

SPORTS

Tuesday, March 12, 1996

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Big 8 Notebook

With the birth of the Big 12 Conference in August, Iowa State's 56-55 victory over Kansas in the Big Eight Tournament championship Sunday was the last-ever Big Eight basketball game. It was also the Cyclones' first league tournament title. In the 20-year history of the tournament, only Colorado failed to win a championship.

The Big 12 will not change the configuration of the Big Eight's wrestling championships. Because none of the Texas schools have a wrestling program, Nebraska, Iowa State, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Missouri still will be the only schools in the league tournament next season.

The last Big Eight Tournament at Kemper Arena in Kansas City, Mo., set a record for attendance as 70,617 fans watched the three-day event. The mark surpassed last year's record of 69,059.

Kansas and Iowa State dominated the all-tournament roster. Named to the team were Dedric Willoughby, Kenny Pratt and Kelvin Cato from Iowa State. Kansas landed Jacque Vaughn, Raef LaFrentz and Ryan Robertson.

Four Big Eight men's teams were selected for the NCAA Tournament. Kansas (26-4) received a No. 2 seed in the East Region and will face South Carolina State (22-7) in the first round in Tempe, Ariz., Friday. Iowa State (23-8) received a No. 5 seed in the Midwest Region and will face 12th-seeded California (17-10) in Dallas on Thursday. In the Southeast Region in Orlando, Fla., Oklahoma (17-12) received a 10th seed and will face seventh-seeded Temple (19-12) Friday. Kansas State (17-11) also received a 10th seed and will face New Mexico (17-4) in the first round of the East Region in Richmond, Va., Friday.

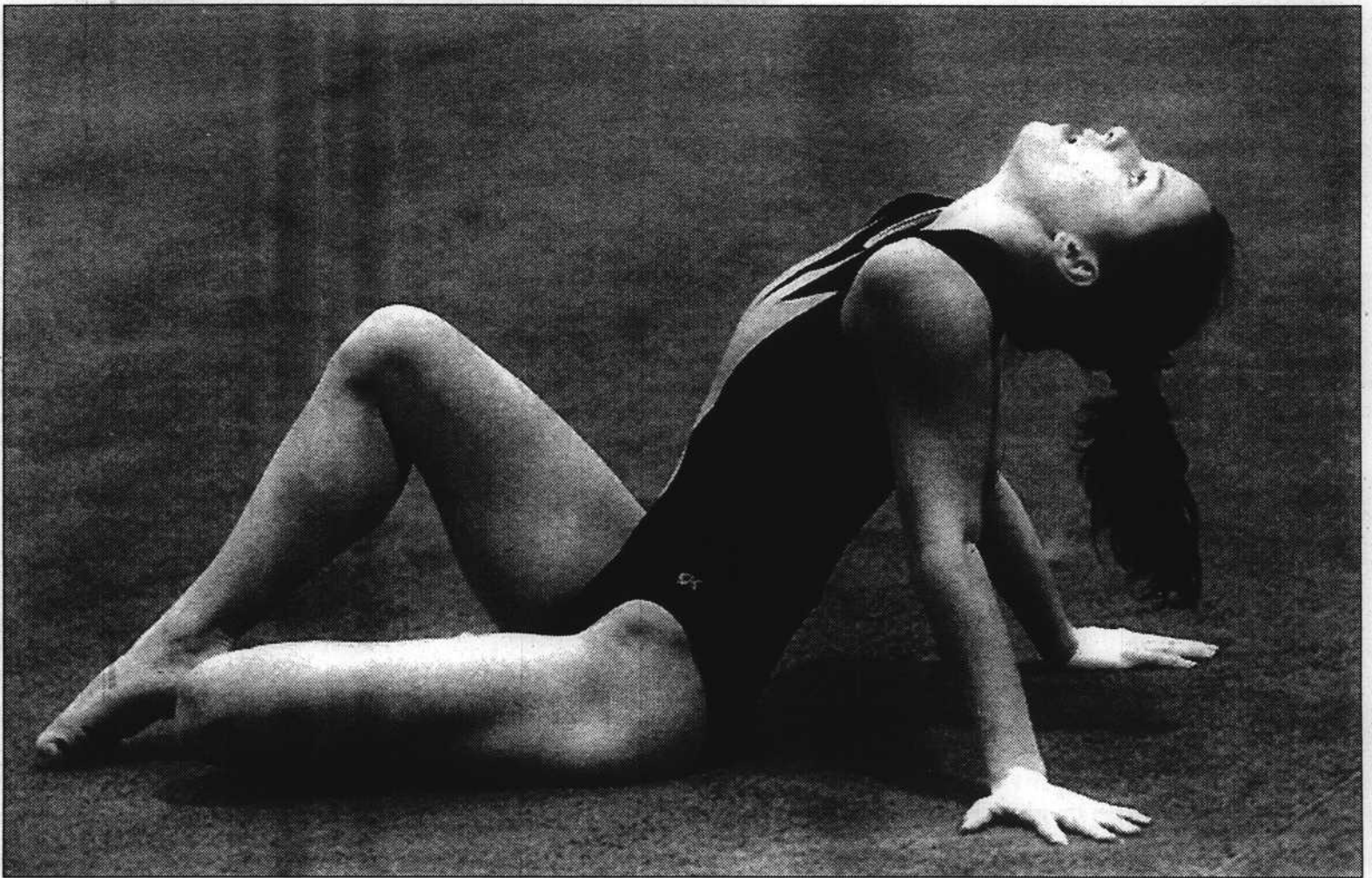
Four Big Eight women's basketball teams, including Nebraska, received bids to the NCAA Tournament.

The ninth-seeded Cornhuskers (19-9) will face Colorado State (25-4) in the first round in Palo Alto, Calif., Saturday. Colorado (25-8) received a No. 3 seed and will play host to 14th-seeded Tulane (21-9) Friday in Boulder, Colo. Fourth-seeded Kansas (20-9) also will play host to a first-round game in Lawrence, Kan., against Middle Tennessee State (24-5). Oklahoma State (19-9) received a seventh seed and will play 10th-seeded Rhode Island (21-7) Saturday in Athens, Ga.

Missouri and Nebraska were invited to the men's National Invitation Tournament. Nebraska (16-14) will face Colorado State (18-11) in Fort Collins, Colo., Thursday. Missouri (17-14) will play host to Murray State (19-9) on Wednesday in Columbia, Mo. Oklahoma State received an invitation but declined the offer.

Big Eight Notebook compiled by senior reporter Mike Kluck.

Sky's the limit



Nebraska freshman gymnast Courtney Brown has led off all season for the Huskers on the balance beam, the team's weakest event. Brown scored a career-high 9.85 on Feb. 25. Matt Miller/DN

Brown sets the pace for Huskers

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

Performing a series of flips and handstands on a 4-inch-wide balance beam suspended 4 feet above the ground is not easy.

But for freshman Cornhusker gymnast Courtney Brown, it comes as second nature.

"She's a great beam worker," Nebraska assistant coach Teresa Ijams said. "She's really clean form-wise. She doesn't have any form breaks, and she moves well on the beam. She just has good skills."

But Brown's form and natural talent are not as valuable as her confidence, Ijams said, which has helped her claim the leadoff role for Nebraska on the beam.

"It's very, very important," Ijams

said, "because what the first person does has a great deal to do with how the rest of the team does. It kind of sets the pace for the other competitors."

Husker coach Dan Kendig said the leadoff position is one that few gymnasts covet, but Brown volunteered for the spot earlier this year.

"She asked for the role," Kendig said. "Courtney's great on the beam. We had her at a later spot in the lineup for intra-squad practices, but she didn't like that."

"We feel like we've got a quality person there to get us going. And nobody is harder on herself when she misses than Courtney."

Brown, a native of Fishers, Ind., has fallen only twice on her beam routines this year. She scored a ca-

reer-high 9.85 in the Masters Classic Feb. 25, good enough for third place.

"I really like it," Brown said, "because it gives me a chance to lead the whole team off. I feel like I can have a big impact."

One of five freshmen in the eighth-ranked Huskers' starting lineup, Brown also competes on the vault and in the floor exercise.

At the Masters Classic, she also scored a career-high 9.875 on the floor, sparking the Huskers to a come-from-behind 193.8-193.2 victory over No. 4 Michigan.

"I didn't think we were going to have as much impact as we have," Brown said, "but all the upperclassmen kept telling us that we were going to be good. I don't really think that any of us believed it until we

actually started performing, and we were like, 'Wow, we can actually do this.'"

Ijams said she was also surprised at the impact that Brown had made this season.

"You don't usually think of a freshman as the type of competitor that would start out an event," Ijams said. "But she's done awesome."

Brown said she hoped to add an uneven bars routine to her repertoire and compete as an all-arounder.

That adjustment, Brown said, will be an easy one. But she said the adjustment to college life had not been as simple.

"It's a lot different," she said. "I had to change a lot. I had to change my time management and just my whole schedule."

Freshman wrestler inspires NU

By Antone Oseka
Staff Reporter

STILLWATER, Okla. — Freshman Dusty Morris entered the Big Eight Wrestling Championships as the fifth seed in a five-man bracket.

He had a losing record at 15-16 and was supposed to be the weak spot in Nebraska's lineup.

He proved everyone wrong.

Morris wrestled his way to third place in the 142-pound weight class Saturday afternoon

at Gallagher-Iba Arena on the Okla-

"The kid's got a big heart. He gives you everything he's got all the time."

TONY DEANDA
Nebraska wrestler

homa State campus.

He beat third-seeded Rod Jones of Oklahoma 2-1 in overtime when Jones was called for stalling. And most important of all, Morris qualified for the NCAA Championships, which will be March 21-23 in Minneapolis.

"Dusty gave us a chance to win the tournament," Nebraska coach Tim Neumann said.

Morris' team points weren't enough for Nebraska to win the title,

though. The Cornhuskers finished six points behind Oklahoma State, which won the meet with 70 team points.

Morris scored team points with a first-round 3-2 win over Matt Webster of Missouri. That victory pitted Morris against top-seeded Derek Mountsier of Iowa State. Morris lost 6-1, dropping him into the match against Jones.

Morris, who is from Cody, Wyo., not only earned the praise of his coach after the meet, he also served as a

model for his teammates, Neumann said.

"We got to get these guys to wrestle like Dusty Morris, as far as letting it all hang out," Neumann said.

Tony DeAnda, a senior 134-pounder, said the secret to Morris was his determination.

"The kid's got a big heart," DeAnda said. "He gives you everything he's got all the time."

DeAnda said he remembered when Morris started the season for Nebraska. Then, DeAnda said he could beat him easily, but now Morris, who redshirted last season, has earned a chance to wrestle for the national championship.

"It's a great feeling," Morris said.

See MORRIS on 8



Morris