

Runners improve in national meet

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

Despite high winds and stiff competition, three Nebraska cross country runners ran tough Monday at the NCAA Cross Country Championships in Ames, Iowa.

"My thoughts on the race were that all three of our runners performed well," Cornhusker cross country coach Jay Dirksen said. "We went in hoping that we would be able to compete with the level of competition at this type of meet, and I think we did that."

Senior Brady Bonsall led the Huskers by finishing 87th in a field of 184 runners, covering the 10,000-meter course in 32 minutes and 39 seconds. Bonsall improved on last year's 128th-place finish.

"He gave a good, solid effort," Dirksen said. "Brady ran a lot better than he did last year."

Dirksen said sophomores Nora Shepherd and Christina Blackmer, who were also competing in their second national meet, gave a strong effort as well.

Blackmer finished the women's course in 18:34, good for 108th place.

That was an improvement from Blackmer's 142nd-place finish at the national meet in 1993, and it

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was the first time this year that Blackmer, who redshirted in 1994, finished ahead of Shepherd.

Shepherd, who finished 105th last year as a true freshman, crossed the line four seconds after Blackmer and finished in 118th place.

"Nora was up there for a while and then she fell back a little bit," Dirksen said. "She couldn't quite hold on, but it wasn't like she fell apart. There was a span of four seconds that determined 24 places when she finished."

Dirksen said that considering the level of competition, the performances were very competitive.

"I think it will give Christina and Nora something to look forward to," he said. "They are both sophomores, so they will have a couple more shots at this. And it really will give them some confidence heading into the track season."

OU not scared of NU volleyball

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

The Oklahoma volleyball team is not scared of playing Nebraska anymore. Twice this season the Sooners have learned the lesson of what happens when an experienced team dominated a young Oklahoma squad.

Now, for the third time this season, the Sooners must face the top-ranked Cornhuskers. Oklahoma and Nebraska meet Friday in the semifinals of the Big Eight Tournament.

Sooner coach Miles Pabst said this time his team would perform better.

"Our players were scared of Nebraska when we played them earlier, but I don't think they are scared any longer," he said. "There is a certain respect for Nebraska, but we are definitely not scared."

That look of fear showed in the second match at Norman this season. Nebraska beat Oklahoma 15-7, 15-7, 15-5, but the Sooners played much better than they did in the two teams'

first match, at the NU Coliseum, where Nebraska won 15-9, 15-2, 15-2.

In the second match, the Huskers had their lowest hitting percentage of the season, .162, after hitting only .267 in the first match. Nebraska made 16 errors in the second match with 35 kills compared to Oklahoma's 37. In the first match, the Sooners had 30 errors and only 28 kills, hitting -.009. The Sooners were hurt by hitting errors once again in the second match with 28 errors.

"We need to play defense on an equal level the whole match," Pabst said. "We've made too many unforced errors in the first two matches, and that really hurt us."

"In the match in Norman, we worked really hard and should have scored 10 to 12 points each game, but we just made too many errors."

The Sooners finished the regular season 19-11 and 7-5 in the Big Eight but have lost four of their last five matches. Oklahoma, Iowa State and Colorado all finished with the same

conference record, but because of a tie-breaker system, the Sooners received the fourth seed.

"We needed to beat Colorado to take third or second, but we lost and now we have to play the big bad Huskers again," Pabst said, "that's OK with me though."

Pabst wants his team to gain experience by playing in big matches. Oklahoma has only one senior, Heidi Luehmann.

"By playing them for the third time this year, we can only get better," Pabst said. "Three years ago we had a chance to beat them in the tournament, and that was a great experience."

In 1992, Oklahoma won the first two games 15-11 and 15-8 before the Huskers rallied to win the final three games 15-4, 15-0 and 15-7.

The Sooners and Huskers have met in the past three Big Eight Tournament semifinals, with the Huskers winning all three times. Last season, Nebraska won 15-4, 15-4, 15-5.

Big 8

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well against them."

When Nebraska sets foot on the court Friday night, it will be the first time in nine days that the Huskers have played. After playing six matches during the first 15 days of November, Nebraska has been idle since a 15-2, 15-4, 15-0 win over Missouri on Nov. 15.

Nebraska had few problems han-

dling the Sooners the first two times the teams met this season. The Huskers beat Oklahoma 15-9, 15-2, 15-2 in Lincoln on Sept. 30, and 15-7, 15-7, 15-5 on Nov. 10 in Norman, Okla, a match in which Nebraska recorded a season-low hitting percentage.

"I think they improved some," Pettit said. "I think they were probably a little more comfortable playing in Oklahoma. They did a pretty good job on us defensively. We have worked on some things to counteract that."

Winsett said anytime you face a

team for the third time in one season, the challenge becomes greater.

"We're just going to have to keep concentrating on what we are doing on our side, and making those adjustments we have been working on," Winsett said.

NOTE:

● Weston, Winsett and setter Christy Johnson were among six players chosen to the GTE Academic All-District Seven team.

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