

SPORTS OPINION



Mitch Sherman

Huskies take steps toward redemption

FORT COLLINS, Colo. — The Nebraska basketball team decided not to go on spring break.

It would have been an easy thing to do. The beaches of Florida and South Texas were calling. But the Cornhuskers aren't going on vacation just yet.

On Thursday night, the Huskers played like a team. They hustled for loose balls and executed fundamentals. They didn't want to die. And finally, they won.

"We all played as a team," said forward Terrance Badgett, one of four seniors who stared down the end of his collegiate career and responded with a big night.

"We were one unit. The main thing we had to do was just play together and stick together."

Coming into the game, Nebraska carried with it the reputation as a bunch of selfish, underachieving individuals. By the time their 64.3 percent second-half shooting performance was in the books, the Huskers had proved they still remembered how to win, and earned the respect of the Ram fans.

"It's like taking a 10-pound gorilla off your back," Nebraska coach Danny Nee said. "The minute we make a couple of shots, it relaxed us and then we started playing with confidence. That's the 15-4 team of last month."

Nee's 10th season in Lincoln has been a rough one, the most difficult year of his career. A loss would have sent him reeling into the spring and summer with a lost feeling. At the very least, Thursday night proved there is still some hope remaining.

For the first time in recent memory, smiles crossed the faces of the Nebraska players on a consistent basis Thursday night. Jaron Boone played like the potent shooter who had drawn the interest of so many NBA scouts before falling off the face of the Earth.

Erick Strickland wowed the crowd with athletic ability never before seen in the WAC. Tyrone Lue, despite a bum left ankle, flashed signs of brilliance, and Tom Wald filled in smoothly when Lue's ankle forced him out of the game.

Where have you been all season, Jaron? Why couldn't the Huskers have done this in the Big Eight? Colorado State isn't Kansas, but the Rams are a good team, one that certainly would have smashed the Huskers during their nine-game skid.

The NIT doesn't mean a lot, but it does provide Nebraska with a chance to show what a spectacular season this could have been.

"It's not the NCAA Tournament," Badgett said, "but it is a national tournament, and we can win it."

It's also a small step in the right direction.

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

Break means no rest for wrestlers

By **Antone Oseka**
Staff Reporter

For the Nebraska wrestling team, spring break does not include sun tan oil and a beach.

Nine of the 10 starting wrestlers will travel to Minneapolis for the NCAA Championships on March 21-23.

The only wrestler not competing in the meet is 150-pounder Jason Kraft. Kraft tore his posterior cruciate ligament during the Big Eight Championships.

That means next week most of the Cornhuskers will work their butts off, Nebraska coach Tim Neumann said.

He said that his team wasn't ready to compete today, but would be before they left on Tuesday.

"I want my guys to be hungry to compete," he said.

Nebraska finished in second place behind Oklahoma State at the Big Eight

Championships in Stillwater, Okla., last weekend.

Neumann said his team needed the first couple of days this week to recover from the Big Eight Championships. With Nebraska's spring break starting Saturday, the Huskers will have all weekend to prepare for the meet.

"We can focus more on our wrestling," he said.

Husker wrestlers Tony DeAnda at 134 pounds and Ryan Tobin at 190 pounds had slight injuries after the Big Eight tournament. DeAnda twisted his knee during the semi-final match, while Tobin turned his ankle during the finals.

"These guys worried me," Neumann

"I want my guys to be hungry to compete."

TIM NEUMANN

NU wrestling coach

champion, and Terry has his sights on the Olympics. Although he is one national title behind Thompson, Terry can win the championship this year, Neumann said.

Those two aren't the only wrestlers looking for titles on the Husker squad. Tobin, DeAnda and 177-pounder Erik Josephson claimed runner-up honors at this year's Big Eight championships. All three lost close matches in the finals.

Iowa looks extremely tough in the meet, Neumann said.

"If you figure it out on paper, there is no way anyone can beat Iowa," Neumann said.

But, he said the team score isn't his concern going into the tournament.

"The guys are eager to go and see what they can do," he said. "We want nine guys to perform at their peak level."

said. "So far, there's no lingering problems from the Big Eight tournament and they haven't missed anything."

The major hurdle for the Huskers, and other teams, is top-ranked Iowa. The Hawkeyes were national champions last year, and they qualified all 10 men for the meet.

Nebraska will try to take down Iowa behind the strength of its two top wrestlers — 158-pounder Temoer Terry and heavyweight Tolly Thompson.

Both wrestlers are two-time Big Eight champions and are rated No. 2 in the nation. Thompson is ranked behind Billy Pierce of Minnesota, while Terry is rated behind Iowa's Joe Williams.

Thompson is the returning national

NU survives first round in NIT

By **Trevor Parks**
Senior Reporter

FORT COLLINS, Colo. — The Nebraska basketball team found out what happens Thursday night when it plays to its potential — it can win.

Nebraska	91
Colorado State	83

The Cornhuskers used a 64.3 percent second-half shooting effort to outscore Colorado State 52-38 and pull out a 91-83 victory in the first round of the National Invitation Tournament before a crowd of 7,261 fans at Moby Arena.

The result improved Nebraska to 17-14. The Huskers will play Washington State, a 92-73 winner over Gonzaga, in the second round of the NIT on Tuesday night. Colorado State ended its season with an 18-12 record.

Jaron Boone, who made three of the Huskers' season-high 10 3-pointers, said Nebraska had been capable of putting forth an effort like Thursday night's all season.

"We didn't do anything special; we just played Nebraska basketball," Boone said. "It's a big relief because we know we can shoot the ball."

In the second half, the Huskers made 18 of 28 shots from the field and were 5 of 8 from behind the 3-point arc. For the game, Nebraska shot 50.8 percent, the first time in eight games that it was over 50 percent.

Mikki Moore, who recorded his second double-double of the year, scoring 10 points and grabbing 10 rebounds, said the Huskers needed to keep confident after struggling in the first half.

"It was like a snowball," Moore said. "One hit and each player gets pumped. Another hit and we were thinking all of them might fall in."

Things definitely went the right direction in the second half.

After Nebraska took a 65-61 lead on a Tyrone Lue free throw, the Rams tied the game at 65 when Bobby Sellers made a jumper from the top of the key with 9:09 remaining.

Tom Wald made a 3-pointer with 8:36 left to put Nebraska in front for good at 68-65.

The Rams pulled within 68-66, but Moore put back a miss by Erick Strickland to make the score 70-66. Colorado State cut the lead to two points twice, 70-68 and 72-70, before Nebraska went on an 11-4 run to put the game out of reach.

Strickland drove through the lane for a layup to make the score 74-70. Then Boone hit two 3-pointers in Nebraska's next three possessions to make the score 80-72. Wald hit a 3-pointer with 3:04 remaining to give the



Nebraska's Erick Strickland, shown here against Kansas State, scored 19 points in the Huskers' win over Colorado State on Thursday night.

DN file photo

Huskies their biggest lead of the game at 83-74.

Colorado State coach Stew Morrill said Wald's play hurt the Rams.

"I thought that kid off the bench, Wald, was huge for them," Morrill said. "He made some dagger shots that just kind of put us away."

In the final 1:16 of the game, Wald

scored five of his 11 points, including a 3-for-4 effort from the free-throw line.

Strickland's defense was also a key in the second half.

He limited Ram guard David Evans, who was averaging 19.3 points per game, to a 3-of-13 performance and only nine points. It was the first time

Evans hadn't scored in double figures in 17 games. He shot 1 of 7 from the field in the second half, scoring just two points.

Strickland said the referees were letting him play physical, and that seemed to bother Evans.

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