

Outdoor season starts in Texas

By **ANDREW STRNAD**
Staff Reporter

With the weather getting warmer and colder all in the same week, it can only mean one thing: The outdoor track and field season is starting.



Pepin

Indianapolis.

NU Coach Gary Pepin welcomes back nine NCAA outdoor All-Americans to both teams on the road to claiming the first-ever Big 12 Conference outdoor titles. NU won the men's and women's Big 12 indoor crowns.

"It's a totally different atmosphere from indoors," Pepin said. "There's more events, and we have some people that didn't compete in the indoor season."

The Husker men won the last two Big Eight conference titles, while the

women hope to bounce back after a disappointing final league season.

The women's team had its streak of 16 straight outdoor conference titles snapped last year by Colorado.

This year in the Big 12, the Huskers are led by recently crowned NCAA indoor shot put champion Tressa Thompson, who said although NU is not the defending league champions, the Huskers are primed to start things off for a run at the title.

"Last year is history, and this year we have a new conference, so we're going to see some new results," Thompson said.

Thompson has expired her indoor eligibility, but has two years of outdoor track remaining.

Also expected to lead the Husker women is defending NCAA long-jump champion Angee Henry.

Despite Henry's recent quadriceps injury, Pepin said Henry will be ready to defend her outdoor title.

"I'll tell you one thing, Angee isn't through," Pepin said. "The season is a long one, so she's going to have a lot of time to compete."

Henry, who is one of the most diverse athletes in the nation, will compete on two legs of NU's relay teams and could also participate in the triple

jump. The men's squad welcomes the return of four-time All-American Willie Hibler.

Hibler, a senior who did not compete in the indoor season because his eligibility had expired, will run the 110-meter hurdles, an event in which he finished sixth at last year's NCAA meet.

"Willie's a superb athlete," Pepin said. "He's got a lot of experience and he's one of those leaders that every team needs."

Thrower Scott Warren recently put his name on the map during the indoor season and hopes to do the same during the outdoor season.

Warren set the school and conference record in the 35-pound weight throw in the indoor season. He will compete in four events during the outdoor season.

"Outdoor's is a busy time for me," Warren said. "With the shot, discus, hammer and javelin coming up, I've got a full schedule."

Pepin said he has no early season expectations, but he is optimistic the Huskers will do well this year.

"I probably won't know how we're doing for a month or so, but we've got a lot of good athletes," Pepin said.

Huskers ready for PSU

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the floor exercise with a score of 9.85, the parallel bars with a 9.8 and the horizontal bar with a 9.85.

Nationally, Nelson averages the third-highest score on the parallel bars (9.833), sixth on the high bar (9.79) and fourth on the floor exercise (9.773).

Nelson's scores reflect the overall performance of the Huskers in the past three meets. After starting slow, NU has scored 230 or above in its last two meets. In those duals, Nebraska defeated third-ranked Iowa and No. 10 Minnesota.

The high scores have done wonders for the team's confidence, he said.

"I think just now we know that we can compete with anybody," Nelson said. "I think we always knew in our minds that we could, and our performances the last two weeks prove it."

NU Coach Francis Allen said Penn State — ranked No. 6 — is one of the top teams in the nation.

The Nittany Lions average a 228.283 team score per meet, just below the Huskers' 229.533.

"I'm thinking they're probably going to be pretty good," Allen said. "If we come out there and lay down, they're going to beat us."

Allen said sophomore J.D. Reive will compete in the floor exercise Sun-

day. Reive started slow this season because of a foot injury, but against the Golden Gophers he won the pommel horse and the vault with 9.7s.

With Reive on the floor lineup, the Huskers will use six gymnasts on each event for the first time this season.

"I think it makes them feel a little more relaxed because they know they have another gymnast to fall back on," Allen said.

The meet will showcase some of the top all-around talent in the nation as well.

Nebraska freshman Derek Leiter and junior Bill Mulholland are ranked eighth and ninth nationally in the all-around and Penn State freshman Mike Dutka is No. 10.

NU needs to continue at the same pace it has the past two weeks, Allen said, to have a chance of reaching the finals in Iowa City.

"I don't think we're going to run away with the national title by any means," Allen said. "But if we make the finals, we can win the championship."

Allen said beating Penn State will send a message to the rest of the nation that Nebraska is a legitimate title contender.

"Penn State is probably going to come out of the East Region as a top seed. We need to let them know now that we'll beat them if that happens."

NCAAs stick to form

NCAA from page 9

no starter taller than 6-foot-6, made a strong bid to become the first No. 1 seed ever to beat a No. 1 seed.

The Stags led by seven at halftime and stayed with the Tar Heels (25-6) until the final minute before a pro-North Carolina crowd in Winston-Salem, N.C.

The victory gave Smith an 876-253 record in his 36th season at North Carolina. Rupp had an 876-190 record in 41 years at Kentucky.

The Jayhawks also faced a pesky No. 16 seed in the Southeast Region.

Kansas (33-1) fought off Jackson State (14-16) 78-64 behind a 12-point, 19-rebound, six-block effort by center Scot Pollard.

Pollard was helped by All-American Raef LaFrentz and Paul Pierce. LaFrentz had 18 points, 14 rebounds and three blocks, and Pierce scored 19 points and had 13 rebounds and four blocks as KU held a 61-27 advantage on the boards.

The Big 12 Conference went 3-0 on the day with a win by Iowa State.

The sixth-seeded Cyclones struggled, but defeated No. 11 seed Il-

linois State 69-57 behind a career-best 29 points by Kelvin Cato at Auburn Hills, Mich., in the Midwest Region.

Dedric Willoughby added 21 points as ISU advanced to play Cincinnati.

Iowa defeated Virginia 73-60 behind 19 points by Guy Rucker and 17 by Andy Woolridge.

Hawkeye Coach Tom Davis improved to 10-0 in first-round games as Iowa never trailed and led by as many as 22 points.

In other first-round action; Purdue defeated Rhode Island 83-76 in overtime and Arizona held off South Alabama 65-57 in the Southeast Region at the Pyramid in Memphis.

In the east, California beat Princeton 55-52 and Villanova defeated Long Island 101-91.

In the Midwest Region, Cincinnati defeated Butler 86-69 and Xavier downed Vanderbilt 80-68 at Auburn Hills.

Boston College beat Valparaiso 73-66, St. Joseph's defeated Pacific 75-65 and defending national champion Kentucky breezed past Montana 92-54 in the West Region at The Huntsman Center in Salt Lake City.

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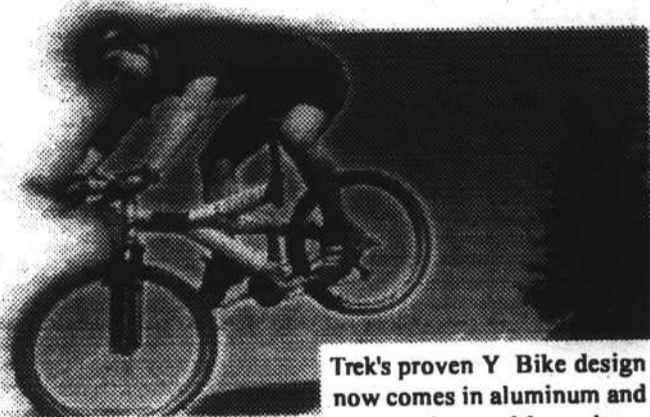
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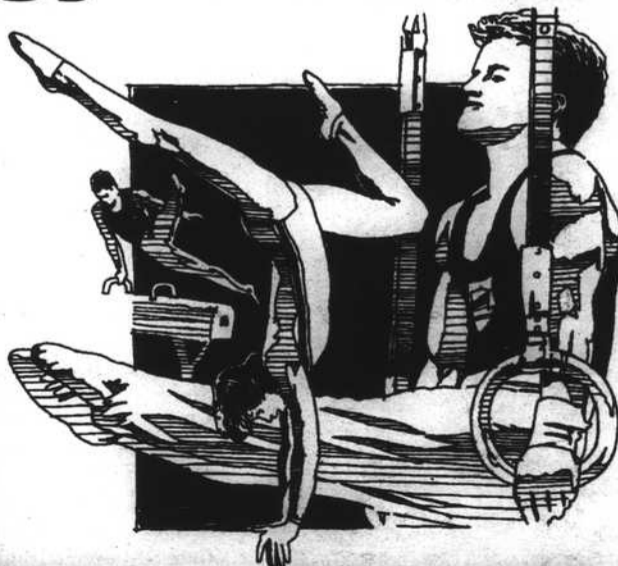
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