

# NU wrestlers hope to finish second

By **ANTONE OSEKA**  
Staff Reporter

Five teams square off this weekend for the first-ever Big 12 Conference wrestling championship. Actually, four teams



**Kraft**

will try to catch mega-favorite Oklahoma State.

The top-ranked Cowboys have gone undefeated in dual meets this season and are expected to qualify eight wrestlers out of 10 weight classes for the NCAA Tournament.

The five teams in the Big 12 who field wrestling teams — Nebraska, Iowa State, Missouri, Oklahoma and the Cowboys — hit the mats at 11

Saturday morning at the Hearnes Center in Columbia, Mo.

As a team, Nebraska is hoping to be the second-place finisher behind the powerful Cowboys. NU Coach Tim Neumann said he wants to see his team in the runner-up spot.

"If this group can finish second," Neumann said, "that's a real feather in their cap."

The top three placers at the conference meet are guaranteed a spot at the NCAA Championships in Cedar Falls, Iowa, March 20 through 22. Otherwise, they have to perform well enough to earn a wild-card berth.

Nebraska wrestlers Jason Kraft and Jeramie Welder are planning to leave Columbia with automatic berths into wrestling's version of the Big Dance. Both wrestlers said it's time for everyone on the NU squad to become selfless.

"If everyone worries about themselves," Kraft said, "we should do fine

as a team."

In last week's trip to Oklahoma, the 12th-ranked Kraft beat No. 6 Byron Tucker 8-6 in overtime, but dropped a 5-3 decision to fourth-ranked Hardell Moore of Oklahoma State. Kraft said he gave up some dumb points to each wrestler and is confident he'll leave Columbia with the conference championship.

"I'll wrestle better than I did last weekend," Kraft said. "I need to keep the pressure up. I think I'm going to win it."

Welder knows his weight will be a tough one to win. At 126 pounds, the 10th-ranked Welder will see the familiar faces of No. 2 Dwight Hinson of Iowa State, the Cowboys' Eric Guerrero, who is ranked No. 1, and ninth-ranked Dane Valdez of Oklahoma.

Welder has lost matches to all three this season.

"I'm hoping I wrestle well; my weight is tough," Welder said.

In Columbia this weekend, wins in every class will be tough. Each of the weight classes sports a ranked wrestler, with many having two or three. Overall, 13 of the wrestlers who are competing are ranked in the nation's top five, and seven are returning league champions.

Even though Nebraska dropped two duals last weekend, Neumann said he is happy with the season leading into the tournament.

No. 10 Nebraska had a 15-6 record in duals this year — which included seven straight wins — with victories over conference foes Missouri, then No. 7 Iowa State and then No. 15 Oklahoma at the Cliff Keen National Duals. The Sooners avenged that loss by beating the Huskers last weekend in Norman.

"We're a good team," Neumann said. "We'll show that this weekend."

## Huskers look to make statement

By **GREGG MADSEN**  
Staff Reporter

With only three meets until the NCAA West Regionals, Coach Francis Allen and the Nebraska men's gymnastics team are looking to send a message to the nation.

"If we do a good job the rest of the year and then we do a good job at the Mountain Pacific Sports meet, then those people out in the west will know we're for real," Allen said. "I don't think that after last year they think we're for real. I think we're for real."

The third-ranked Cornhuskers get a chance to prove themselves Sunday afternoon at 2 when they take on Minnesota at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The matchup is the second of a four-meet homestand that ends one week before the April 5 NCAA West Regionals in Las Cruces, N.M.

Last week, Nebraska turned its performance up a notch, dismantling second-ranked Iowa 231.7-229.7.

Allen said the Huskers are looking to do the same thing to the 11th-ranked Gophers on Sunday. Minnesota lost to No. 1 Ohio State last weekend, but Allen said the Gophers will present a challenge.

"It's going to be a tough meet," he said. "They're going to be a lot tougher than I thought they would be."

The Huskers will try to clean up routines and continue their overall consistency, Allen said.

"I think the boys know now that being clean on routines is the key," he said.

Allen said the all-around tandem of Bill Mulholland and Derek Leiter should set the tone again for the team.

Leiter won the all-around against Iowa with a career-best 57.5, and Mulholland was second at 57.35.

## NU to see tough teams in Oregon

By **GREGG MADSEN**  
Staff Reporter

The sixth-ranked Nebraska women's gymnastics team travels to Corvallis, Ore., tonight to compete in the six-team Shanico Invitational.

The Cornhuskers will bring the highest scoring average (195.635) into the meet, which features eighth-ranked UCLA, No. 13 Oregon State, No. 21 Arizona, No. 23 Denver and California-Davis.

NU Coach Dan Kendig said the Cornhuskers should see some of their stiffest competition of the season at the meet, set for a 7 p.m. start at the Gill Coliseum.

"Talentwise and on paper, UCLA's as good as they get," Kendig said. "I mean, they were the pre-season No. 1 team and they're just starting to come back."

The 1996 national runner-up,

UCLA is averaging a 195.427 per meet.

The Beavers — fifth at the 1996 National Championships — haven't cracked the 195-point barrier yet this season. Kendig said Oregon State will be primed to perform in front of its home crowd.

The Huskers are coming off their first two back-to-back 196-point performances in school history.

"I'm not after the big scores this weekend," Kendig said. "I'm after the big performance this weekend. If the scores are down and we win the meet, then so be it."

Sophomore Courtney Brown will return to the Husker lineup on the balance beam. Brown has battled a stress fracture in her left leg all season.

Kendig said Brown will add consistency for the Huskers, who counted two falls on their team last Sunday in a win over Iowa State.

## Poor start dooms NU

**TIGERS** from page 7

The Huskers trailed 25-12 after 14 minutes, 38-24 at the break and fell behind by 17 early in the second half. But an 18-8 spurt brought NU back within five at 62-57 with 3:55 to play. Missouri then sank 11 of 13 free throws, never allowing Nebraska closer than four points.

"The first 10 minutes of the game is what did us in," Nee said. "When Nebraska started playing it was too late and too big of a hole to get out of. "I was very disappointed. There's just no reason for that. The spark was not there."

With just seven players Nebraska matched Missouri statistically, shooting 47.5 percent from the field to the Tigers' 43.5 percent. MU out-rebounded the Huskers 40-38, and NU committed 10 of its 16 turnovers before halftime. Venson Hamilton scored 13 points and pulled down 11 re-

bounds for Nebraska, and Bernard Garner added 15 points in 27 minutes.

For Missouri — which beat NU for the sixth time in seven postseason games — Grimm scored 22 and Jason Sutherland contributed 12 of his 15 points in the second half after drilling a buzzer-beating 27-foot 3-pointer to close the opening half.

"That might have been the best first half of basketball we've played in awhile," Grimm said. "But I don't know if we put all 40 minutes together."

MU Coach Norm Stewart, who watched his team lose four straight and six of seven games to end the regular season, didn't mind the lackluster second half.

"When you've lost a few games, you're not real confident," Stewart said. "That showed down the stretch, but we executed, which we really hadn't been able to do all year."

## Field events suit NU

**FIELD** from page 7

field events as well.

All-Americans shot putter Tressa Thompson and long jumper Angee Henry hope to make a happy return to Indianapolis. High jumper Kerry Doetker, who has the fourth-highest collegiate leap this season (6-1/4), and triple jumper Dahlia Ingram also represent NU in the field.

Henry is the defending indoor champion in the long jump, but she has been hampered by a sore quadriceps muscle, which she injured in the Big 12 meet.

"The jumps are going to be bigger," Henry said. "I'm not at my best but I'm still going to try and give my best."

Thompson, who holds the indoor shot-put record with a toss of 60-7 3/4, is seeking her first national championship after a fifth-place finish last season.

Jill Myatt, Stella Klassen, Charmaine Burton and La'Tisha Croom will compete on the 4 X 400-meter relay team, which owns the third-fastest time (3:36.98) in the nation this year.

## Kansas beats NU

From Staff Reports

Kansas scored five runs in the eighth inning on six hits and a Nebraska error to beat NU 11-6 Thursday at Hoglund-Maupin Stadium in Lawrence, Kan.

With the game tied at six, Stephen Matthews opened the bottom of the eighth with a single. That was followed with hits by Andy Juday and Joe DeMarco to load the bases. Wes Walrond then bounced into a force play at home, but an error on NU first baseman Todd Sears allowed two runs to score. With two outs, Sparky Wilhelm, Justin Headley and Craig Stewart added RBI singles.

The Huskers (5-8 overall and 0-3 in the Big 12 Conference) play host to Baylor this weekend at Buck Beltzer Field. Saturday's double-header starts at 1 p.m. and a single game Sunday also begins at 1.

## Men's tennis team plays host to Drake

From Staff Reports

The Nebraska men's tennis team is hoping to change its luck this weekend with a home dual against Drake.

The Cornhuskers (4-5) return home after a trip to Boise, Idaho, to face the Bulldogs at the Cather-Pound tennis courts on Saturday.

## Weekend Preview

Drake has beaten Nebraska 4-3 the past two years.

"This should be a competitive match," NU Coach Kerry McDermott said. "We need to turn things around this time."

To do that, McDermott said his team will have to function well from top to bottom. This season, the top three seeds are 16-11 while the bottom three seeds are 11-16.

"Our guys have to produce big time," McDermott said. "We look at this as a big match. They need to go in thinking they need to pull the upset."

## Golfers travel to South Carolina

From Staff Reports

After third-place finishes at two tournaments in Texas, the Nebraska men's golf team is looking to improve on those performances at the the Fripp Island Intercollegiate in Fripp, S.C., this weekend.

NU rallied from 10th place on the first day to finish third at the Crown Colony Classic in Lufkin, Texas, two weeks ago. The Huskers finished five strokes behind winner Arkansas, who is ranked 14th in the nation.

## Kansas ready to win title

Tournament Notes

No. 1 Kansas, which arrived in Kansas City Thursday, will play Oklahoma State today at noon. The 29-1 Jayhawks have already assured themselves of a top seed in the NCAA Tournament, but KU carries a sense of pride into the first-ever Big 12 Conference tournament.

Kansas lost in the championship game of the Big Eight Tournament last March and owns a 30-16 record with four titles in league tournament competition. Coach Roy Williams balked when asked why Kansas hasn't matched its regular season success in the conference tournament.

"We could have won it last year," Williams said. "I guess we are going to have to go over there and win it 80 times in a row so there will be another question."

## OSU, Tech, OU advance

At Kemper Arena Thursday, No. 8-seed Oklahoma State hammered ninth-seed Baylor 80-66 in the first game of the tournament. Four Cowboys scored in double figures, and Baylor shot just 41 percent, misfiring on 21 of 31 3-pointers. Baylor, 18-12, will likely receive an invitation to the National Invitation Tournament on Sunday.

Fifth-seed Texas Tech drilled No. 12-seed Kansas State 73-57 behind 22 points from Cory Carr and 10 from Tony Battie. The Red Raiders will face fourth-seed Iowa State today at 2:20 p.m.

In the nightcap, Oklahoma beat Texas A&M 67-58.

## NIT tickets

Student tickets for the first round of the National Invitation Tournament go on sale Monday morning at the Nebraska ticket office. The Huskers, who lost 78-72 to Missouri on Thursday, will play host to an opponent to be announced on Wednesday. Tickets are \$4.

## KSU upsets KU

It's been a Cinderella season for the Kansas State women's basketball team and Thursday night in the first of two semifinal Big 12 Tournament games the Wildcats took a major step to insure a happy ending.

Kansas State dominated top-seed Kansas 73-58 in the biggest upset of the tournament. KSU out-rebounded the Jayhawks 39-31 and held All-American guard Tamecka Dixon to 13 points. KU's bench contributed only one point in the loss.

With the victory Kansas State advances to a postseason tournament final for just the fifth time in school history.

"This is a tremendous victory for our program to line up and beat a team like Kansas," said KSU Coach Deb Patterson. "It's a tremendous statement about our team and their effort. It's an awesome opportunity to play for the tournament championship."

The Jayhawks led 50-48 with 9:36 remaining in the game, but the Wildcats went on an 18-2 run to gain a 66-52 advantage and control of the game.

Andria Jones led Kansas State with 18 points and nine rebounds while Brit Jacobson contributed 18. Angie Halbleib paced Kansas with 19.

In the other semifinal at Municipal Auditorium, Colorado beat second-seed Texas 64-50.

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