

SPORTS

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SPORTS OPINION



Mitch Sherman NU basketball atmosphere needs changes

Saturday night's 72-57 loss to Oklahoma State was inevitable.

The Cornhuskers had no chance to win. They are a beaten basketball team, void of pride and discipline, every time they walk on to the court. The only question this weekend was the Cowboys' margin of victory.

But there is another factor contributing to the Huskers' hideous play. Believe it or not, poor coaching, a lack of teamwork and non-existent senior leadership account for only about 95 percent of the problem.

The atmosphere Saturday night at the Bob Devaney Sports Center — despite an inflated crowd because of the state wrestling tournament — was horrendous. Nebraska has no homecourt advantage. None at all, not in a backwards environment like that.

It all started after the Huskers won the Big Eight Tournament in 1994, coincidentally the same time at which the team began to tumble. Brilliant minds converged and decided the Devaney Center needed an overhaul. Why? I have no idea. Games in the 1993-94 season were fun. Today, they stink.

Two years ago, the band played, and it played loudly. Whoever decided that the band needed to play quieter should be shipped out of the Devaney Center faster than Danny Nee.

Secondly, what's the deal with the organ music, and for that matter, the rest of the worthless junk piped through the arena's new speakers? Nebraska basketball does not need to employ a full-time disc jockey.

This is not the NBA. This is not Major League Baseball. Whatever noise we hear should come from the pep band and the red masses. We don't need to hear Michael Buffer's "let's get ready to rumble," and we certainly don't need mechanical clapping to excite the crowd.

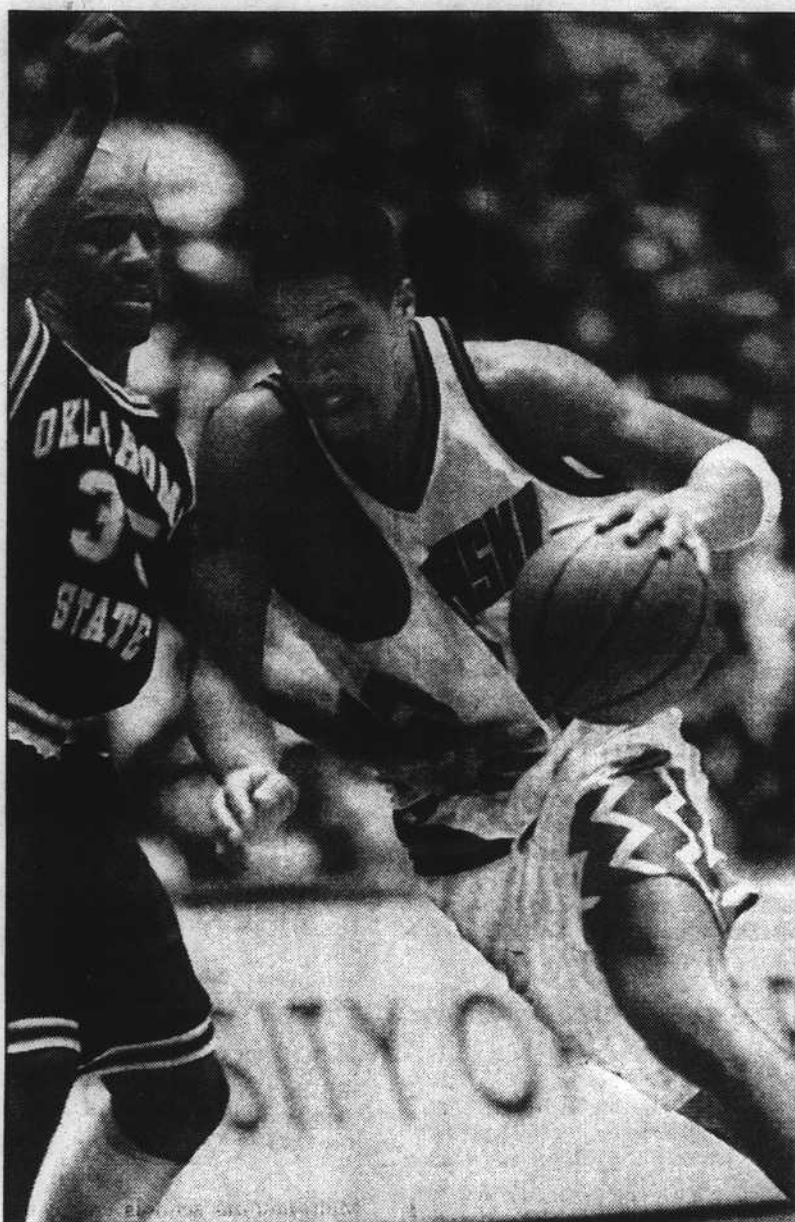
Haven't they gotten the picture by now? It doesn't work. This is college basketball, pure amateur sport without the money, ugliness and fabricated enthusiasm of the professional leagues.

And that's not it. Public address announcer Rick Schwieger needs to work on his pronunciation. This is his first season, so he deserves to be cut a little slack. But come on Rick, stop making a mockery out of the players' names.

Cut the fancy jazz. Talk normal, not like a sick dog. Or even better, just bring back Steve Johnson, who actually adds to the enthusiastic atmosphere of Nebraska volleyball. Schwieger does a decent job with football and baseball, but he makes a basketball game sound like a three-ring circus.

Kind of fitting, isn't it?

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



Matt Miller/DN

Nebraska guard Jaron Boone drives around Oklahoma State's Andre Owens Saturday night at the Devaney Center. Boone scored five points on 2-of-11 shooting in the 72-57 Husker loss.

Koziol leads Huskers to big victory

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

In its first home meet of the year, the Nebraska men's gymnastics team scored a season-high team score and defeated No. 2 New Mexico, 225.875-220.20.

Cornhusker coach Francis Allen said competing at the Bob Devaney Sports Center was definitely a positive factor in the victory.

"We should have our best scores at home," he said. "That's where we're more comfortable."

The Huskers, ranked No. 4, had season-high scores in four of six events, and five gymnasts recorded personal bests.

The season-high marks came on the floor exercise (37.85), rings (37.925) and parallel bars (37.6). Nebraska also tied its season-high mark on the horizontal bar (37.725).

The team score was an improvement from the Huskers' 221.525-220.475 loss to the Lobos on Jan 19-20 at the Rocky Mountain Open.

Sophomores Jim Koziol and Bill Mulholland, along with senior Jason Christie, scored more than 56 points in the all-around.

Koziol won the all-around, scoring a career high 56.60. Mulholland was second with a 56.125, another career high, and Christie finished third with a 56.10.

"It feels pretty good," Koziol said. "I was just looking for a career best tonight."

Koziol won the pommel horse (9.7)

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Huskers lose sixth straight

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

Just when the Nebraska basketball team thought things couldn't get any worse, they did.

Oklahoma State	72
Nebraska	57

With a 72-57 loss to Oklahoma State Saturday night, the Huskers have lost six straight games for the first time since 1964-65, and now they travel to Lawrence, Kan., to play No. 5 Kansas tonight at 8:30 at Allen Fieldhouse. The game will be televised nationally by ESPN as part of Big Monday.

After dropping six straight, Nebraska has fallen to 15-10 and 3-7 in the Big Eight. Kansas (21-2 and 9-1) leads the conference by two games over Iowa State, while the Huskers are in seventh place.

"Every American in the United States doesn't think we can win, but we have to go in there with the attitude that we have nothing to lose," Husker coach Danny Nee said. "It will be very tough."

Contributing to Nebraska's heavy underdog status are their six-game skid and the fact that the Huskers haven't won in Lawrence since 1983, their longest losing streak against a conference team on the road.

Even though Nebraska hasn't had much success in Allen Fieldhouse, senior guard Erick Strickland said it would be good to get away from Lincoln.

"They are playing really well, and

we're going to have to let it all hang out," Strickland said. "It will be good to get away from here, and get a chance to sit back in our rooms and think about what we have to do."

After a week in which the team met with Athletic Director Bill Byrne and had team meetings to discuss its losing ways, Nebraska wasn't shown much sympathy by Oklahoma State.

The Huskers played well to start the game and took a 26-25 lead with 4:12 remaining in the first half. But Oklahoma State took the lead for good on a 3-pointer by Adrian Peterson to make it 28-26.

The Cowboys scored the final 12 points of the half to take a 37-26 lead, causing a few of the 13,086 fans in attendance to show their displeasure by booing as the teams left the court.

Nee said the final 12 points of the first half hurt, but he still thought his team played well.

"You're not going to believe this," Nee said, "but I thought it was more Oklahoma State's sharpness and good play than Nebraska not being ready to play."

In the second half, the Huskers cut the lead to four points twice at 40-36 and 43-39, but that's as close as they came.

Lack of rebounding and good free-throw shooting by the Cowboys hurt Nebraska. The Huskers were outrebounded 24-8 in the second half, including an 8-1 Cowboy advantage on the offensive glass.

Before the game, Oklahoma State was shooting 57.7 percent from the

See LOSS on 8

Free throws key in Husker win

By Mike Kluck
Senior Reporter

Before the season, the Nebraska women's basketball team knew free

Nebraska	92
Missouri	72

throws were going to be a key ingredient to making the NCAA

Tournament.

On Sunday, free throws accounted for 40 percent of the Cornhuskers' offense as they defeated Missouri 92-72 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. The win, before a season-high crowd of 5,832 fans, was the Huskers' 12th consecutive victory over Missouri.

Nebraska improved to 17-8 overall and 7-6 in the Big Eight.

The Huskers set a new team record by making 37 free throws and tied a Nebraska free-throw attempt record with 48 tries.

Nebraska senior Kate Galligan, who scored her 1,000th career point and finished the game 12-of-12 from the free-throw line, said the Huskers were more confident this season from the charity stripe.

Galligan led the Huskers with 22 points and became the 15th player in Nebraska history to score more than 1,000 points.

"This year we go to the line, and we know that we need them," Galligan said. "Last year we stepped up there not understanding the significance of what we were doing. We realize how important it is for us to hit those."

Missouri coach Joann Rutherford said she thought she was watching a free-throw exhibition instead of a basketball game. The Tigers, who suffered their worst loss of the year, fell to 13-11 overall and 4-8 in conference play.

"If we'd have gotten 40 points off free throws, we might have won, too," Rutherford said. "I think you have to look across the line and see how many field goals and turnovers we had."

Rutherford had no comment when asked why Nebraska was able to shoot so many free throws.

The Tigers made 27-of-71 shots from the field, and Nebraska made 26-of-48 field goal attempts. Missouri had 11 turnovers compared to the Huskers' 16.

Nebraska took an early seven-point lead when senior Pyra Aarden made a layup off an assist from senior Lis Brenden. But the Tigers went on a 10-4 run to cut the Husker lead to one point with 7:03 remaining in the first half.

For the rest of the first half and through the first four minutes of the second half, the Tigers connected on 3-of-19 field goal attempts as the Huskers went on a 27-7 run to take a 21-point lead.

Nebraska coach Angela Beck, who is working to position her team for an NCAA Tournament invitation, wanted more Sunday.

"We wanted to beat them by 30," Beck said. "We wanted to prove to people that we're improving and try to make an impression on how we're playing. But I think the 20-point (win) was good."

Swimmers take home first place

By Vince D'Adamo
Staff Reporter

The metal detector was busy at the Oklahoma City airport this weekend as the Nebraska men's and women's swimming teams took home plenty of hardware from the Big Eight Swimming and Diving Championships.

"I just felt we had nothing to lose and everything to gain," Cornhusker coach Cal Bentz said.

Nebraska took first place in both the men's and women's competition.

Bentz was named men's and women's conference coach of the year.

Travis Niemeyer dominated the 1- and 3-meter diving events. On the 3-meter board, he shattered a school record with 617.45 points. Niemeyer's

efforts earned him co-Big Eight diver-of-the-year honors. Eric Rasser won newcomer-of-the-year honors by winning the 200-meter backstroke in 1 minute, 47.88 seconds.

Conny Wennberg captured the 200-meter breaststroke title in 2:02.03. Juan Benavides led the way in the 50-, 100- and 200-meter freestyle, only the third swimmer in Big Eight history to accomplish such a feat. Josh Mathias, Francois Boshoff, Mark Bennett and Benavides headed the class in the 400-meter freestyle in 2:57.60.

On the women's side, Penny Heyns shattered the U.S. Open and NCAA record in the 200-meter breaststroke in 2:08.90.

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