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Stewart can't find right mix

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

Missouri coach Norm Stewart tried a little bit of everything to stir up his team Wednesday.

The Tigers, who dropped to 13-5 overall and 2-2 in the Big Eight, lost 76-58 to Nebraska at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Before the game began, Stewart had his team shoot around for 20 minutes and then go to the locker room. With 15 minutes to go before the game, Missouri returned to the floor and stayed on the court until the opening tipoff.

Stewart also had his team open the contest in a 3-2 zone defense. After the game, he said the Tigers had never had much success opening any game in that type of defense.

"I've never played one when they didn't make the first two shots," Stewart said. "I knew that on the first two shots they could have shot them behind their backs and they would have gone in."

The Cornhuskers made their first four shots of the game and built a 9-0 lead. Meanwhile, the Tigers' offense struggled, missing their first four shots and committing three turnovers before guard Jason Sutherland made a basket.

Eventually, Nebraska built a 36-15 lead with 3:03 remaining in the first half, but Missouri scored 11 of the final 14 points before the break, to trail 39-26.

At that point, Stewart said his team still had a chance to come back and avoid its worst-ever defeat at the Devaney Center.

"We come back out to start the second half and it's our ball, we get a bucket, make a stop, get a bucket and now you've got a new game," Stewart said. "The third time down the court we shot the ball quick, and then the fourth time down the court we shot the ball quick."

Sutherland drilled a 3-pointer, and after an Erick Strickland miss, L. Dee Murdock made a layup to make the score 39-31 — the closest the Tigers came in the second half. The Huskers

then scored the next seven points to regain control of the game.

The Missouri offense struggled the entire game, scoring only 58 points and making 20 field goals, both season lows.

With 5:07 remaining in the game and Missouri trailing by 10, Stewart's frustration with his team showed after forward Derek Grimm was called for a charging foul.

Stewart disagreed with the call and walked down the sideline along the Missouri bench. For a few seconds, he played band director in front of the Husker band.

Sixteen seconds later, Stewart was called for a technical foul by official David Hall.

To try to rally his team, he used 13 players in the game. Stewart said he didn't have any timetable for establishing a consistent lineup.

"If you've got the personnel, you play the personnel," Stewart said. "At one point, we had some good things going and we stayed with that lineup. But we can't take that long to find it."

Wildcats become 'surprise team'

By Mike Kluck
Senior Reporter

Kansas State basketball coach Tom Asbury isn't ready to pat himself on the back for his team's accomplishments this season.

But the rest of the Big Eight Conference coaches are.

Wednesday night in Manhattan, Kan., the Wildcats beat Oklahoma State 62-59, improving their record to 13-4 and 4-1 in the Big Eight.

"Kansas State is probably the surprise team in my opinion," Oklahoma State coach Eddie Sutton said earlier this week. "During December they really bounced around looking for their identity. Right now they're playing very good and are in a position to finish in the upper division."

Since the Wildcats' 15-point win over Oklahoma in Norman, Okla., on Saturday, many of the league coaches have taken notice. The Wildcats are

second in the conference behind in-state rival Kansas, which is 3-0 in the Big Eight.

Two of the Wildcats' conference victories were on the road, where Kansas State did not win a league game last season. By defeating Colorado on Jan. 13 and Oklahoma on Saturday, the Wildcats recorded their first back-to-back Big Eight road wins in three seasons. Kansas State also beat California on the road on Dec. 29.

"It's way too early to sprain our wrist patting ourselves on the back," Asbury said. "It's way too early and way too premature to take too many looks back. A month and a half from now I will want to sit back and evaluate what we have accomplished."

But for now, it's opposing coaches who have to evaluate the Wildcats, especially their defense. Kansas State has held the top scorers in the Big Eight — Oklahoma's Ryan Minor, Iowa State's Dedric Willoughby and

Colorado's Chauncey Billups — to 16-of-63 shooting for 25 percent.

The Wildcats lead the league in field goal percentage defense, limiting their opponents to 38 percent shooting. They're third in the league in scoring defense, allowing only 65.5 points per game. In its four conference games, Kansas State has limited its opponents to less than 40 percent shooting.

"They have won and built their philosophy of winning on playing excellent defense," Sutton said.

Asbury said Kansas State's philosophy of defense was installed last year during his initial season with the Wildcats. But it took a year and a good recruiting class for the defense to start paying dividends.

"We're doing a pretty good job of making people earn their baskets," Asbury said. "That's the thing you have to do to be a reasonably good defensive team as long as you have the size."

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Tennis

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player. McDermott said Dino Teppara was another key newcomer for Nebraska.

Iowa State and Kansas State do not have a men's tennis program, but the other five Big Eight teams will com-

pete in the tournament. McDermott said he would have a chance to assess his Big Eight foes.

"Colorado is going to be a better team," McDermott said. "But right now I see Kansas as the team to beat."

McDermott said the Huskers could be a factor in the Big Eight race this year.

"I certainly think we can be right up there with Colorado, probably Oklahoma and Oklahoma State," he said.

Nebraska begins its nonconference schedule on Feb. 9, against Texas A&M and Southern Alabama in College Station, Texas.

Tigers

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Strickland said the Huskers wanted to stay focused in the second half. "We weren't going to relinquish

anything and just tried our best not to let them come back," Strickland said. "I don't think that we ever thought we were going to lose the game."

The Tigers scored the first four points of the second half, cutting

Nebraska's lead to eight points, but the Huskers responded with an eight-point run to push the lead to 16 points.

"We could have been better off in the ballgame, but they made a run," Missouri coach Norm Stewart said.

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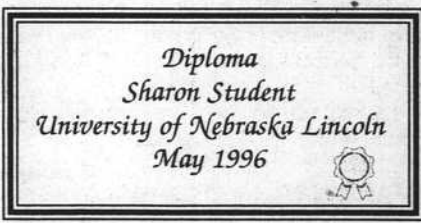
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