

Sports Opinion



Gregg Madsen

Good character carries Huskers past adversity

I can honestly say I've never been more afraid at any athletic event than I was last Saturday night at the NCAA Midwest Regional in Salt Lake City.

I'd never been so close to such a devastating injury as I was when Nebraska sophomore gymnast Amie Dillman went down.

As soon as she landed her practice vault, it was obvious that she wouldn't be getting up.

She crumbled to the mat, devastated from the pain in both of her dislocated knees. I, along with the rest of the crowd at the Huntsman Center, was suddenly struck by the true importance of the sport.

The regional championship wasn't important anymore.

The only thing I wanted was to see Dillman back on her feet with that electric smile on her face.

I was angry. It's hard to watch someone who has dedicated her life to a sport — and in gymnastics that's no understatement — as it comes to a screeching stop in one second.

I was anxious. Dillman lay on the mats — surrounded by Nebraska coaches Dan Kendig, Rob Drass and Teresa Ijams, along with trainers and paramedics — for nearly 20 minutes.

I wanted the meet to be over, but the meet hadn't even begun.

After wiping away the tears, the rest of the Cornhuskers regrouped to start the meet on balance beam.

It was obvious that Dillman's injury was on everyone's mind. But Nebraska fought hard to salvage a decent score in the event.

And that was the story through each of the other three events. The Huskers didn't have the usual flair and excitement that had typified the school's most successful season in history, but they didn't fall apart.

NU had every reason to collapse.

But with the deck stacked against them, they pulled off one of the gutsiest performances I've ever seen. They finished a close third and earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Championships next Thursday in Gainesville, Fla.

Say a prayer for Dillman on Saturday. She'll be in surgery for at least six hours as doctors repair both posterior cruciate ligaments and her right medial collateral ligament.

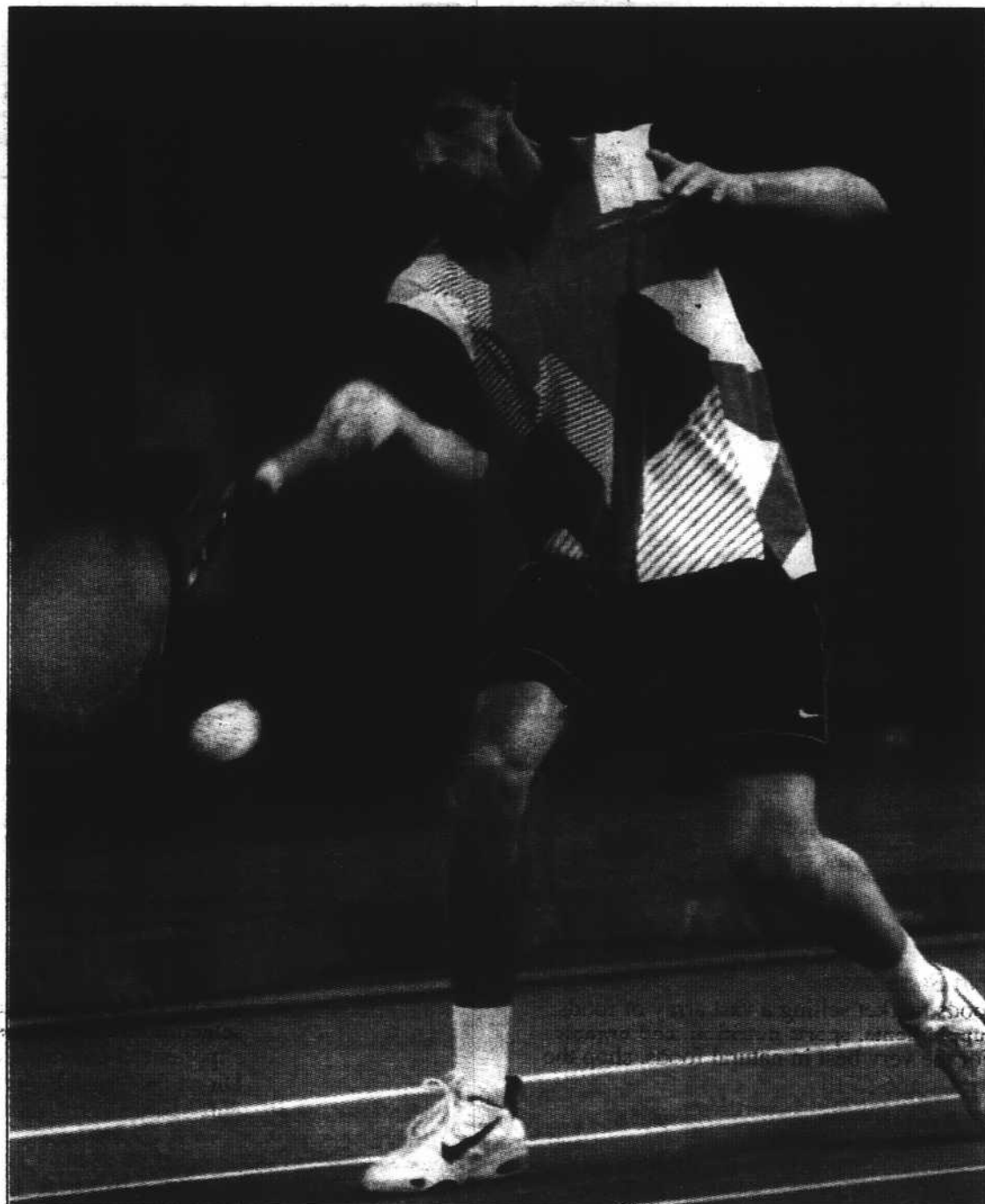
It won't be easy, but for inspiration all she needs to do is look at her what her teammates' did Saturday.

You can tell how talented a team is by the final score of a meet.

But to see the character of a team you have to see how they respond to adversity.

The Huskers didn't fly home from Utah with the Regional trophy, but they did fly home champions.

Madsen is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.



DANIEL LUEDERT/DN

DINKO VERZI, NU's No. 2 singles player, is 12-8 overall and 4-2 in the Big 12 this season. NU plays host to Texas Tech on Saturday.

Tech up next in rough season

Dual against Red Raiders is first of three at home.

By JAY SAUNDERS
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's tennis team hopes to bounce back from several obstacles to finish the regular season on a high note.



McDermott

NU (9-11 overall and 1-5 in the Big 12 Conference) enters Saturday's 2 p.m. dual against Texas Tech (8-10 and 1-3) after a series of ups and downs last weekend.

The match against the Red Raiders is scheduled to be played at the Cather-Pound tennis courts, but could be moved into the Bob Devaney Sports Center track area depending on the weather.

"We are trying to get the guys to use this match to prepare for next week," NU Coach Kerry McDermott said. "We are giving ourselves an opportunity to be in the regional playoff."

Against Tech, the Huskers will

be without No. 6 singles player Andrew Wiese, who is nursing a sprained ankle. Henrik Andersson, a senior from Stockholm, Sweden, who is 1-1 this season, will replace Wiese in the lineup.

Wiese, a freshman from Flushing Hills, N.Y., is 10-8 this season playing in the No. 5 and No. 6 spots. McDermott said Wiese should be healthy for next weekend's home duals against Oklahoma and Oklahoma State.

McDermott is not worried about making a late-season adjustment.

"All the guys have confidence that Henrik can get the job done," McDermott said. "At the beginning of the season, we said there would be injuries and now we have one. That is just part of the game."

Next weekend's matches against the Sooners and Cowboys will be even bigger for the Huskers.

NU needs to win one of those two duals to stay alive for a spot in six-team NCAA regional tournament. With the importance of next weekend's matches, McDermott said he is stressing his team take it one match at a time.

The Huskers did that last weekend, winning one of three matches. Nebraska started off its weekend with a 5-2 loss to Colorado and then lost to Kansas 6-1 the following day.

"We paired up against CU on every court," McDermott said.

"We are giving ourselves an opportunity to be in the regional playoff."

KERRY McDERMOTT
NU men's tennis coach

"We played good enough to win, but didn't"

In the Kansas match, McDermott said NU didn't show the competitive fire that he had seen in the Colorado match. The lack of intensity in that match has not been a problem this season, McDermott said.

"Kansas outplayed us, and we didn't compete very well," McDermott said. "I felt maybe we were down emotionally a little bit. We didn't give 100 percent."

NU salvaged the weekend beating Wichita State 4-3, putting the team in good shape to advance to the regional tournament.

"It was a much-needed win for us," McDermott said. We have a ways to go, but we are keeping our goals alive here."

Huskers take on Aggies

By DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

The last time the Nebraska baseball team traveled to College Station was in 1989. They lost 21-4.

Texas A&M finished 58-7 that season and had 11 players who went on to sign professional contracts — including Minnesota Twins second baseman Chuck Knoblauch.

But this year, things are different.



Johnson

The Cornhuskers (18-19 overall and 4-8 in the Big 12 Conference) will look for their first-ever win against the Aggies (27-15 and 10-8) today at Olsen Field at 7 p.m.

Texas A&M opened the 1997 season winning 11 of its first 15 games. But since their first conference loss Feb. 28 to Baylor, the Aggies are 16-11.

"Every time you play a Big 12 team, you have your hands full," Texas

Please see AGGIES on 10

Huskers add three guards, lose Mitchell

By MITCH SHERMAN
Senior Reporter

Assured of a new look in the backcourt next season, the Nebraska basketball team has added three guards and lost one in the first two days of the spring signing period.

Todd Smith, a 6-foot-4 shooting guard from Milledgeville, Ga., has joined Cory Cochran of Neola, Iowa, and Rodney Williams of Houston in signing letters of intent to join the Cornhuskers next fall. But Alvin Mitchell will not return for his junior season, Coach Danny Nee said Thursday.

Nee has granted Mitchell a release from his scholarship, and the Husker coaches expect the 6-foot, 160-pounder from Omaha Burke High School to transfer before next season. "We're in the process of working with Alvin and helping him contact other schools," Nee said. "We've mailed a lot of film out. Alvin and those schools are currently interviewing each other."

Mitchell and Nee came to a mutual agreement following Nebraska's season-ending loss to Connecticut in the National Invitation Tournament last month, the coach said. Mitchell started five games as a sophomore and played in 29 of NU's 33 contests, averaging 2.7 points and 1.4 rebounds.

His playing time dropped dramatically in the Big 12 Conference season after a strong showing early in the year.

Please see HOOPS on 10