

Huskers ready to win regional

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The Huskers are coming off their fourth consecutive conference championship after narrowly defeating Oklahoma 196.2-196.075.

Kendig said the close call at the Big 12 Conference meet could serve as motivation for the Huskers, whose only defeat this year came at No. 2 Michigan on Feb. 9 and against sixth-ranked UCLA.

"I think that in some ways it prepared them," Kendig said. "Just pulling together and helping out helped them to learn to compete as a team."

Sophomore Courtney Brown, who tied the school record of 9.9 on the balance beam at the Big 12 championships, said NU is ready to start the championship portion of its season.

Brown's balance beam mark was broken later in the meet by teammate Shelly Bartlett, who scored a 9.925 en route to a school record 39.575 performance in the all-around.

A senior, Bartlett is the sixth-ranked all-arounder in the nation.

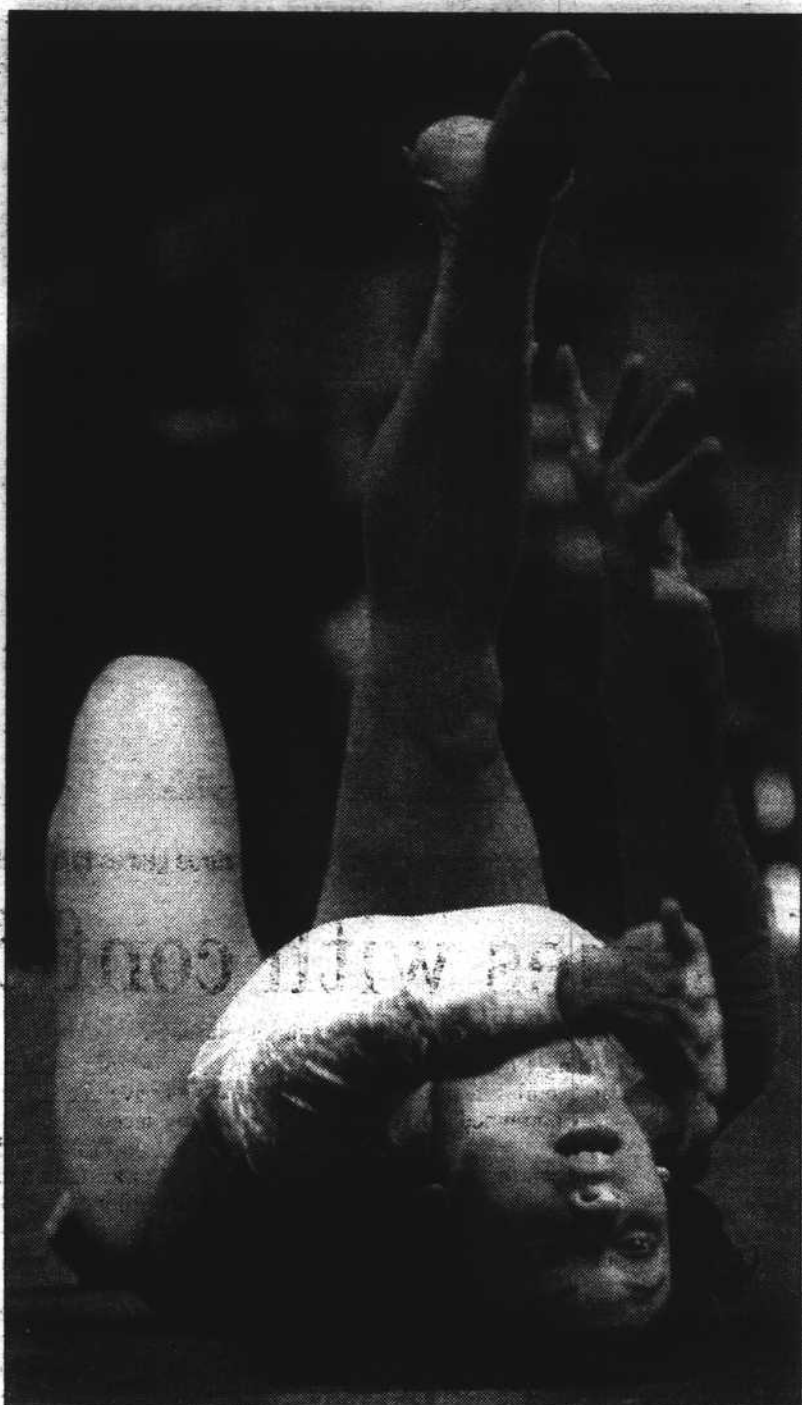
Utah's Angie Leonard and Traci Sommer will lead the Utes. Leonard is ranked fifth in the all-around and Sommer is second in the nation on the balance beam behind teammate Summer Reid.

The Huskers defeated Arizona State on Feb. 23 in the Master's Classic, but Kendig said that victory doesn't matter anymore. The Sun Devils are averaging a 196.115 score each meet.

Nebraska will open the meet with a bye and then begin the competition on the balance beam, the apparatus on which the Huskers scored a school-record 49.45 at the league meet.

Brown said NU's performance on the balance beam will set the pace for the rest of the meet.

"We'd like to start the meet out with a bang," Brown said. "Beam seems to be the event to make or break us, so we'll need to hit."



AMIE DILLMAN competes on the floor exercise at the Big 12 meet. MATT MILLER/DN

Young players dominate sports

NEW YORK (AP) — David Stern has an answer for those who question the exodus of high school stars and college freshmen for the NBA — Martina Hingis and Tara Lipinski.

"Of course, we'd rather that players go through college," the NBA commissioner said Thursday. "But just look at those two young girls. One is 16 and is the world's top-ranked woman tennis player; the other is 14 and is the world figure-skating champion."

Stern spoke at a forum sponsored by Madison Square Garden that included NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue and NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman.

The discussion covered issues from fan support to finances to franchise movement to player misconduct. The most compelling subject was the influx of young players into professional sports, particularly in basketball.

Two of this year's top rookies, Minnesota's Stephon Marbury and Allen Iverson of Philadelphia, left after their freshman and sophomore years at Georgia Tech and Georgetown. And now high school players are getting in on the act.

Two years ago, Kevin Garnett went directly from high school in Chicago to the NBA draft. Now with the Timberwolves, he played in this year's All-Star Game.

Last year, Kobe Bryant and Jermaine O'Neal jumped from high

school to the NBA. Tracy McGrady, a high school player from Durham, N.C., intends to enter this June's NBA draft and Lamar Odom, a New York star, is considering a similar move.

Stern said the NBA asked the union to consider an age restriction on entering the league.

"We'd like to see a college Final Four with Stephon Marbury, Allen Iverson and some of the others who have opted to come into the NBA early," Stern said. "They're more mature at 23 than they are at 19, there's no question."

"But, on the other hand, look who the elder statesman is who's criticizing them — Charles Barkley. I'd like to go back through our records and find out how many times Charles was fined for misbehavior when he was younger."

Tagliabue, whose league allows players to enter the draft three years after they've finished high school, cited studies that demonstrate a player who finishes college has a longer and more lucrative NFL career.

Bettman noted that the NHL has changed its draft age from 18 to 19. And he said the league has been trying to work out an agreement with the NCAA that would allow players from Canadian junior hockey to go to college. Currently, Canadian juniors are not permitted to play at U.S. universities.

<http://www.unl.edu/DailyNeb/>

Huskers take two games from Jays

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team would score again.

"We needed to create some runs," Revelle said. "That's been one of our themes all year, and we were able to manufacture runs when the defense presented them."

In the first game, NU connected on nine of its 19 attempts at the plate. Designated player Christie McCoy hit a perfect 1.000. McCoy has been hot recently, averaging .667 in four games last week while filling the offensive hole left by injured shortstop Ali Viola.

"Christie was so anxious to prove herself that she jumped the gun at the beginning of the season," Revelle said.

The Huskers were also aided by pitcher Jenny Voss' curve ball. Voss (13-11) pitched two complete games, giving up only five hits and committing one error on the night. Voss also posted 11 strikeouts.

"It is so easy to throw well when the fielding is good," Voss said. "When I know that I can trust the defense, I have less pressure on me."

Revelle said the back-to-back wins not only take the pressure off Voss, but the entire team as well. Nebraska opened Big 12 Conference play last weekend against Texas and Texas A&M, winning the first game of both doubleheaders before dropping the second games.

"Those two losses stung," Revelle said. "We were snake bit, because we knew we were capable of winning those double headers. We needed to prove we could come back and win a second game."

McCoy agreed with Revelle. "These were good wins," McCoy said. "We hit the ball really hard and we're fielding like we should and we're building confidence."



JENNIFER LIZAMA receives a hug from Kelly Pinkepank. JAY CALDERON/DN

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