

# SPORTS

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## SPORTS OPINION



**Mitch Sherman**

### Huskers lag behind rest of Big Eight

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Friday night at Kemper Arena the final grains of dirt were thrown on top of the coffin containing the 1995-96 Nebraska basketball season.

This has been a wasted year, one that held so much promise in November, began spectacularly in Hawaii, started to crumble against Kansas on Jan. 28 and fell apart on a windy Saturday afternoon in Ames, Iowa, last month.

So Friday it was only fitting that Nebraska died at the feet of eventual conference tournament champion Iowa State, a team so very different — yet amazingly similar on paper — to the underachieving Cornhuskers.

Because of an irritating Big Eight rule that limits student newspapers to only one seat on press row, I watched Friday's games from the upper balcony of Kemper. But what was painfully obvious from the stands would have been no more evident from a court-side seat.

Nebraska has been in reverse since late January while every other Big Eight team has been improving, moving forward and leaving Nebraska in the dust. Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Missouri, Kansas State, Colorado and Iowa State each entered Big Eight play trailing Nebraska in talent and experience.

All six teams showed this weekend why Nebraska needs to make major changes before next season. The same Missouri team that couldn't buy a bucket during an 18-point loss in Lincoln on Jan. 24 looked unbeatable Friday in its overtime win over Oklahoma.

The Huskers' effort in the tournament was admirable. They played to win. But by this point, they apparently couldn't remember how.

Forget about the NIT. That doesn't mean anything. What's important is that over the last two seasons, Nebraska is 6-21 in games played after Jan. 22. Before that date, the Huskers are 28-7. Bad scheduling? That's only part of the problem.

Perhaps Jaron Boone, whose senior-season struggles are symbolic of a faltering program, said it best after the loss Friday. When asked what the Huskers needed to do to turn things around, he said they had to play as they did in the season-opening Big Island Invitational. Not exactly a ringing endorsement for Coach Danny Nee and staff.

Something is drastically wrong with the system in place. It needs to be refined. Not only are players failing to improve over the course of a season and a career, others are being completely ignored.

Look at Jason Glock, who played in fewer games this season than he did as a freshman. Has Glock become a worse player over the course of his career? Have his skills declined? I doubt it.

I wonder what he would have to say about Nee.

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

# Martial, Henry take home titles

## NU men finish second; women fourth at NCAA Championships

By Andrew Strnad  
Staff Reporter

INDIANAPOLIS — The Nebraska men's and women's track and field teams had high expectations going into the NCAA Indoor Championships on Friday and Saturday at the RCA Dome. The Nebraska men took second place behind George Mason, one spot ahead of 12-time defending champion Arkansas.

The women, expected to challenge for the title, finished fourth. But two Cornhuskers came away as national champions.

For senior Nicola Martial, nothing could have been sweeter than an indoor triple-jump title. After winning two outdoor titles, Martial focused her

attention on this year's indoor championships. She didn't disappoint.

On Martial's final jump Saturday, she was trailing Suzette Lee of Louisiana State, but overcame the deficit with her final jump of 44 feet, 8 1/4 inch. Lee finished at 44-8.

"Even if I didn't win," Martial said, "and if she (Lee) came back on the last one, I was going to be satisfied because I competed hard. And I knew in my heart that I tried my best."

Martial's jump was not only the longest of her career, but also a Nebraska and a Big Eight triple jump record. The title was also the first indoor triple jump national title by a Nebraska athlete.

"I wanted it (the Big Eight record)," Martial said. "And, hey, I could set it

### NCAA Indoor Track Championships

Men		Women	
1. George Mason	38	1. Louisiana St.	52
2. Nebraska	31.5	2. Georgia	34
3. Arkansas	28	3. Texas	31
4. Baylor	24	4. Nebraska	28
Texas-El Paso	24	Florida	28

by winning, so I just went for it."

Nebraska coach Gary Pepin said he was happy for Martial. He said the senior from Las Vegas was the greatest competitor he had ever coached.

"She has always managed in all of her major meets to be able to respond to competition," Pepin said.

Martial wasn't the only Husker crowned a national champion in Indianapolis. Angee Henry was a busy woman this weekend, competing in the 55-meter dash, the triple jump and the long jump.

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Scott Bruhn/DN

Nebraska's Jaron Boone battles Iowa State's Kenny Pratt for a loose ball Friday during the Huskers' 62-60 loss to the Cyclones in the first round of the Big Eight Tournament.

## NIT pits NU against Colorado St.

By Trevor Parks  
Senior Reporter

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Two days after losing to Iowa State in the first round of the Big Eight Tournament, the Nebraska basketball team learned Sunday night that its season would be extended at least one more week.

Nebraska, 16-14, will travel to Fort Collins, Colo., to play 18-11 Colorado State in the first round of the National Invitation Tournament Thursday night at Moby Gym. It is Nebraska's second straight NIT appearance and sixth straight year playing in a postseason tournament.

"We just wanted to be in the tournament," Cornhusker coach Danny Nee said. "If we get a win on the road, maybe we can get a home game."

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# Huskers get NCAA bid

By Mike Kluck  
Senior Reporter

After the first 32 teams for the 1996 NCAA Women's Tournament were announced Sunday night and Nebraska wasn't among them, Angela Beck needed a change.

So during a break in the ESPN telecast, the Cornhusker coach found her good luck charm, sophomore Jami Kubik, and sat by her for the remaining selections.

Four picks later, a loud roar from the team and the 150 boosters gathered at the Hewitt Center erupted as the Huskers learned they were in the tournament.

Nebraska will play Colorado State, 25-4, in the first round of the West Regional at Palo Alto, Calif., Saturday at 9 p.m. In the other game, top-seeded and host Stanford, 25-2, will face 21-8 Grambling State. The winners of the two games meeting on March 18 and the regional semifinals and finals will be in Seattle the following weekend.

"The last four hours have really been nerve-racking," Beck said moments after the announcement. "I had been confident all week, but when I woke up this morning, I had this sick feeling because I didn't know for sure."

"This is a historic moment for us because this team certainly deserves to be on the map. The seniors have done a tremendous job all season,

but it also has been an entire team effort."

This will be the Huskers' third NCAA Tournament appearance. In 1988, Nebraska lost to Southern California in the first game. In 1993, the Huskers defeated San Diego 81-58 before losing 78-60 to USC.

Beck wasn't the only one who was nervous Sunday. Senior guard Lis Brenden said she was restless all day and even tried to get information from Beck on Sunday. But the coach knew no more than her players.

"During the announcements, my palms were sweaty, cold and clammy," Brenden said. "It felt like I was playing a game."

To calm her nerves during the selection show, she said she tried to fill in the tournament bracket while it was being announced. But once Nebraska appeared on the television screen, Brenden's hands stopped writing.

"I just lost everything then," Brenden said.

Junior forward Tina McClain said her mouth dried up during the announcements. But she didn't know if she would be able to get a drink during the break because her legs were shaking so badly.

"We're excited to be in," McClain said. "I feel it's going to be a really good game. We just want to go out there and play as

### NCAA West Regional first round games

Palo Alto, Calif.	
Stanford (25-2)	11:30 p.m.
Grambling (21-8)	
Colorado St. (25-4)	
Nebraska (19-9)	
9:00 p.m.	
Tuscaloosa, Ala.	
N.C. State (19-9)	6:00 p.m.
Montana (24-4)	
Alabama (22-7)	
Appalachian St. (24-5)	
8:00 p.m.	
Boulder, Colo.	
Auburn (20-5)	7:00 p.m.
Nebraska (19-9)	
Colorado (25-5)	
Purdue (21-6)	
9:00 p.m.	
University Park, Penn.	
Texas A&M (20-11)	5:00 p.m.
Kent (22-3)	
Penn St. (25-6)	
Washington St. (22-3)	
7:00 p.m.	

hard as we can."

Brenden said she, too, was ready for the tournament. Both Brenden and McClain said they had a chance to watch Colorado State win the Western Athletic Conference championship on ESPN.

Beck said winning the first-round game will come down to preparation and the team's approach to the game.

"I've often said ability gets you there," Beck said. "But character keeps you there."

## Wrestlers take second in Big Eight

By Antone Oseka  
Staff Reporter

STILLWATER, Okla. — Boos echoed through Gallagher-Iba Arena as the Nebraska trainer ran on to mat two at the Big Eight Wrestling Championships on Saturday afternoon.

But there was nothing he could do. He couldn't fix the problems Nebraska faced as they placed second behind Oklahoma State. He also couldn't fix Jason Kraft.

The Nebraska 150-pounder tore his posterior cruciate ligament during his match for third place. Kraft, a junior and last year's conference champion at 158 pounds, lost by medical default to Jimmy Arias of Oklahoma State.

Kraft tried to continue wrestling after suffering the injury, but he couldn't. The referee called the default 4:04 into the match as the crowd booted its disapproval.

Nebraska coach Tim Neumann expressed his concern.

"It doesn't look good," Neumann said about Kraft's knee.

He had the same concerns for the Oklahoma State crowd.

They are knowledgeable wrestling fans, Neumann said, and they thought Kraft was faking an injury to get out of

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