

Russell leads NU charge

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Bentz said. "Apparently we had to go through the drama of winning the Big 12 meet before people across the country recognized us."

Now that Nebraska has accomplished the goal of being ranked in the Top 10, it is looking to reach even higher with a good performance in the NCAA meet.

"We want to go as high as we can possibly go," Bentz said. "We have placed ourselves in a position to have the opportunity to do that."

For the Huskers to be able to climb up the rankings even more, they must focus on the task at hand in Indianapolis. Fourteen NU swimmers make up the largest representation of any team at the national meet.

A youth movement will carry NU into Indy as nine of those 14 competitors are freshmen. With only two seniors and one junior, Bentz said he is not apprehensive about how his team will perform in such a big meet.

"We have a lot of young people, but a lot of those swimmers have competed in big meets before," Bentz said. "They have gone up against fast people this year and have done well. Our feeling is they should perform at that level."

Leading the way for NU is All-American Julia Russell. The senior from South Africa said she wants to make a big mark at the NCAA meet. Russell, who was named the Big 12 Conference swimmer-of-the-year, qualified for three events in nationals.

She ranks second nationally in both the 100-yard breaststroke and the

"I would love to go out with a bang."

JULIA RUSSELL
NU swimmer

200-yard individual medley. Russell's time of 2:10.25 is the fastest time in the NCAA this year in the 200-yard breast.

"I think this will be a really fun meet," Russell said. "I have heard it is one of the fastest meets in the world. I would love to go out with a bang."

Russell has just returned to the United States from her native country. While in South Africa she won the 200-meter breaststroke and 200-meter IM and finished second in the 100-meter breaststroke. All the competition in a short time has left Russell a little tired, she said.

"I know I have been at the conference meet and went home for nationals," Russell said. "Keeping that in mind I just want to swim my best times. If I do that I will be very satisfied."

Russell and the rest of the 13 Husker swimmers are hoping to put it together like they did in Texas and maybe come back to Lincoln with some more hardware.

"We will be ready to compete," Bentz said. "We have to be sure everyone goes faster or duplicates their conference performance."

Thompson's final chance comes near hometown

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times."

Thompson has dwelled on the thought since a surprise upset last year in the meet's semifinals against North Carolina's Justin Harty. Thompson ended up third.

"I learned how to deal with adversity," Thompson said of last year's finish. "This year, I don't care who's out to get me. Nobody can stay with me for seven minutes."

NU Coach Tim Neumann said Thompson is wrestling better than ever.

"He's wrestling better than any time in his career," Neumann said. "The only thing stopping him is his mental outlook. The two standing in his way have beat him this year. He feels like an underdog."

That's no big deal, according to Thompson.

"I feel like a million bucks," he said after his workout Tuesday.

So do the Huskers, Neumann said. He said the practices leading up to the NCAA Championships have focused on each of the wrestlers' weaknesses. For the freshman qualifiers, Beckerman and McCorty, the important thing is to get the experience of wrestling in the NCAA Championships.

"Winning matches is realistic," Neumann said. "Once they get on the mat, that's how important this experience is."

For juniors Canoyer and

"This year, I don't care who's out to get me. Nobody can stay with me for seven minutes."

TOLLY THOMPSON
NU wrestler

Welder, this is a chance to earn All-America status before their senior season. It would be the second time for Canoyer who finished fifth in 1995. For Kraft, NU's lone senior besides Thompson, it's his last shot at a national title. Neumann said Kraft — although not a high seed — has a chance at the title.

"He's capable of winning the tournament," Neumann said.

Neumann's hoping the home-mat advantage and emotion carries Thompson to the finals. On the road to the championship match, Thompson must get by Neal to face off against McCoy for the final time. Thompson wouldn't mind that at all.

"The third time's the charm," he said. "I need to worry about Thursday first."

Huskers bash UNO

UNO from page 7

the mound than have them throw in the bullpen," Sanders said.

But it wasn't all fun and games for the Huskers. In the first game, the Mavericks gave NU a run for its money.

In the top of the sixth inning, sophomore Joe Cunningham tripled home senior Derek Voss to tie the game at five. Cunningham later scored to give UNO a 6-5 lead when NU right fielder Gabe Garcia biffed a routine fly ball.

Nebraska struck back with six runs on four hits in the bottom half of the sixth to take an 11-5 lead.

"The first game was a little sloppy," Sanders said, "but we did better at the end of the game. Offensively, we did a pretty good job both games."

Todd Sears finished the day 4 for 8 with five runs scored and three RBIs and raised his team-high average to .461.

"I like Sears," Gates said. "I've seen him a lot. The other kids, I haven't seen a lot."


Harrington, who played his first career game against UNO, raised his average to .327, which ranks second among Husker hitters.

Nebraska needs to continue its winning streak to enter the Rainbow Easter Tournament with confidence, Harrington said.

"We just need to put some wins together going into a tough tournament against some good teams," Harrington said.

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<p>21</p> <p>MEN'S TENNIS/V AT TEXAS, 2:00 PM</p> <p>MEN'S WRESTLING/V AT NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS 9:00 AM</p> <p>WOMEN'S SOFTBALL/V AT CAPITAL CLASSIC, 7:00 PM</p> <p>MEN'S BASEBALL/V VS. SOUTH DAKOTA STATE BELTZER FIELD, 1:30 PM</p>	<p>22</p> <p>WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS/V BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIPS AT OKLAHOMA, 7:00 PM</p> <p>MEN'S TENNIS/V AT TEXAS A&M, 5:00 PM</p> <p>MEN'S WRESTLING/V AT NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS 9:00 AM</p> <p>WOMEN'S SOFTBALL/V AT CAPITAL CLASSIC 7:00 PM</p> <p>M/W TRACK & FIELD/V AT ARIZONA STATE 5:00 PM</p>	<p>23</p> <p>WOMEN'S SOFTBALL/V AT CAPITAL CLASSIC 7:00 PM</p>

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