

Thompson wants to finish with title

By SEAN LEWIS
Staff Reporter

Tressa Thompson owns a Big 12 championship, a collegiate indoor record and is the favorite to win the national title in the shot put. But that isn't enough.

When Thompson competes for the Nebraska women's track and field team at the NCAA Indoor Championships this weekend in Indianapolis, she is not just simply looking to win a national title — she wants to do something no woman has ever done before.

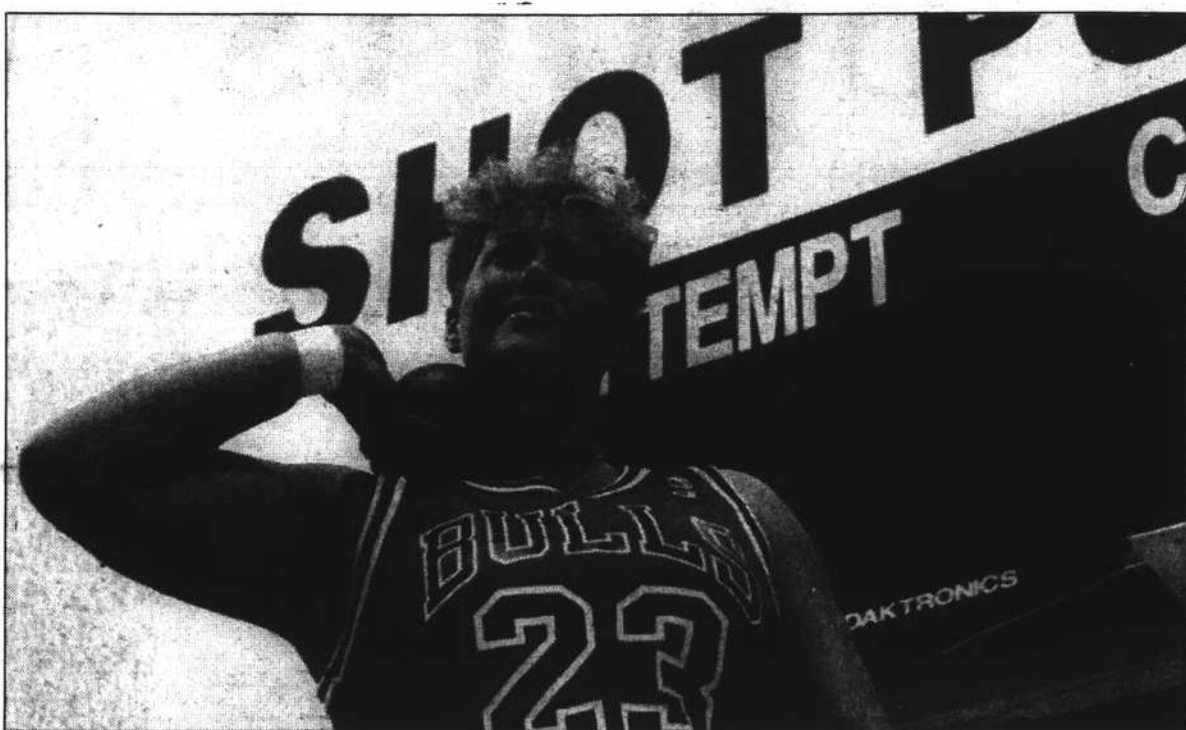
"I'm not satisfied with throwing 60 feet," Thompson said. "I'd like to throw 19 meters, which is about 62 feet 4 inches. That's the overall NCAA record for indoor and outdoor shot and that's my goal going into this meet."

Thompson holds the collegiate record with a toss of 60-7 3/4 at the Nebraska-Iowa Intercollegiate Conference meet Feb. 14 in Lincoln. The previous record was a heave of 59-3 1/2 by former UCLA All-American Valetya Althouse.

Thompson, the only person in NCAA history to eclipse the 60-foot mark, also holds the nation's second longest throw at 59-5 3/4.

Although she wants to toss an even more impressive mark, Thompson — a four-time All-American from Bloomfield — said her main focus is winning her first national shot put title.

"If you want to be a champion or go to a higher level, you have to start thinking like a winner," she said. "I'm going into the meet thinking that I'm No. 1 because if I start doubting myself, then there's room for people to start coming in to try to knock me out



TRESSA THOMPSON goes for a chance at winning the national title in the shot put this weekend. Thompson owns the collegiate record in the indoor shot at 60 feet 7 3/4 inches.

of my place."

NU Throws Coach Mark Colligan said Thompson's strength and confidence are higher than they have ever been for the favorite to win a national title. He also said Thompson is a high-risk athlete, which may or may not work to her advantage.

"She has to get her adrenaline really pumped up and then we have to hope we've done enough technical work to hold her over," Colligan said. "She could throw something the likes of which has never been done in college athletics or she could blow up trying to do that."

"I hope we're going to get some-

thing in between. Something where she's enthusiastic, but she's controlled to where she's not going to blow the championship because she got greedy."

Thompson, a senior for the indoor season who almost redshirted this year, took last weekend off, opting not to compete at the United States Track and Field Championships in Atlanta.

"I could've maybe won it with a nice throw and then I think I would've had more people intimidated," she said.

While Thompson said she thinks her accomplishments will push her past the competition, Colligan said

many of the competitors may feel unsure that they can beat Thompson.

"I think it probably intimidates them a little bit knowing that she's done that on more than one occasion now," Colligan said. "Certainly the ones who dream of winning a championship know the odds aren't in their favor if Tressa is on her game."

Thompson's dream of winning a national championship comes down to her final indoor meet, something she said will not affect her.

"It's my last indoors and this is my last meet for the Huskers and I'd like to come out with a national championship."

Huskers' bus crashes with van

Tournament Notes XII

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — How about this for a bad omen?

The Nebraska men's basketball team's bus driver missed a turn Wednesday while driving the Cornhuskers to Kemper Arena for their one-hour afternoon practice.

After becoming aware of his mishap, the driver threw the bus into reverse on a bridge over the Missouri River. The bus then hit a van and pushed the van backwards 40 feet, pinning it against a guard rail before the bus driver stopped.

"We thought the toilet stool fell down when we hit the van," point guard Tyrone Lue said.

NU Assistant Coach Jimmy Williams missed the practice session while attempting to smooth matters over between the team bus driver and the van owner.

"I'll tell you this," NU Coach Danny Nee said, "the guy driving the van was pretty mad."

Penders likes K.C.

Texas Coach Tom Penders said he is confident Kansas City will play host to one of the nation's top men's league tournaments.

The Longhorns won two of the last three Southwest Conference Tournaments at Reunion Arena in Dallas but did not witness the pageantry evident at the inaugural Big 12 tournament festivities this week, Penders said.

"Just a few years ago, you could call the 800 line for the Southwest Conference Tournament ticket information and no one would pick it up all day."

Pride shines for KU

Women's Big 12 player of the year Tamecka Dixon scored a game-high 22 points in Kansas' 66-54 win over Baylor (15-13) on Wednesday.

But it was freshman Lynn Pride who was turning heads with her performance.

Pride established career-bests in rebounding (19) and steals (6) and shot 50 percent from the field.

"Lynn gives us a different dimension with her height and ability," KU Coach Marian Washington said. "As she becomes more confident in herself as an athlete and a player you'll be seeing a lot more of her."

Women's RPIs high

The overall strength of women's basketball in the Big 12 Conference goes without saying. Of the eight teams in the tournament's second round, seven are ranked in the top 51 in the Ratings Percentage Index.

Of those seven, three have RPIs in the top 20. Kansas is fifth and Colorado is 12th and Texas is 16th.

Other rated conference teams include Texas Tech (33), Kansas State (42), Iowa State (48) and Nebraska (51).

KSU wins again

Fifth-seeded Kansas State advanced to the semifinals of the league tournament for the fourth time in school history with a 76-68 win over No. 4-seed Texas Tech (20-8).

Andria Jones led the Wildcats (18-10) — who played only six players — with 20 points. Texas Tech's Alicia Thompson scored a game-high 26 points and Rene Hanebutt added a career-best six 3-pointers in a losing effort.

Notes from the men's and women's Big 12 Tournaments were compiled by Mitch Sherman and Shannon Heffelfinger.

NU, Tigers ready to clash

TIGERS from page 9

The winner of today's Nebraska-Missouri game will meet No. 2-seed Texas Friday night at 6:08. NU, the tournament's seventh seed with a 16-13 overall record and a 7-9 mark in the Big 12, probably needs a tournament championship to secure a berth in the NCAA Tournament.

A loss this week likely presents Nebraska with a chance to defend its National Invitation Tournament crown. The Huskers would much rather play in the Big Dance, Lue said, but they can't forget last year's run to the NIT Championship.

"We have to take the same approach that we took into the NIT last year," Lue said. "Just lay back and go out there and have fun."

Tenth-seeded Missouri (13-16 and 5-11) has not had fun on the basketball court recently. Since handing No. 1 Kansas its only loss of the season, 96-94 in double overtime on Jan. 4, the Tigers have won just once in seven games. They have lost four straight since downing Oklahoma Feb. 15, but MU has a history of making noise at Kemper Arena.

"Missouri in Kansas City is almost a home game," Nee said. "But if we come to play, we feel good. We feel that we match up well with them."

"We feel that Missouri and Kansas are the toughest teams to draw here. The only advantage is that the Antlers won't be sitting behind me calling me an asshole."

The Tigers last won the Big Eight Tournament title in 1993, their sixth crown in 15 years. Missouri owns a 15-5 first-round record and a 5-1 overall mark against NU, which won its lone title in 1994 beating MU in the semifinals.

This season, Nebraska beat Missouri 76-53 in Lincoln on Jan. 18, and the Tigers won 75-74 four days later in Columbia when NU guard Cookie Belcher missed the front end of a one-and-one opportunity with 1.7 seconds to play.

"For people in our position," MU Coach Norm Stewart said, "it's our last chance. Nebraska is a good ball club, very athletic. I would guess they'd be in a great position for the NCAA Tournament."

Missouri, however, is just happy

Men's Basketball Starters

Today, 6:08 p.m.
Big 12 Tournament, First Round
Kemper Arena, Kansas City, Mo.

Nebraska 16-13 (7-9)				
Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
F 4	Vernon Hamilton	6-9	240	So.
F 13	Bernard Garner	6-7	245	Sr.
C 32	Mike Moore	6-11	220	Sr.
G 30	Cookie Belcher	6-3	200	Fr.
G 10	Tyrone Lue	6-0	170	So.
Missouri 13-16 (5-11)				
Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
F 32	Corey Tate	6-4	229	Sr.
F 33	Kelly Thames	6-8	220	Jr.
C 42	Derek Grimm	6-10	220	Sr.
G 5	Jason Sutherland	6-1	183	Sr.
G 21	Dal Ray	5-10	170	Jr.

to be in Kansas City.

"What are we, a 10 seed?" MU's 30th-year coach asked with a slight grin. "It's a good thing they expanded the league or we wouldn't be in the tournament."

Longhorns corral Huskers 74-68

TEXAS from page 9

The Huskers put together a furious 13-4 run to cut the lead to two when NU point guard LaToya Doage made a scooping layup with 27 seconds remaining.

On Texas' next possession, Viglione made both of her free-throw attempts giving the Longhorns a four-point cushion. Viglione led Texas with a season-best 30 points, including five 3-pointers, which tied her season-best.

"I just went out and said to myself, 'We're not losing this game,'" Viglione said. "Our five seniors know this is our last go-around, and we just can't afford to lose. I just went out and tried to play relaxed. The more I think

about my shot, the worse it is."

Nebraska had one last chance, but Angela Jackson blocked a Tina McClain shot with 17 seconds left. Jackson recovered her own block and was fouled. She added two free throws to seal the win.

Despite the loss, Beck said she is pleased with the way her players responded in the second half after falling behind.

"I do want to credit them for coming back," Beck said. "We could have folded our tents right there. I really saw them dig to another level, and I was really proud of that."

NU almost forced Texas to pack up its tent early in the first half. After the Horns built a 4-0 lead, the Huskers went on a 16-0 run to go up by 12

seven minutes into the game.

"Texas is a top 10 school, and we knew we weren't going to blow them out," said DeForge, who led NU with 22 points. "We got a lot of good looks early on, but then they hit some 3's on us to comeback."

Texas hit four 3-pointers during a 16-8 run to cut the lead to 24-20 with 6:16 left in the half. The Longhorns then put together a 7-2 run to take a one-point lead.

UT now faces Colorado, a 56-39 winner over Iowa State, in the semifinal of the tournament while NU must wait until Sunday to see if it gets one of the 33 at-large bids to the NCAA Tournament.