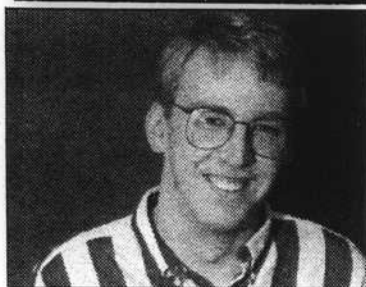


SPORTS

Thursday, January 18, 1996

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SPORTS OPINION



Tim Pearson

Coach preps his wrestlers for life's mat

Tim Neumann has built a powerhouse — both on and off the mat. The Nebraska wrestling program is mentioned in the same breath as Iowa. But the national title has eluded the Cornhuskers. This year, that title could become reality. But the road must pass through Iowa.

This weekend at the National Duals at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, the elite will go to battle, and we'll find out if Neumann's team has what it takes for a title.

The Huskers have been down this road before.

Three years ago, the Nebraska wrestling team made school history at the National Duals. The Huskers pulled off the biggest upset in Nebraska history by defeating then-No. 1 Iowa.

After that night, Nebraska wrestling had made its mark. The Huskers had cemented their place among wrestling's elite programs.

No longer would the wrestling world look down on Neumann's Huskers. They went on to win their first Big Eight title since 1949 and finish third at the NCAA Championships.

Six All-Americans. John Buxton at 118 pounds, Tony Purler at 126, Frank Velazquez at 134, Mike Eierman at 142, Corey Olson at 177 and Rulon Gardner at heavyweight.

And one national champion, Purler.

That team's starting 10 had a mission, Neumann said.

"They worked for five years to get where they were," he said. "That year's team, all they thought about was wrestling."

But that was then. This is now.

Three of them are still wrestling; two are coaching. The other five have continued on without wrestling.

In Tulsa, Okla., Buxton is a computer programmer and Tommy Robbins is a financial consultant.

Olson got married, gave up wrestling and now owns a landscaping firm in Rochester, Minn.

Ovanes Oganisian is teaching Russian via satellite to high school students across the United States.

Rick Colvet is an electrical engineer in Norfolk.

Purler and Velazquez are both assistant wrestling coaches. Velazquez at Nebraska and Purler with Great Britain's Olympic team.

Eierman is still wrestling at Nebraska.

Matt Lindland and Gardner both are training for the 1996 Olympics.

Those 10 wrestlers epitomized Nebraska wrestling. Forget the honors on the mat; Neumann probably is more proud of the fact that nine have graduated, and the other one, Eierman, is a senior this year.

The 1993 team set an example for this year's team to follow. That team had a mission that extended beyond wrestling into life.

Pearson is a senior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan copy desk chief.

Nebraska rolls over Kangaroos

OSU up next for Huskers

By Todd Walkenhorst
Staff Reporter

Three of the past four years, Missouri-Kansas City has played Nebraska within three points. Wednesday night at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, the Cornhuskers hopped over the

Nebraska	87
UMKC	69

Kangaroos.

Nebraska ended its nonconference season with an 87-69 victory over UMKC to raise its record to 13-4 on the season.

"To get our nonconference schedule over with is a big relief," Nebraska coach Danny Nee said. "We ended up 12-3 in our nonconference schedule. I thought very easily we could have been 14-1."

The Kangaroos tried to get an upset bid going early by jumping to a 7-3 lead. But with 16:19 left in the first half, Nebraska junior center Mikki Moore tied the game at seven with a slam dunk. Guard Erick Strickland nailed a 3-pointer to complete an 11-0 run, putting the Huskers up 14-7. They never trailed again.

"I was pleased with the game," Nee said. "I thought we came in with the right attitude, got off to a good start and took control of it."

Strickland, a senior from Bellevue, finished the game with 15 points, three assists and two steals in 22 minutes. All the Husker starters saw limited action in the second half as Nebraska held a 47-28 lead at halftime.

True freshman Venson Hamilton, who scored 11 points and grabbed six rebounds, was Nebraska's second leading scorer.

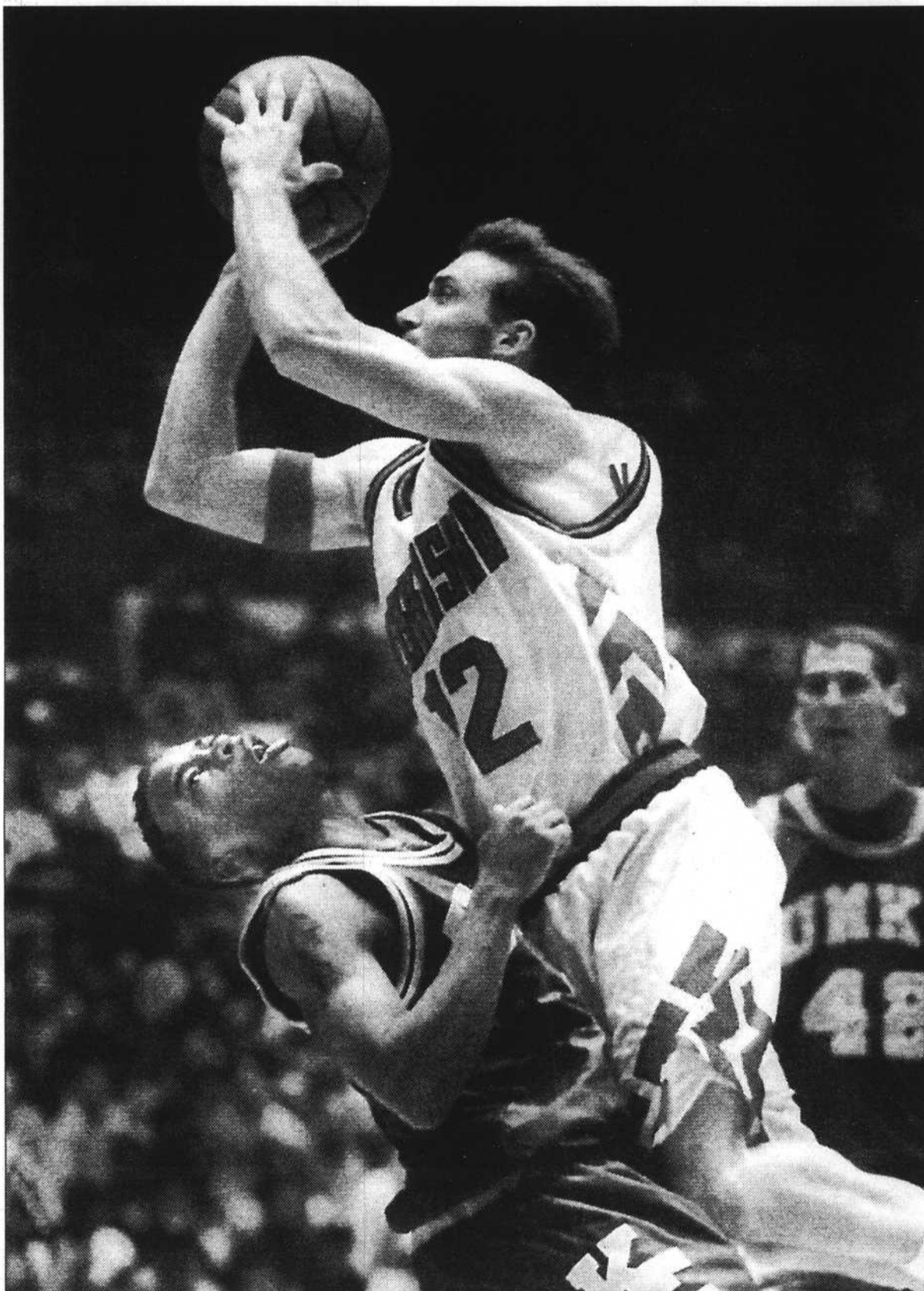
"I was also pleased that we had the opportunity to get to our bench and get a lot of guys playing time," Nee said. "I wasn't worried about how many points we were going to win by, but I wanted to try to get people off of the bench and get some playing time."

Redshirt freshman Andy Markowski, Leif Nelson and Chad Ideus all saw at least 13 minutes of playing time, combining for 16 points and 11 rebounds.

Every Husker saw action and every player scored except senior guard Jason Glock.

The Kangaroos cut the Nebraska lead to 14 points early in the second

See UMKC on 8



Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska point guard Tom Wald hammers UMKC guard Erin Washington. Wald made the shot, was fouled and completed the 3-point play. Washington had to leave the game and required stitches in his lip.

Huskers to face CU powerhouse

By Mike Kluck
Senior Reporter

Over the past few years, dominance in the Big Eight Conference has become synonymous with the Nebraska football team, the Cornhusker volleyball squad and the Colorado women's basketball team.

The Buffaloes have been the measuring stick of Big Eight success, winning three straight regular-season conference championships, compiling a 14-0 Big Eight record last season and winning the conference tournament.

The Buffaloes, who play host to Nebraska at the Coors Event Center in Boulder, Colo., Sunday at 1 p.m., are ranked No. 12 in the nation. They have a 16-3 overall record and have

won all three of their conference games.

Over the past four seasons, Colorado has qualified for the NCAA Tournament every year, twice advancing to the Elite Eight.

But with all of its success on the court, Colorado coach Ceal Barry said it's what the Buffalo coaching staff does off the court that keeps her team at the top of the Big Eight.

"It's a combination of things," Barry said, "recruiting and a lot of hard work — a lot of hard work."

Part of the hard work at Colorado is trying to lure recruits to Boulder. Because Big Eight games aren't shown on television, many recruits' parents, Barry said, don't want their daughters to go to school where they can't see them play.

Although recruiting at Colorado is difficult, Barry still was able to recruit Shelly Sheetz, whom the coach said was key in developing the success the Buffaloes are now experiencing.

Sheetz, who played for the Buffa-

loes from 1991-1995, is second in career points at Colorado with 1,775. Sheetz was Big Eight newcomer of the year in 1992, and was a first-team all-Big Eight pick the next three seasons.

Barry is quick, however, to point out that Colorado's success comes from more than just its players. It also comes from fan support.

Last season Colorado ranked eighth among Division-I schools in home attendance, averaging 5,338 fans per game.

Even with the difficulty in recruiting at Colorado and the success the Buffaloes have experienced, Barry said although she had been offered other coaching opportunities, she's not interested in leaving Colorado.

"I've had people tell me that I would never win a national championship at Colorado," Barry said. "I don't know if we can win a national championship, but I'm very committed to our athletic director, Bill Marolt. My goal is to stay in it one year at a time."

CU coach announces resignation

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Colorado basketball coach Joe Harrington's decision on Tuesday night to resign left the Big Eight with its first major shake-up of the basketball season.

One year after the debut of four new conference coaches, Harrington, who said the decision was his own, said the fundering Buffaloes needed a change at the top.

The change came immediately after Harrington announced his decision before Colorado's loss to Southern Utah. The Buffaloes lost the game, their sixth straight — an

See HARRINGTON on 8