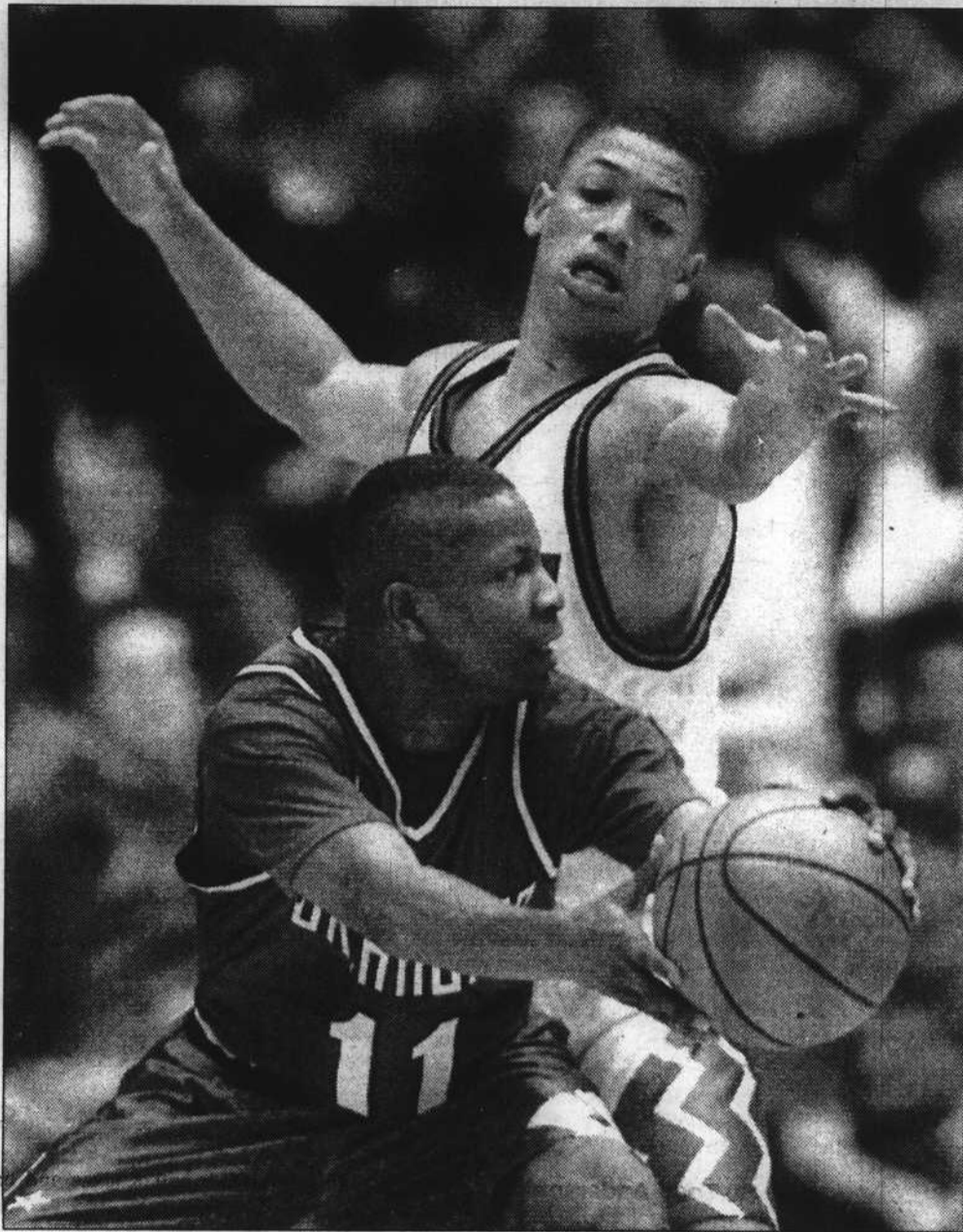


SPORTS

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Jon Waller/DN

Nebraska point guard Tyrone Lue attempts to steal the ball from Oklahoma's Dion Barnes in the final moments of regulation Sunday. The Huskers lost 80-76 in overtime.

15-point lead fizzles; Huskers lose in OT

By Mike Kluck
Senior Reporter

For the first 29 minutes of its game with Oklahoma on Sunday, the Nebraska basketball team looked as if it had shaken the monkey from its back.

But the animal returned with a vengeance, forcing the Cornhuskers into shooting 4 of 22 from the field in the final 11 minutes, and giving the Sooners an opportunity to erase a 15-point deficit.

Oklahoma went on to win 80-76 in overtime before 11,094 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. It was the Huskers' eighth straight loss, their longest losing streak since 1963-64 when they lost nine straight games in Joe Cipriano's first season. Nebraska fell to 15-12 overall and 3-9 in the Big Eight.

The Sooners, 16-10 and 7-5, improved their chances of earning an invitation to the NCAA Tournament by securing a non-losing record in league play.

"The first thing we have to do is get this monkey off our back," Nebraska senior guard Erick Strickland said. "I'm disappointed that our team played so hard, but we still lost. It hurts pretty bad."

Junior center Mikki Moore came off the bench and led the Huskers with 17 points. He also grabbed 10 rebounds for his third double-double of the season.

Although the Huskers showed a variety of emotions in the locker room after the game — including frustration, sadness and anger, they were still encouraged by their play early in the game, Moore said.

In a 10-minute span beginning with 3:43 left in the first half, Nebraska outscored the Sooners 20-4 to take a 48-33 lead with 13:43 remaining in the game.

During the run, seven different players scored, including Strickland, who had nine points. In that run, Nebraska's defense limited the Sooners to an 0-for-12 shooting effort and forced six turnovers.

But the tables quickly turned as Oklahoma shot 66 percent and made 9 of 10 free throws during the final 14 minutes to outscore the Huskers 32-17. Oklahoma finished the game 25 of 27 from the line.

During that same time, Nebraska was 7 of 32 shooting, committed six turnovers and was 3 of 6 from the free-throw line. For the game, Nebraska made 10 of 18 free throws.

The Huskers still had a chance to win the game at the end of regulation, though. After Oklahoma junior Nate Erdmann hit a 3-point goal with 22 seconds remaining, Nebraska senior Jaron Boone made a leaning jump shot in the lane to tie the game at 65.

Then, as Oklahoma senior Ryan Minor was trying to pass the ball, Strickland stole the pass, took two dribbles and attempted to get the ball back to Boone.

But the pass was picked off by Erdmann, who missed a halfcourt shot as time expired.

Strickland said he felt Boone had the better shot. He said the turnover, one of 18 for Nebraska, was because of miscommunication between the guards.

In overtime, Oklahoma jumped to an early five-point lead as Erdmann made a 3-pointer and Minor made a field goal. Minor led the Sooners with 24 points, and Erdmann added 23 points.

Nebraska had opportunities to send the game into double overtime, but the Huskers missed three 3-pointers, including a 32-foot heave by Strickland with less than 20 seconds remaining in the game.

Nebraska coach Danny Nee said he wasn't disappointed with the Huskers' shot selection. "We have problems with finishing the game," Nee said. "We had many opportunities. We're just going to go back to the drawing board."

Gymnasts come back to top No. 4 Michigan

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

When the Nebraska women's gymnastics team began the last rotation at the sixth Masters Classic Sunday night, it trailed Michigan by .005 of a point.

The 1,658 fans in the Bob Devaney Sports Center split their attention between the Cornhuskers' floor exercise routines and the Wolverines, who were on the balance beam.

But Nebraska senior Joy Taylor wasn't watching the Wolverines' balance beam routines.

Not completely, anyway. After two Michigan gymnasts fell off the beam, Taylor gave full attention to her floor routine. She scored a 9.8, and finished in a tie for third with Ball State's Sarah Mikrut, leading the No. 7 Huskers to a 193.8-193.2 victory over the No. 4 Wolverines.

"When we're out there, we can only control what our scores are," Taylor said. "But we were watching how they were doing on the beam, too."

Michigan's 48.4 score on the beam was not enough to hold off Nebraska's 49.05 on floor. Washington finished in third place with a 190.125 and Ball State held fourth place with a 188.9.

Taylor won the all-around for the first time this season, scoring a 39.025. She placed fourth in vault (9.75), seventh on uneven bars (9.675) and fifth on beam with a career-best of 9.8.

Nebraska coach Dan Kendig said

he was pleased with his team's composure and determination.

"When they had to, they came back and did it," he said.

Kendig and Taylor agreed that the scoring had been tight at the meet.

Michigan coach Bev Plocki, however, was not as enthusiastic about the scoring.

"The judges here didn't see the same things that our judges last week did," she said.

The Wolverines scored a 195.575 — the third-best mark in school history — last week against 1995 national champion Utah.

Nebraska freshman Jess Swift filled in on the vault and floor for junior all-arounder Kim DeHaan, who had a knee injury and competed only in the bars and beam.

"Jess picked up the pieces tonight, and bam — two big scores," Kendig said.

Swift finished in a three-way tie for seventh in the bars (9.675), and in a tie for eighth in floor with a career-high 9.725.

DeHaan was able to fight through her injury and win the uneven bars with a career-high 9.925. Kendig said he was also pleased with the effort of freshman Courtney Brown, who scored a career-high 9.850 in both the beam and floor. She finished third in the beam and second in the floor.

Husker freshman Misty Oxford had another personal best in the all-around (38.425). She finished second in the vault with 9.850, fourth in the bars (9.750) and fifth in the floor with a career high 9.775.

Huskers defeat Cyclones

By Jason Brunz
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska women's basketball team has earned the fourth seed in the Big Eight Tournament next weekend.

The Cornhuskers, 18-8 overall and 8-6 in the Big Eight, defeated Iowa State 72-69 Friday night at the Bob Devaney Sports Center to end their regular season.

With Oklahoma State's victory over Colorado on Sunday, the Cowgirls edged the Huskers for the tournament's third seed. Nebraska will play Missouri on Saturday at noon at the Bicentennial Center in Salina, Kan.

Sophomore forward Anna DeForge led Nebraska against the Cyclones. She scored 23 points and grabbed 10 rebounds.

DeForge said that the Huskers' intensity on the court was the key to the win over Iowa State.

"Everyone was having a decent game," DeForge said. "I don't think we ever relaxed."

Iowa State coach Bill Fennelly said Nebraska was a good team and would do well in the Big Eight Tournament. He said he thought the Huskers would move on to the NCAA Tournament.

Nebraska	72
Iowa St.	69

Nebraska continues dominance in track

By Andrew Strnad
Staff Reporter

This weekend was business as usual for the Nebraska men's and women's track teams.

The Cornhuskers captured first-place honors in the final Big Eight Indoor Track Championships at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on Friday and Saturday.

The women won their 33rd straight title overall and 17th consecutive indoor championship, and they broke the conference scoring record. The men won their third straight indoor title.

The Husker men jumped to an early lead Friday and then added to their advantage Saturday to outdistance Oklahoma 192-137. The Nebraska women won their title by posting 197 points, finishing 43 points ahead of second-place Colorado.

Nebraska coach Gary Pepin said he was proud of his team's ability to dominate the meet on both the men's and women's sides.

"We scored well pretty much all over the board," Pepin said. "And any time you can score that many points, you've got a lot of good athletes."

Next season, Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and Baylor will join the conference. The addition of those four teams will make it tougher for the Huskers to repeat.

"It was also a special win for the women because of their streak of 16 straight indoor titles," Pepin said. "To make it 17 was really special."

Individually, Pepin said he was happy to see many meet records set,

Big 8 track results

Men's final team standings

1. Nebraska	197
2. Oklahoma	137
3. Iowa St.	117
4. Colorado	75
5. Kansas	71
6. Kansas St.	62
7. Missouri	49
8. Oklahoma St.	36

Women's final team standings

1. Nebraska	197
2. Colorado	154
3. Kansas St.	97
4. Kansas	72.5
5. Iowa St.	60
6. Oklahoma	59
7. Missouri	50
8. Oklahoma St.	11.5

For individual records, see pg. 8

including sprinter Kathy Travis Miller's 6.79-second performance in the 55-meter dash and her 200-meter time of 23.79 seconds.

"Other people picked it up when others faltered today," he said, "and that is what a team needs if they want to do well at nationals."

The NCAA Indoor Championships will be held in Indianapolis on March 8-9. Pepin said he expected his teams to challenge for the national championships.

"We have a lot of bullets to fire," he said, "which should help our chances to finish in the top three at nationals."