

SPORTS

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SPORTS OPINION



Tim Pearson

Worthy teams struggle to get local attention

Tim Neumann remembers when four people showed up for his team's dual against Iowa State — and two were holding brooms.

Francis Allen remembers when NCAA-record crowds flocked to gymnastics meets in 1988.

Gary Pepin remembers looking at a packed gym while coaching basketball.

Those three coaches all want their teams to be the center of attention. And the truth is, they deserve the same amount of attention paid to the football team.

Allen has led his men's gymnastics program to eight national titles, making Nebraska one of the elite programs in gymnastics.

Pepin has created a dynasty in track and field. His women's team has won the Big Eight indoor and outdoor titles for 16 straight years.

Neumann has resurrected the wrestling program. Slowly but surely, his teams have scratched the echelon of greatness. But all three coaches want more than national attention.

They want the attention of fans in Lincoln, Omaha and the rest of the state. Come just once, they say, and you'll be back for more.

No one listens, though. Or very few listen.

Indoor track and field may be the exception, Pepin said, but a lot depends on the caliber of the meet.

Concordia, Doane and Nebraska Wesleyan just don't attract the crowds that Arkansas does. Big teams attract big crowds, plain and simple.

"It's an absolute plus for the whole atmosphere," Pepin said. "We want to pack this place in there and have noise coming out of the rafters."

Allen would like that too, but he realizes his pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Eight years ago, the local media put a priority on men's gymnastics. Now the Omaha and Lincoln newspapers and TV stations focus on football, football, football, Allen said. The non-revenue sports at Nebraska, subsequently, get the shaft.

No longer do the newspapers and TV stations feature gymnasts during the week and preview upcoming meets. Without this coverage, Allen said, fans stay away from gymnastics meets — in part, because they don't know about them.

"People tell me if they don't know a week in advance," he said, "then they can't make it to a meet."

"The Journal Star and local TV aren't doing what they used to, and without the stimulus, we're just dying."

Neumann wouldn't characterize his team's fan support as dying, but he admitted that Nebraska's fan support didn't come close to comparing with Iowa's or Penn State's.

"(Iowa's) fans are really educated," he said. "My daughter commented on how they were so rude,

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Huskers drop second straight game

Boone benched after halftime

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Minus one key player, the Nebraska basketball team tried to battle back in the second half against Kansas State Wednesday night. But after falling behind 49-38 in the first four minutes after halftime, the Cornhuskers couldn't stay around.

Nebraska dropped to 15-6 overall and 3-3 in the Big Eight as Kansas State (14-6 and 5-2) defeated the Huskers 77-68 in front of a crowd of 10,279 at the Bramlage Coliseum.

For the entire second half, Nebraska was without senior guard Jaron Boone, who was benched at halftime for disciplinary reasons by Coach Danny Nee.

Nee would not give the specific reason why Boone was benched. Boone was the Huskers' leading first-half scorer with seven points, but he failed to score in double figures for the third straight game.

Boone said he had no idea why he was benched after scoring seven points in the first half to give Nebraska a 15-11 lead with 13:13 remaining.

"I was in rhythm tonight," Boone said. "I felt good on the floor and in the flow."

Nee said the length of the suspension was to be decided between he and Boone.

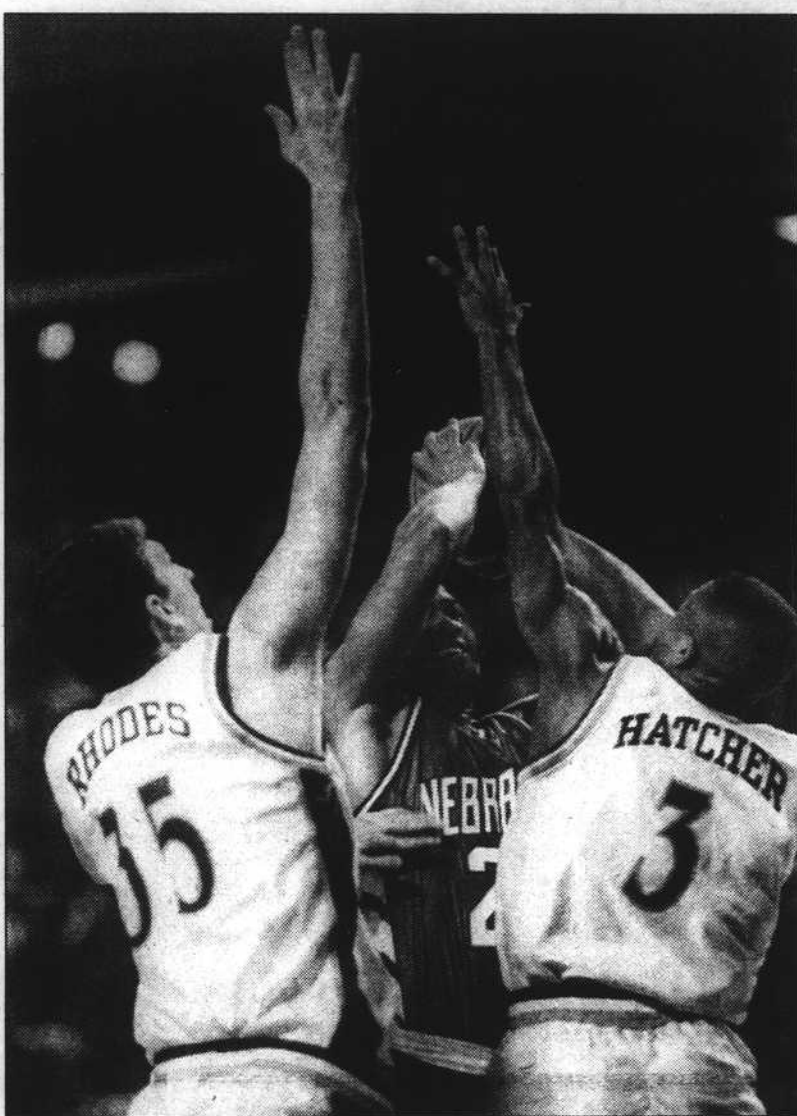
With Boone on the bench, the Huskers watched a five-point halftime deficit grow to 11 points when Wildcat freshman Paco May made a shot with 16:10 remaining.

Then to try to get back in the game, Nebraska turned to its 3-point shooting. After attempting only four 3-pointers in the first half, the Huskers attempted 16 in the second half. For the game, Nebraska was 8-of-20 behind the arc.

"We just wanted to try to get a quick jump start," Nee said. "Most of them were decent (shots), but none of them rattled in."

After a Tom Wald 3-pointer to make the score 66-61, the Wildcats made four straight free throws to extend their lead to 70-61. A 3-pointer by Erick Strickland made the score 70-64, and Nebraska had a chance to cut deeper after Elliot Hatcher missed a 3-point shot.

Nebraska dug a hole for itself in the first half by turning the ball over



Travis Heying/DN

Nebraska guard Erick Strickland attempts a shot over Kansas State's Elliot Hatcher and Shawn Rhodes Wednesday night at Bramlage Coliseum. Strickland and Hatcher led all players with 18 points each in the 77-68 Husker loss.

But Strickland missed everything with a 3-point attempt the next time

down the court and the Wildcats scored six consecutive points to put the game away.

Strickland led the Huskers with 18 points, making 4-of-8 shots from behind the 3-point line. Wald added 10 points and Venson Hamilton, Boone and Bernard Garner each scored seven points. Point guard Tyrone Lue, averaging 2.9 rebounds per game before Wednesday night, led Nebraska with six rebounds and also scored six points.

"We had our chance, but it just wasn't our night," Strickland said. "They did a great job. I don't think we were in it like we could have been."

Nebraska dug a hole for itself in the first half by turning the ball over

13 times and making only 4-of-11 free throws.

After Nebraska jumped to an early 9-4 lead, the Wildcats tied the game at 15 and never trailed after that point. Kansas State led 37-32 at the half.

Kansas State was led by Hatcher, who scored 18 points. Forward Tyrone Davis added 17 for the Wildcats and center Gerald Eaker scored 15 points.

Nee said the Huskers made things difficult for themselves with their first-half problems.

"We dug a hole quick, but I feel Kansas State was digging the hole for Nebraska just as much as Nebraska was," Nee said. "They were really ready to play."

"We weren't as ready as we had to be," Nee said. "We tried but we never got over that hump."

KSU has its way on boards

By Mike Kluck
Senior Reporter

MANHATTAN, KAN. — Kansas State did not need an outstanding effort to beat Nebraska on Wednesday night.



Asbury

All the Wildcats needed was a solid effort. And a solid effort is what they got, topping the Cornhuskers 77-68 to improve to 14-5 overall and 5-2 in Big Eight play.

"Certainly there were some areas and spurts of the game we weren't overly enthralled with," Kansas State coach Tom Asbury said. "Certainly we can't be critical of our performance. We shot the ball pretty well."

However, there were many areas Asbury said he was pleased with in the Wildcats' performance, including rebounding in the second half.

In the first half, the Huskers outrebounded Kansas State 18-13, but in the second half, the Wildcats grabbed 22 rebounds, including 16 defensive boards, to Nebraska's 12 rebounds.

"We made that a huge priority," Asbury said. "We did a nice job defensively in the first half, but weren't able to keep them off the boards."

One of the Wildcats who stepped up in the second half was 6-foot-11 center Gerald Eaker, who grabbed five rebounds after halftime and finished the game with seven boards.

Eaker said Asbury was adamant about being more aggressive and shooting the ball more, which he did. The transfer from Southeastern (Iowa) Community College scored a career-high 15 points and blocked three shots.

Eaker has been unselfish with the ball, Asbury said, and needed to start scoring more points. Coming into the game, the junior from Chicago was averaging 7.6 points and 4.8 rebounds per game.

"I anticipated him doing that," Asbury said. "He is going to have to score like that next year. He doesn't look for a shot very much. He really needs to get more scoring conscious and be more aggressive offensively. He's got great touch."

Asbury said he was also pleased with the performance of senior guard Elliot Hatcher, who led the Wildcats with 18 points, and Tyrone Davis who

See KSU on 8

NU guard says goals have changed

By Mike Kluck
Senior Reporter

As the Nebraska women's basketball team goes through a midseason transition, so must senior guard Kate Galligan.



Galligan

Before the Big Eight season started, Nebraska hoped to win the conference crown, but now the Huskers, who are

tied for fourth in the conference with Kansas State and Oklahoma, need to work on finishing in the top three of the conference, Beck said.

Galligan, like the Huskers, said she was reassessing her goals from the beginning of the season. At the beginning of the year, Galligan said she hoped to receive first-team All-Big Eight and Academic All-American honors.

But the 5-foot-8-inch senior from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, who is averaging 10.4 points per game, realizes All-Big Eight honors may be out of the picture.

"To me, I always felt if you don't have those goals, you don't have anything to work for," Galligan said. "Probably now in this point of the season I'm going to have to re-evaluate somewhat."

Galligan said, however, her role is not to be a flashy player. She said she wanted to provide solid leadership to her teammates on the court.

She said she also must be able to shoot the 3-pointer to relieve the pressure on 6-4 senior center Pyra Aarden. Galligan leads the Huskers, making 46 percent of her 3-point field goal attempts.

Galligan said she learned about developing her role early in her career. During Galligan's freshman season, she played with Karen Jennings, a first-team All-American.

"I came in as a role player, someone who averages six points a game," Galligan said. "I think I realized right away that was going to be my role. As the years went on, my role increased."

"If you want to win games and have a team focus, you're going to accept

the role whether it be scoring 20 or 10. If the team is last in the Big Eight and I'm scoring 20 points per game, what good is that?"

Galligan's senior leadership has been noticed by sophomore guard Jami Kubik. Kubik said Galligan had helped her throughout the season.

"She's really playing better," Kubik said. "With her being a senior, she knows she doesn't have much playing time left. So she is stepping up her play."

Galligan said it was tough to realize she may have only eight games left in her career that began when she was in first grade.

"I just have a love for this game. It has been a major part of my life," Galligan said. "I always knew in the bottom of my heart that basketball is what I was going to do. That's really all I wanted to do."