

Gymnasts prepare for Ohio State

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

With the NCAA West Regional only a month away, Nebraska men's gymnastics coach Francis Allen is standing by his preseason prediction that the Cornhuskers will win the national title.



"If we're healthy," Allen said, "then I think we can still win this thing." Nebraska, 4-1 in duals this season, will get a chance to see how Allen's prediction holds up when they face No. 1 Ohio State at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, Saturday, March 23.

Despite being plagued by injuries all season, the Huskers moved up to third in the national rankings this week, holding a 225.85 average team score.

"For us to be ranked third with the condition our team is in, that's pretty good," Allen said.

The Huskers received some good news this week when freshman J.D. Reive returned to practice for the first time in two months.

Reive, whom Allen has called "the Jim Hartung of this generation," has missed the entire season because of chronic back problems. Allen said Reive had been going through a rigorous calisthenic exercise routine to stay in shape over the past two months.

"He's done a great job in the gym," Allen said. "He's shown a lot of dedication and intensity."

"When we get J.D. back, that will give us a lot of power. We hope that he can compete in rings, vault and floor for us."

Marshall Nelson, another true freshman, has been a pleasant surprise this season, Allen said.

Competing in the pommel horse, the parallel bars and the horizontal bar, Nelson has become a valuable scorer for the Huskers, Allen said.

"I didn't know Marshall was as good as he is," he said.

Nelson has been slowed by a wrist injury, but Allen said he is back to full strength.

Allen said his team benefited by being forced to rely on only five gymnasts in each event.

"It has helped us a lot," he said. "Because if they miss a routine, we haven't been able to rely on someone else. I think it has built their character."

With so many injuries, all-arounders Jason Christie, Jim Koziol, Don Kinison and Bill Mullholland have handled the majority of the load for the Huskers.

Christie, the Huskers' lone senior, finished second in the all-around with a 56.05 last weekend in the Huskers' 225.295-224.125 victory over Minnesota. But Allen said Christie had not completely healed from a severe sinus infection.

Junior Ryan McEwen has been one of the few to remain healthy and that has helped him emerge as a scoring force, Allen said.

Against the Golden Gophers, McEwen won the pommel horse with a season-high 9.75.

Koziol, a sophomore, has fought through a torn right bicep to become a contributor for Nebraska this season.

Koziol won a spot on the 2000 U.S. Olympic Team at the Winter Cup on Feb. 3, and scored a career-high 56.6 in the all-around against New Mexico.

Allen said that Koziol, Christie and Reive benefited from not having a meet this weekend, and also a light week of practice during spring break.

Reive will probably be ready to participate in the Nebraska's 7 p.m. dual with Ohio State, Allen said.

"We're going to have to be 100 percent healthy to beat Ohio State," he said, "or they're going to come in here and walk all over us."

The dual with the Buckeyes, Allen said, will be one of the most exciting meets in the history of Nebraska gymnastics.

"A 226 team score is not going to win this meet," he said. "But it will hopefully be hard for them to come in here and win."

NU gymnasts looking to gain bragging rights

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

The eighth-ranked Nebraska women's gymnastics team will face Penn State and West Virginia this Saturday in a 2 p.m. triangular meet at University Park, Penn.

Coach Dan Kendig, who has worked at the Woodward Gymnastics Camp just outside of University Park for 16 summers, said he was excited about facing the Nittany Lions.

"We're going to try to bring up the rivalry aspect of this meet," he said.

Kendig isn't the only Cornhusker with ties to the Penn State area. Assistant coach Rob Drass graduated from Penn State in 1990, and redshirt freshman Laurie McLaughlin is a University Park native.

Kendig said seniors Joy Taylor and Meghan Nicolini, junior Shelly Bartlett and freshman Courtney Brown all have spent time at the camp.

Earlier this season, Nebraska finished third behind Penn State and No. 1 Alabama in a triangular meet at Tuscaloosa, Ala. Penn State outscored the Huskers 191.7-189.45 in that meet.

"We're real familiar with the people up there," Kendig said. "So this will kind of establish bragging rights for the winner."

Taylor, coming off a 9.875 performance on the balance beam last weekend at Minnesota, again will provide a stabilizing force for the 13-3 Huskers, Kendig said.

Nebraska also will play host to a dual with Southern Utah on March 23 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. The meet will run simultaneously with the third-ranked Nebraska men's dual with No. 1 Ohio State.

Kendig said the Huskers had a different kind of rivalry with Southern Utah.

In 1994, the Thunderbirds edged Nebraska for the Academic National Championship. But last year, the two teams reversed spots and the Huskers won the title.

"We're not quite willing to give that up again," Kendig said. "We kind of enjoy it."

Nebraska expects swimming success

By Vince D'Adamo
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska women's swimming team is preparing to take its act to Ann Arbor, Mich., for the NCAA Championships.



Bentz

showcase event was a high priority for Nebraska.

"The situation with the NCAA Championships is that it's one of the highest goals of the season in terms of our team," Bentz said.

Senior Penny Heyns leads her Husker teammates into Ann Arbor. Heyns, a native of South Africa, returned to her home country to compete in the South African Olympic Trials, following the Big Eight Championships. Heyns made her trip to her home country a memorable one, establishing a world record in the 100-meter breaststroke with a time of 1:07.49.

Heyns will compete in both the 100- and 200-yard breaststroke and as a member of the 200- and 400-yard medley relay teams.

Bentz said he expected to see Heyns continue her winning ways.

"We saw that in the conference championship meet and the South African Olympic trials," Bentz said. "I think we'll see that she does very well in the NCAA Championships."

"It's one of the highest goals of the season in terms of our team."

CAL BENTZ

Nebraska swimming coach

Each competitor will compete in the relays for Nebraska, Bentz said.

Julia Russell will join Heyns in the 100- and 200-yard breaststroke. Russell also will compete in the 200-yard individual medley. Melanie Dodd will compete in the 50-, 100- and 200-yard freestyle.

Participating in the 400-yard individual medley relay will be Mikaela Lauren. Lauren also will compete in the 100- and 200-yard butterfly. Heather Park will join Lauren in the 400-yard individual medley and will compete in the 500- and 1650-yard freestyle.

Teammate Brianna Wilkins will join Park in the 500- and 1650-yard freestyle.

Janet Danberg will be the lone Husker representative in the 100- and 200-yard backstroke. Shannon Wright and Erin Carew are tentatively scheduled to compete only in the medley relay events.

Bentz said his team would be happy to be there, but would not be awed by the competition.

"The way you approach it is like any other meet," Bentz said. "You can't control how fast other people swim."

NIT

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"I was trying to play the kind of defense Erick Strickland likes to play," Strickland said. "I just didn't allow him to do what he wanted to do."

The win, Nebraska's third on an opponent's home court this season and second NIT road win in school history, was highlighted by seven Huskers scoring in double figures.

Along with Wald, Bernard Garner (10), Moore (10), Luc (10), Boone (15), Terrance Badgett (11) and Strickland (19) contributed double digits for the Huskers.

"We were hanging around shooting 38 percent and not putting the ball in the basket," Coach Danny Nee said. "Then finally the ball started going in the basket, and when it did that was the difference."

The story was different in the first half.

Colorado State shot 58 percent, making 18 of 31 shots. Of those 18 field goals, 15 were made less than four feet from the basket.

Nebraska shot 38.7 percent from the field during the first half and the Rams led 45-39 at the break.

Strickland said he hoped this would propel the Huskers on to more success in the NIT.

"We were hoping we were going to win because we want to continue to play," Strickland said. "At the start of the half, we chanted 'New York' coming out of the huddle."

If Nebraska plays at home Tuesday, tickets will go on sale at the South Stadium Ticket office at 8:30 a.m. today. Student tickets are \$4.



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