

Big 12 Notebook

The Oklahoma men's basketball team set an unprecedented feat this week in the Big 12 Conference's brief history.

The Big 12 honored senior guard Nate Erdmann as its player of the week and freshman forward Eduardo Najera was named rookie of the week. It is the first time in the Big 12 that a team swept the weekly awards.

Erdmann averaged 27 points and nine rebounds in two games last week and has averaged 26.7 points over the last six games. Najera averaged 11 points and eight rebounds last week. He scored a career-high 16 in OU's win 83-69 over Texas.

Nebraska heavyweight wrestler Tolly Thompson continued his mastery of NWCA All-Star matches. Thompson, ranked third in the nation, upended No. 4 Bryan Stout of Clarion 2-1 in the NWCA All-Star Wrestling Classic in Clarion, Pa. Stout, a senior from Janesville, Iowa, improved his record to 29-3.

Husker gymnast Shelly Bartlett has started out 1997 on the right foot. Bartlett, a senior from Spokane, Wash., was named the Big 12 gymnast of the month.

Texas women's basketball player Angela Jackson and Oklahoma State's Renee Roberts were named co-Big 12 players of the week. Jackson averaged 19 points and seven rebounds in the Longhorns' wins over Sam Houston State, Baylor and No. 17 Clemson. Roberts scored a career-high 27 points against Baylor and averaged 22.5 points and 7.5 boards in two games last week.

Baylor (14-7 overall and 3-6 Big 12) has been proof that strong finishes matter more than quick starts. Seven of the Bears' wins this season have come after trailing at halftime. One of those came after falling behind Missouri-Kansas City by 11 points at halftime.

Baylor Coach Harry Miller said it has nothing to do with him making great locker-room speeches.

Missouri stunned top-ranked Kansas Tuesday night, becoming the first team to beat the Jayhawks with a 96-94 double overtime win at the Hearn Center in Columbia, Mo.

The Tigers' Corey Tate picked up a loose ball near the free throw line and scored with 5.6 left in the second overtime for the upset.

MU (12-10 overall and 4-6 in the Big 12 Conference) was led by Kelly Thames who had 24 points and 11 rebounds and Derek Grimm who had 20 points. Raef LaFrentz scored 26 points, Jerod Haase contrinuted 20 and Jacque Vaughn added 19 for the Jayhawks (22-1 and 8-1).

Big 12 Notebook compiled by staff reporter Vince D'Adamo.

Signing day finally arrives

Quarterback duo highlights Nebraska's recruiting class.

By MITCH SHERMAN
Senior Reporter

Throughout the Big 12 Conference and around the nation, pens meet paper today, and college football coaches can finally rest.

Since early August, hundreds of coaches have worked day and night, preparing game plans, watching film and gaining commitments. Today on national letter of intent signing day, a long season ends, and future stars officially accept their scholarships.

Nebraska coaches expect to ink up

to 20 recruits today, restocking a Cornhusker stable partially depleted by the exit of 24 seniors, who left the program after last month's Orange Bowl victory.

Quarterbacks Eric Crouch of Millard North and Bobby Newcombe of Albuquerque, N.M., highlight NU's recruiting class, which may or may not include Brandon Harrison of Gainesville, Texas. Harrison, a standout junior college cornerback, has wavered between Texas A&M and Nebraska. Today, he'll make a final decision.

The Cornhuskers' class also includes Joe Walker of Arlington, Texas, and Glen Matthews of Chicago, both of whom signed last month and are currently participating in NU's winter-conditioning program.

Bobby Burton of The National Recruiting Advisor ranks Nebraska's class third in the Big 12 behind Colorado and Texas.

"From top to bottom," Burton said, "Colorado's class has the most depth."

The Buffaloes gained 21 verbal commitments — including 10 Californians — and filled their biggest holes with star tailback Damion Barton, from Corona, Calif., and junior college offensive lineman Brad Bedell.

Texas edges Nebraska, Burton said, primarily because "kids decided to stay at home." Leonard Davis, a 6-foot-6, 348-pound lineman from Wertham, Texas, stands out among the Longhorn recruits.

Burton ranks Texas A&M (23 commitments) fourth in the confer-

ence. Kansas State, the "surprise of the league," places fifth with 24 commitments.

"I don't think K-State has ever had this kind of a class," said Burton, who noted that the Wildcats will ink several players courted by league powers Nebraska and Colorado.

Next comes Oklahoma (26 commitments), Texas Tech (26), Baylor (16), Oklahoma State (19), Missouri (24), Kansas (17) and Iowa State (16).

Nebraska's class, which Burton ranks 14th nationally, could receive a major boost if Atlanta running back Jamal Lewis surprises Tennessee coaches and signs with NU today. The 6-1 215-pound Lewis said earlier this week that he's still considering both schools.

NU looks to cut down turnovers

By DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

A five-point overtime loss to top-ranked Kansas Saturday gives the Nebraska basketball team a boost of confidence, but the Cornhuskers are looking for nothing less than a win tonight against Colorado.

The 15th-ranked Buffaloes bring a 5-0 conference road record to the Bob Devaney Sports Center tonight at 7:05.

"There's no moral victories at this point in the year," NU Coach Danny Nee said. "We have to find a way to win."

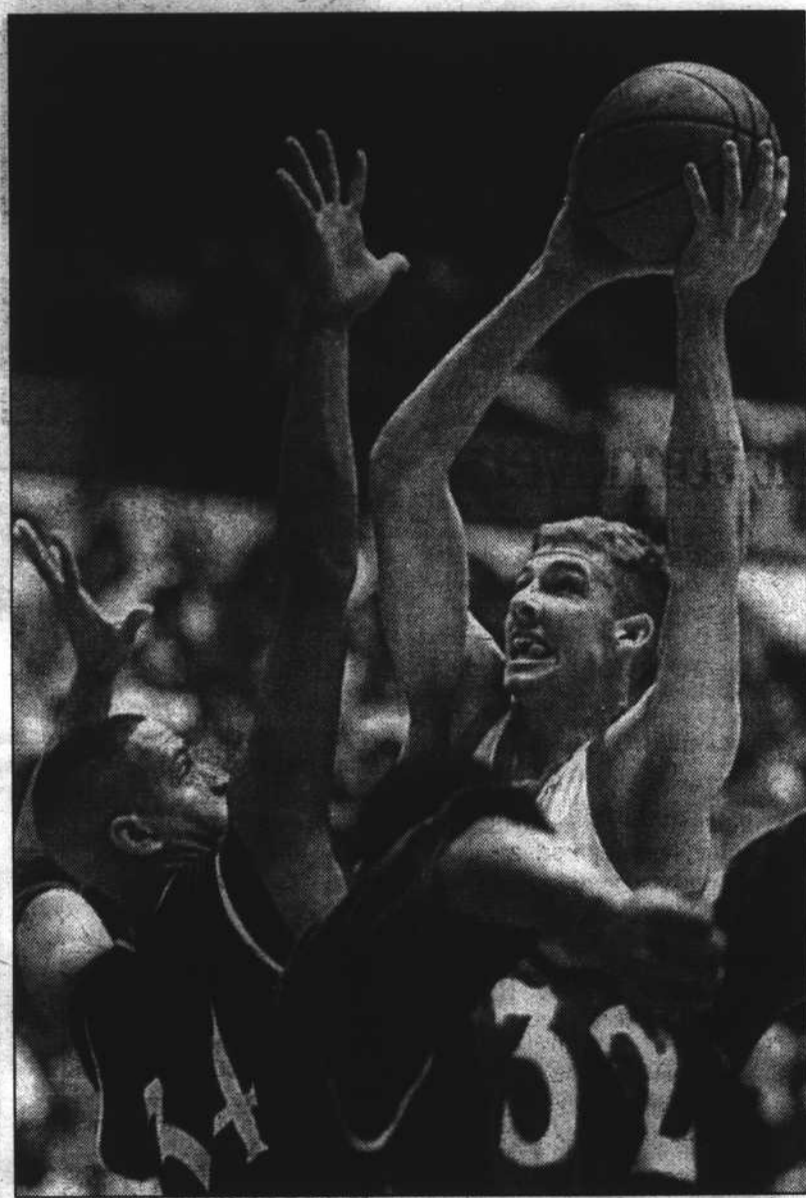
NU (11-9 overall and 3-5 in the Big 12 Conference) lost its first conference game of the year 79-73 to Colorado on Jan. 4. The Buffs (16-4 and 7-1) have improved since that mile-high meeting, Nee said.

"They're a better team than they were on Jan. 4 because of the confidence factor," Nee said. "They didn't know how good they were."

CU guard Chauncey Billups continues to torment opponents, averaging 19.8 points per game. Stopping Billups is a must, Nee said.

"We have to focus on Billups," Nee said. "He creates a rhythm and he cre-

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SCOTT BRUHN/DN

ANDY MARKOWSKI and his Husker teammates play No. 15 Colorado tonight.

Huskiers seek revenge at CU

By MIKE KLUCK
Senior Reporter

In Nebraska's first game against Colorado on Jan. 4, Cornhusker point guard LaToya Doage picked up two quick fouls and played six minutes in the first half as the Buffaloes built a 30-24 halftime lead.

Doage finished with 10 points playing only 16 minutes. The result without Doage was a 65-58 win as CU handed the Huskers their first loss.

If Nebraska (16-2, 6-2 in the Big 12 Conference) is to change the outcome from that first contest in tonight's game at 8 at the Coors Event Center, Doage must double her playing time, NU Coach Angela Beck said.

"Our big key now is to try and keep Doage in the game," Beck said. "If we can get her for 40 minutes at Colo-

rado, I think it's going to be a different game. She really has been our catalyst here of late."

Since the loss to Colorado (12-6 and 6-2), the Huskers won seven straight games before losing to eighth-ranked Kansas 67-59 on Sunday.

Against the Jayhawks, Doage picked up two fouls in the first half and fouled out with 5:31 remaining in the game.

"We just didn't know how to get it done down the stretch without Doage in there," Beck said. "The two big games we have lost, Colorado and Kansas, Doage has been sitting on the bench."

Doage, a 5-foot-5 senior, is going to have her hands full against the Buffaloes' 5-foot-4 guard La Shena Graham. Graham has started all 18 games and is Colorado's second-leading scorer,

averaging 11.6 points per game.

Graham, a junior from Independence, Mo., is shooting 44 percent from the field and is leading the team in assists with 3.5 per game. Against NU, Graham led the Buffs with six assists and was their second-leading scorer with 12 points.

The Huskers did force Graham into 11 turnovers as the Buffaloes finished the game with 26.

CU Coach Ceal Barry said the Buffaloes will have to take better care of the ball if they are to continue their dominance over Nebraska in Boulder.

Nebraska hasn't won at CU since Feb. 13, 1985.

"Right now we are just taking one game at a time and Nebraska is the next team on our schedule," Barry said. "Nebraska has a lot of balance. They are a very good team that is more than worthy of national recognition."

Visit to NU troubles CU's Patton

By GREGG MADSEN
Staff Reporter

A ranked Colorado men's basketball team used to be an oxymoron.

After 20 games this season it's become reality.

The Buffaloes have been transformed from a team with just two winning seasons since 1985 to a squad that has bulled its way into The Associated Press poll, ranked 15th.

The change could be attributed to better athletes, but most agree it has been one man who has turned Colorado from an also-ran into a powerhouse.

In less than one season, CU Coach Ricardo Patton has used his disciplinarian style to help the Buffaloes reach a new, much better level of play.

Patton said he wouldn't let all the success change his team's attitude.

"What changed the way we look at things is just the effort we put in," Patton said. "I think the guys realize now that if they put in a good effort, a lot of good things can happen to them."

Good things have happened in his first full year.

The Buffaloes have improved from 9-18 a year ago to 16-4 this season, including an 8-1 mark at home.

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Women's Basketball Starters

Today, 8 p.m.
Coors Event Center

Nebraska 16-2 (6-2)

Pos	Name	Ht.	Yr.
F	22 Tina McClain	5-10	Sr.
F	30 Anna DeForge	5-11	Jr.
C	33 Charlie Rogers	6-2	Fr.
G	24 Jami Kubik	5-11	Jr.
G	20 LaToya Doage	5-6	Sr.

Colorado 12-6 (6-2)

Pos	Name	Ht.	Yr.
F	21 La Shena Graham	5-4	Jr.
F	22 Alexis Felts	5-6	Jr.
C	52 Raegan Scott	6-4	Sr.
F	25 Lauri Weathers	5-9	Sr.
F	44 Erin Scholz	6-3	Sr.