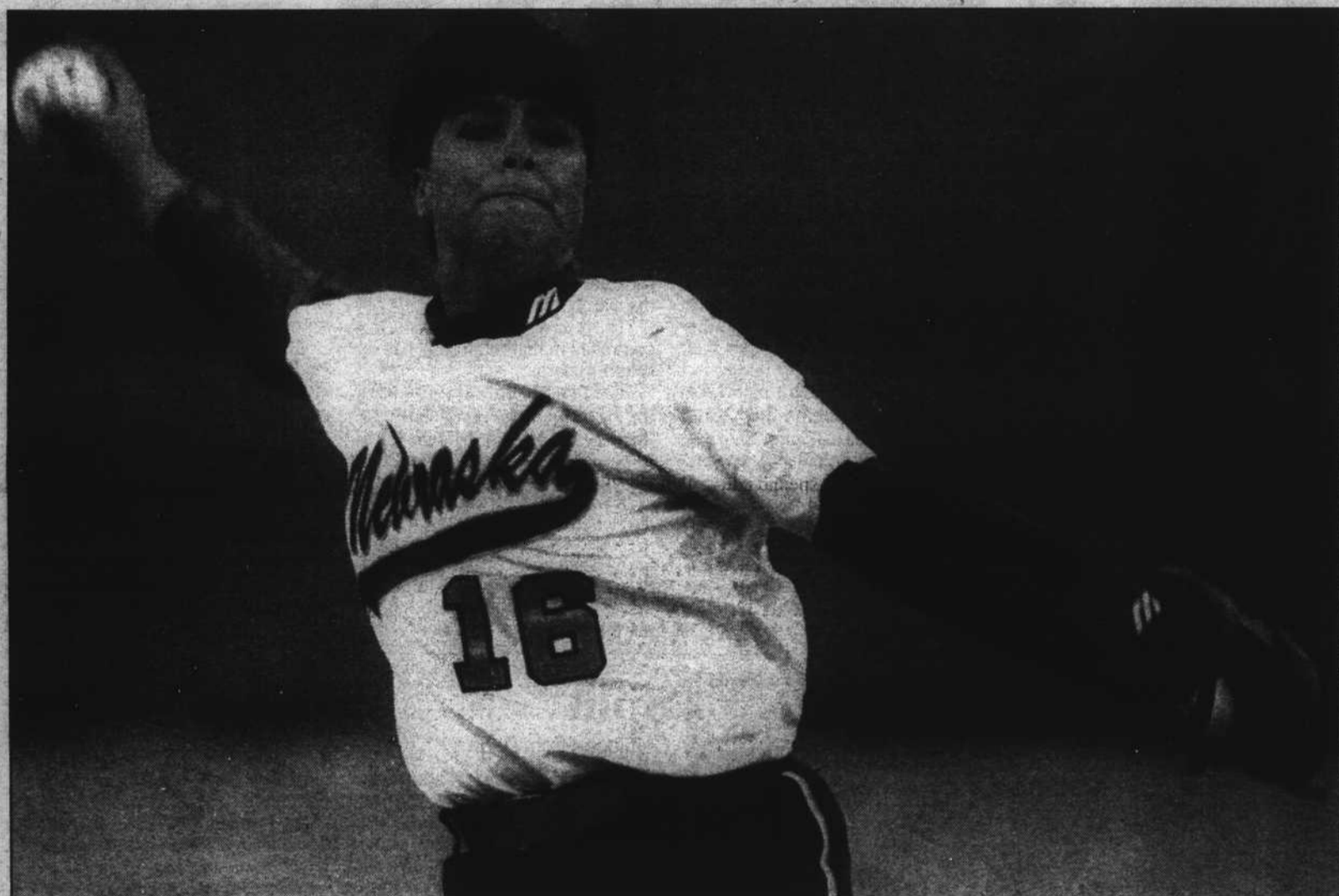
Also competing in the first session will be defending NCAA champion Utah, the host Georgia, Michigan, Louisiana State and West Virginia.

The finals will be Friday night, and individual event finals will be Saturday.

Coach Dan Kendig said his team couldn't be in better shape for its first NCAA meet since 1990.

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## Husker bats wake up soon enough to split with Creighton



Jay Calderon/DN

Nebraska pitcher Angela Blackwood throws during the Huskers' first game in a doubleheader against Creighton Wednesday night at the NU Softball Complex. Blackwood came on in relief of starting pitcher Stacie Stafford and pitched five innings of shutout baseball. Blackwood also picked up her 14th win in the second game.

By Trevor Parks  
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska women's softball team woke up its bats one inning too late against Creighton Wednesday night.

And when the bats did wake up, the Cornhuskers walked away with a split of a doubleheader against Creighton at the NU Softball Complex in front of a crowd of 320.

The 32-16 Huskers scored eight runs in the first two innings of the second game and went on to win 9-1 in five innings.

But in the first game, Creighton's Stephanie Byrge tossed a five-hitter to pace a 3-0 Bluejays win.

It was Nebraska's second shutout loss of the year, with the first a 1-0 loss at Sacramento State.

First baseman Gloria Von Rentzell said Nebraska needed to come back after a dismal first game.

"We knew we had to come out stronger in the second game," Von Rentzell said. "We needed to hit, and that was our problem in the first game, and that's what we did in the second game."

Nebraska's onslaught began with the first three batters scoring in the second game.

Amy Offenbacher led off with a walk and scored when Von Rentzell hit her third home run of the year.

Tobin Echo-Hawk followed Von Rentzell's blast to center with a walk and, after a stolen base, scored on Ali Viola's single to center.

The offense continued to roll in the second inning.

Rachel Dunham began the inning with a bloop single and moved to second when Karla Knically was hit by

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## No one plans a party like the NU athletic department

It's going to be a big party. It's Nebraska's football season rolled into one event.

And you can't miss it. More than three months after Nebraska won the national title, the celebration is finally starting. Or else it's rekindling its fire.

The athletic department is having a party to celebrate the national title on Friday, and it's about time.

Fans have lost interest in Nebraska football — not the real fans, but those fans who jump on the bandwagon when wins start rolling around. There's no more clamor about that special Sports Illustrated issue.

Nebraska national championship shirts are going at discount prices. All the coffee mugs, national title books and Orange Bowl highlight tapes are being threatened by extinction.

But it's time to start the "Save the National Championship" crusade. The athletic department is launching one last effort to get people excited about the national

title again.

In January, Cornhusker fans were dancing in the streets — or country roads — celebrating the title.

Now, toward the end of April, they have a chance to bring out the party hats one more time. They have one more chance to hang on to the past.

And this celebration offers that chance.

You can see the Huskers roll over West Virginia in the Kickoff Classic. You can see Brook Berringer lead the troops to victory while Tommie Frazier is gone with a blood clot.

You can see the 17-point victory over Colorado at Memorial Stadium. You can see the Huskers' road win at Oklahoma. And most importantly, you can watch the Orange Bowl — or at least highlights from the fourth quarter.

And this all can be done at one place and one time — Memorial Stadium Friday night.

A bit much? To more than 25,000 fans, it's



Tim Pearson

more than enough. The athletic ticket office has already sold 26,000 tickets to the event. That's more than some schools' average attendance in a year. Some schools are happy to have 26,000 fans go to a game.

This party starts at 7:30 Friday night. But the gates will be opening at 5 p.m. It's kind of like game day in Lincoln. Bring out the tailgaters.

And bring out the rings. And the Sears national championship trophy, the Associated Press trophy, the National Football Foundation Hall of Fame MacArthur Bowl and the National Association of College

Football Fans trophy.

Hey, you can even bring out the one-of-a-kind Husker postmark. Even the Lincoln Post Office is joining in on the hysteria. Employees will be on hand to offer the special postmark.

Again, a bit much? Not to Nebraska ticket manager Cindy Bell.

"We almost expect a little more (people)," she said. "A lot of it is going to depend on the weather."

And if the weather's nice, Nebraska baseball coach John Sanders could be smiling broadly. Could you imagine 26,000 fans at Buck Beltzer Stadium? Now there's a party.

According to the agenda, the national title celebration will conclude at 8:37 p.m. with a laser light show. And it just so happens that Nebraska's baseball game with Iowa State was moved to 8:30 p.m.

And all those 26,000-plus football-frenzied fans could file in through the gates of Buck Beltzer around 9 p.m. The fans will see the

Huskers' title-winning punter in left field.

There will be some of that national championship spirit on the baseball field because Darin Erstad will be playing. The addition of all these fans should make Sanders a happy man.

"We think that at least some people would at least stop by to see what's going on," Bell said.

That could make for some seating problems at the 1,500-seat stadium, but Sanders surely wouldn't mind.

Put the crowd in both bullpens. Put them in the dugouts. The record-crowd of 3,154 fans who showed up almost a year ago today for a game against Kansas would be shattered.

But could it be a bit much? No, just a darn good scheduling scheme.

You have to give the athletic department a hand. Two teams, two parties, one night. It can't get any better than that.

Pearson is a junior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.