

Sports Opinion



Mitch Sherman Two-game home stretch will give NU an identity

Simply put, the Nebraska basketball team must win tonight. Danny Nee knows it. His veteran players know it. His young players need to understand it. For the Cornhuskers to finish with a conference record near .500 — and have any chance to reach their goal of qualifying for the NCAA Tournament — wins tonight and Saturday over Missouri are critical. In these two games, the 1996-97 Huskers can separate themselves from the NU teams of NIT past and create their own identity. Here's an opportunity to buck a two-year trend that is beginning to give Nebraska a nasty reputation as a team that self-destructs each January. A quick glance at Kansas State, tonight's NU foe, reveals a struggling squad that has lost its last three road games by 114 points. But in preparing for the Wildcats, the Huskers face a challenge much more imposing than KSU's impotent offense. NU must overcome its own youth. "There's a learning curve for the young players," Nee said Monday, two days after NU beat Texas A&M, possibly the Big 12's worst team, by two points in Lincoln. "That's why we went to Puerto Rico. We had to get some tough games under our belt." Tonight, Nebraska continues its seemingly blind journey into a conference season filled with the potential for disaster. And two games into the Big 12, the dike has already shown signs of cracking. Why did Bernard Garner, pegged as one of NU's on- and off-court leaders, do whatever he did on Dec. 31, prompting Nee to ship the senior forward back to Lincoln on the first plane out of Puerto Rico? And why can't Venson Hamilton, a sophomore forward with an NBA wingspan and the talent to play at an All-Big 12 level, realize his potential? "Part of it's maturity and part of it's discipline," Nee said of Hamilton's inability to provide NU with a dominating big man when given the chance to start in Garner's absence. "He needs to play better and he knows it." In a meeting with Nee on Sunday, Hamilton said his "head wasn't in the game" during NU's win on Saturday. "For 35 minutes, I wish I'd have known that," Nee said. Nebraska needs all nine of its heads every night. "We are going to keep working at it," Nee said. "We have no illusions of who we are and what we are." Exactly who are these Huskers? We'll find out soon. Sherman is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.

Thompson closes door on competition

By ANTONE OSEKA
Staff Reporter

For Nebraska heavyweight wrestler Tolly Thompson, records are falling like opponents.

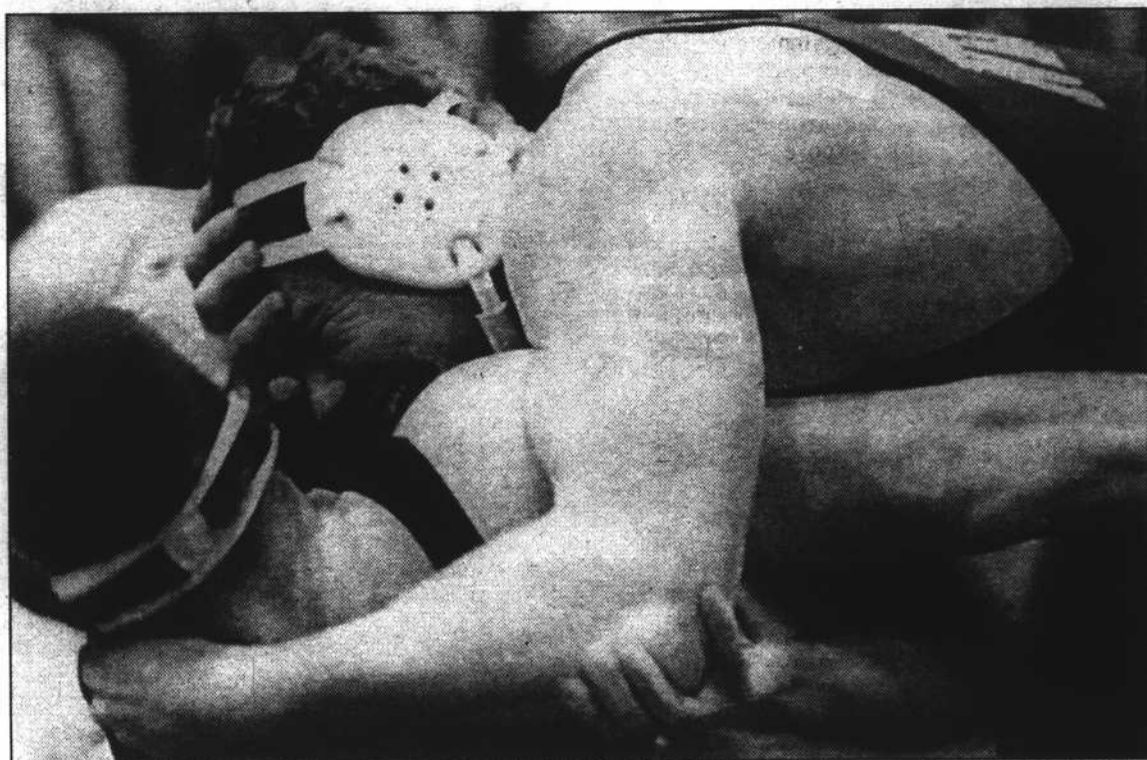
During the winter break, Thompson picked up his 134th career win as a Cornhusker, breaking the 12-year record of 133 career wins by NU 190-pounder Bill Scheer. Scheer won a national championship and earned All-America honors three times.

Thompson, the 1995 national champion and a two-time All-American, is on a similar track as Scheer. In almost the exact amount of mat time, Thompson broke Scheer's record.

Scheer, who won the bronze medal in the 1988 Olympics, won 133 matches with only 18 defeats competing at NU from 1980-84. Thompson now has a career record of 138-19 with at least 15 matches left to go this season. He is 23-2 this year.

Thompson's next broken record may come this weekend. The senior from Janesville, Iowa has 64 career falls — including pins and technical falls — only four behind Gary Albright's record of 68.

Please see THOMPSON on 12



JAY CALDERON/DN

NEBRASKA HEAVYWEIGHT Tolly Thompson wrestles Brent Beshans of Minnesota Jan. 7. Thompson won that match and after winning four times at the Great Plains Invitational he holds the school record for most wins in a career with 138 victories.

Wildcats, Huskers to tangle

Cornhusker men go for their third straight win against struggling KSU.

By MITCH SHERMAN
Senior Reporter

Mikki Moore warned his Nebraska basketball teammates before the Big 12 Conference season began that nothing comes easily in league play.

No opponent lies down, he told the Cornhuskers — four of whom played their first Big 12 game on Jan. 4 — and every game is a struggle. Eleven days after NU's conference opener, the Huskers now realize Moore wasn't kidding.

"In conference games, everybody is ready to play," said sophomore Larry Florence, who scored 16 points in NU's 74-72 win over Texas A&M.

Please see MEN on 11

Men's Basketball Starters

Today, 6:05 p.m.
Devaney Center

Nebraska 9-5 (1-1)

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
F 4	Venson Hamilton	6-9	240	So.
F 5	Larry Florence	6-5	225	So.
C 32	Mikki Moore	6-11	220	Sr.
G 30	Cookie Belcher	6-3	200	Fr.
G 10	Tyronn Lee	6-0	170	So.

Kansas SL 7-5 (1-1)

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
F 4	Manny Pines	6-9	235	So.
F 5	Mark Young	6-6	200	Jr.
C 45	Garrett Esker	6-11	245	So.
G 12	Ayome May	6-4	200	So.
G 21	A. Swartzendruber	6-2	185	Jr.

Nebraska women feel like the underdog against Kansas State.

By MIKE KLUCK
Senior Reporter

Although Nebraska and Kansas State are both coming off big wins over Big 12 Conference south division teams, neither coach believes her team has the upper hand in tonight's match.

The Cornhuskers, off to a school-best 11-1 record, play host to the Wildcats at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. The game will begin about 8:15 p.m. following the NU-KSU men's game.

Last Saturday, Nebraska evened its conference mark at 1-1 by winning at Texas A&M 75-65. The Wildcats (8-4, 1-1) stunned No. 12 Texas 68-67.

Please see WOMEN on 11

Women's Basketball Starters

Today, 8:15 p.m.
Devaney Center

Nebraska 11-1 (1-1)

Pos	Name	Ht.	Yr.
F 22	Tina McClain	5-10	Sr.
F 30	Anna DeForge	5-11	Jr.
C 33	Charle Rogers	6-2	Fr.
G 20	LaToya Doage	5-2	Sr.
G 32	Nicole Kubik	5-10	Fr.

Kansas SL 8-4 (1-1)

Pos	Name	Ht.	Yr.
F 24	Audra Jones	6-1	Sr.
C 44	Angela Finkes	6-1	Fr.
C 42	Naya Foster	6-0	So.
G 23	Jenny Coalson	5-11	So.
G 25	Misty Decker	5-10	Sr.

Mississippi I-back to play for Huskers

By DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

Correll Buckhalter, from Collins, Miss., has become the first running back and the 19th player to give a verbal commitment to play football for Nebraska next season.

The 6-foot-1, 210-pounder was offered a scholarship after a visit to Lincoln in December, and made his decision Monday.

But the Cornhuskers did not initially pursue Buckhalter. He mentioned his interest in Nebraska to his coach, Roy Foster, who immediately shipped a tape to Lincoln. The NU coaches were impressed with what

they saw, Foster said.

"He is a true I-back," said Foster, in his 22nd year of coaching. "He'll be no stranger to Nebraska."

Last fall, Buckhalter's "hard-nosed" style of play resulted in 1,822 rushing yards on 238 attempts — an average of 7.7 yards per rush. He also scored 12 touchdowns.

In his last game, Buckhalter ran the ball 48 times for 387 yards, scoring four touchdowns and contributing as a free safety on defense. Collins High School, which operated out of an offense similar to Nebraska's, finished 7-4 in the state's third largest class.

Please see RECRUITS on 12

Verbal Commitments

The following players have verbally committed to play football at Nebraska next fall.

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown
Dion Booker	CB	6-2	185	Oceanside (Calif.) El Camino
*Grant Bunton	LB	6-1	200	Shawnee Mission (Kan.) NW
Ben Comelsen	WB	5-10	175	Shawnee Mission (Kan.) NW
Matt Davison	WR	6-1	175	Tecumseh
Kyle Kollmorgen	OL	6-4	270	Lincoln Southeast
Dominic Raiola	OL	6-3	285	Honolulu St. Louis
Kyle Vanden Bosch	LB	6-4	235	Inwood (Iowa) West Lyon
Dave Volk	OL	6-5	275	Battle Creek
J.P. Wichmann	RE	6-5	215	Shawnee Mission (Kan.) NW

* Bunton will walk-on next fall at NU and be placed on academic scholarship.
* Walker and Matthews have already signed letters of intent and enrolled at NU. They will begin workouts with the team this spring.