

# Big 12 reaches communities

## Special Olympics searches for partnership, exposure

By GREGG MADSEN  
Staff Reporter

The Big 12 is a conference full of special athletes, so it is only fitting that the league has chosen to adopt the Special Olympics as its official charity.

Nebraska Special Olympics representative Margaret Lageschulte said the new alignment will set a national precedent for conferences adopting a selected charity.

"This is the second-largest partnership between athletics and a nonprofit organization," Lageschulte said. "The idea behind it is that the universities and Special Olympics are both training for life."

The partnership, she said, will provide the Special Olympics with national exposure and help athletes of all kinds to build skills in life and athletics.

"We are thrilled to death," she said. "Nebraska Special Olympics has been involved with University of Nebraska athletics for a long time, and now we're thrilled to be with the Big 12."

The teams in the conference will have a relationship much like the relationship between National Football League teams and United Way volunteer centers, Lageschulte said.

“

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MARGARET LAGESCHULTE  
Nebraska Special Olympic representative

There will be several commercials aired during the Big 12 championship game, Dec. 7 in St. Louis, and others as the partnership grows, she said.

The commercials will highlight Special Olympian performances and interaction with Big 12 athletes.

Lageschulte said each Special Olympics office will work with Big 12 schools in their area to coordinate publicity events, various camps and also use of the school's facilities for practice.

The Big 12 Indoor Track and Field Championships at the Bob Devaney Sports Center will be one event that showcases Special Olympians, Lageschulte said.

Financially, the Big 12 hasn't promised a set donation for the Special Olympics, but Lageschulte said she


wasn't worried about that. "We hope that it helps financially," she said, "but at the present time, what it's going to do is give us exposure so the Special Olympics can develop the reputation it deserves from the nation. We hope that it will help us by opening up more doors."

The Big 12 will also provide a post-graduate scholarship for one athlete at each conference school pursuing a career in special education, she said.

Another integration of Big 12 athletes and Special Olympians will come at the conference honors ceremony next spring.

Lageschulte said a male and female Special Olympian from each Big 12 state will be named Special Olympics athlete of the year and honored at the banquet along with the Big 12 male and female athletes of the year.

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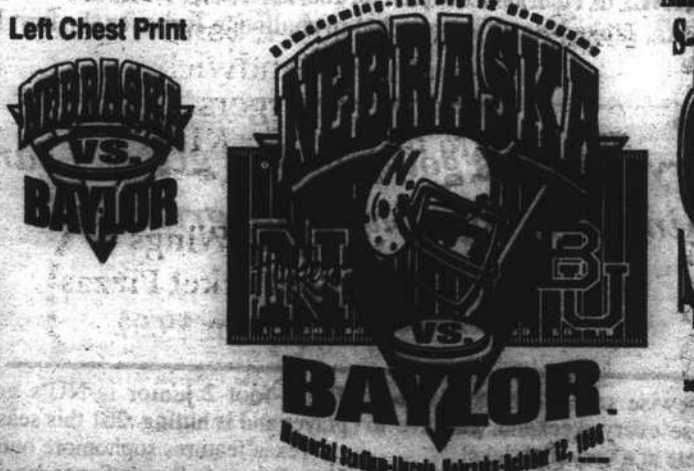
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# NU hopes to challenge strong OSU wrestlers

After no conference expansion, wrestlers look to other options.

By ANTONE OSEKA  
Senior Editor

Since 1980, five wrestling programs have dominated the Big Eight Conference.

But now, with the Big Eight's addition of four schools to become the Big 12, those five programs are a little lonely.

Only the five former Big Eight schools — Iowa State, Nebraska, Missouri, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State — support wrestling in the Big 12. However, these teams form a powerful force on the national wrestling scene.

Each of the Texas schools, particularly Texas and Texas A&M, supports strong club wrestling teams, but because of gender-equity legislation, it has become nearly impossible to institute Division-I programs at those schools.

Eleven Big 12 All-Americans return this season in 10 weight classes, including two from Nebraska. Cornhusker All-Americans Brad Canoyer, a 118-pounder a year ago, and 1995 heavyweight national champion Tolly Thompson return to lead a young Nebraska lineup.

Nebraska is redshirting two other All-Americans, 158-pounder Temoer Terry and 190-pounder Ryan Tobin. Coach Tim Neumann hopes Terry and Tobin will lead his team off the mat throughout their redshirt year and direct the team when they return for the 1997-98 season.

But not all Big 12 teams are thinking about 1998. Oklahoma State has its best team in re-

cent memory this season, Neumann said. "Coming out of the chute, Oklahoma State is the team to beat," Neumann said. "Iowa State is fairly young. They could have five new guys in their lineup."

The Cyclones return five experienced wrestlers to the lineup, led by returning 150-pound national champion Chris Bono.

Oklahoma is in a similar situation. The Sooners return a talented team led by returning 190-pound national champion John Kading.

"They're due to have a big year," Neumann said of OU. "They're going to have a real good dual team."

But the Big 12 isn't all about dual victories. There is also a conference tournament in which to compete. Last year, Oklahoma State won the conference, followed by Nebraska, Oklahoma, Iowa State and Missouri.

Coaches are looking not only to improve their own squads but increase the strength of the conference overall.

In the near future, the conference hopes to add independent teams to strengthen and deepen the league tournament, from which wrestlers qualify for the NCAA Championships.

Neumann said the athletic departments of each Big 12 school have been notified that the conference wants to add five schools — for wrestling only.

If the proposal is accepted, the schools — Northern Iowa, Wyoming, Brigham Young, New Mexico and Air Force — wouldn't join the Big 12. But they would compete in the conference tournament.

Neumann said the expanded conference tournament will not become a reality until at least the 1997-98 season.

Each of the schools, with the exception of Northern Iowa, are in the Western Athletic Conference. The only other WAC team with a wrestling program is Fresno State, which would probably join the Pacific-10 Conference Tournament if the deal goes through, Neumann said.



Neumann