

Sooner coach confident about chances for victory

SOONERS from page 9

would beat them in Lincoln. "Another thing that will help us is that for the first time, our experience on the court equals Nebraska's. We won't be intimidated by them on our home court."

The Sooners suffered two three-game losses to NU last season and have not posted a victory against the Huskers since 1993. But Pabst favorably compares the 1997 version of the Sooners to past teams, pointing to the dominant and consistent play of outside hitters Patrice Arrington and Melissa Peterson.

Arrington is 11th in the nation with 5.29 kills per game and has earned conference player-of-the-week honors after posting a league-record 40 kills against Kansas State last Saturday in Norman.

Peterson, who Pabst labeled "one of the best - if not the best - passers in the nation" averages 4.29 kills per game and leads all Sooners with 169 digs (3.25 per game) this season.

"Our outsiders are as good as any in the country," Pabst said. "Patrice is tough to stop when she gets going because she has such great power. She has a great work ethic, she's competitive, and her all-around game has improved."

"At this point in her career, she is playing smarter than she ever has."

Pabst also credited the emer-

gence of middle blockers Danielle Cornelius and Tanisha Webster as a key to OU's success this season.

Webster, a junior who averages 1.18 blocks per game, sat out last season after winning the Big Eight Conference blocking title her sophomore season. Webster broke the Big 12 record with 13 block assists against Kansas State Saturday.

Cornelius, a 6-foot freshman, averages .96 blocks per game.

Those four players, along with junior setter Meredith Van Horn - who averages 15.88 assists per game - can lead Oklahoma to its first NCAA Tournament birth since 1989, Pabst said. Pabst predicts that OU will finish the season ranked in the league's top four.

"Coaches can speculate and fantasize," Pabst said, "but it's up to the team to put 'em on, tie them up and get after it."

"At times this season, we've put 'em on brilliantly and played exceptionally well. It's just doing it for the duration. But I think we're on track."

Pettit agreed that the Sooners can pose a challenge to conference teams.

"Oklahoma is the team that nobody wants to play," Pettit said. "They have a lot of talent and tremendous outside hitters."

"They are going to be a ranked opponent on their floor this year, and I just hope that team isn't us."

NU hopes to improve against top opponents

BY NATE ODGAARD
Staff Reporter

Less than one week into the bowling season, the Nebraska women's team appears to be in top form.

The Huskers, who won the national championship last year as a club team, cruised to the Milwaukee Intercollegiate Bowling Invitational title last weekend with a pin total of 10,953. Purdue finished second, but was a distant 797 pins behind.

While NU coach Bill Straub said Nebraska's dominance "proved we have a solid squad," he said room for improvement still exists.

"(We've) not exactly reached our potential yet, but we're headed in the right direction," Straub said.

The Huskers will have an opportunity to improve this weekend when the men's and women's teams will compete in their first and only meet of the year. Nebraska is one of six schools to play host to the Great Plains Conference Tournament. Competition begins Saturday at 12:30

Bowling
Saturday Nebraska Invitational at Sun Valley Lanes, Lincoln 9 p.m.
Sunday UNO at Council Bluffs, Iowa 9 a.m.

p.m. at Sun Valley Lanes in Lincoln.

Though the Husker women rolled to the title in Milwaukee, Straub remains low-key about the team's performance. "Our team is solid, but let's see how it does against a field stronger than (Milwaukee)," he said.

Wichita State will be the team to watch this weekend, Straub said. "They've been in the NCAA Championships at least the last 10 years," Straub said.

Straub is uncertain about the rest of the field this weekend.

"We haven't seen the other five schools in the conference, but I think we'll do fine," he said.

Straub said competing in Lincoln gives the fans an opportunity to personally support the Huskers.

"Anytime you get a chance to perform in front of the home crowd, it is definitely special," he said

NU receives sixth verbal commitment

■ A linebacker from Papillion-La Vista accepts a Nebraska scholarship.

BY DAVID WILSON
Senior Reporter

Jeremy Slechta, a defensive lineman from Papillion-La Vista High School, became the sixth player to give a verbal commitment to Nebraska.

The 6-foot-5, 260-pounder, who was offered a scholarship after attending the Cornhuskers' football camp in June, recorded 10 solo tackles and 21 assisted tackles through the Monarchs' first four games.

"He's a heck of a high school football player," Papillion coach Gene Suhr said. "I think he's going to make the state very proud."

"He's very agile and has great feet. He's quite an athlete. He'll definitely find a spot somewhere on the Nebraska football team."

Though he serves as a lineman on both sides of the ball, Slechta is being recruited by schools - including Michigan and Kansas State - primarily as a defensive lineman. High school seniors can't sign letters of intent until February.

Slechta sat out Papillion's 45-21 victory last week as part of a two-week suspension for abusing the school's alcohol policy. While at a homecoming party, a complaint was filed by the mother of a "pom-squad" girl, and Slechta was questioned by school officials. He admitted he had been drinking, and, following school policy, served a two-game suspension that ends today after the Monarchs face Millard North. Three other players were suspended for the same reason.

"If you know Jeremy, you know he's an outstanding kid," Suhr said. "He's a good student and he has been a model student. He just made a bad decision one time."

Suhr said Osborne contacted Slechta the day of the incident, and Slechta told Osborne the truth about what had happened.

"He had the courage to stand up," Suhr said. "He could have lied, but he's a person of integrity. He faced his mistake. I'm really proud of him and the way he handled it."

Huskers to face tough competition

BY SAM MCKEWIN
Staff Reporter

It's mid-term time for the Nebraska men's and women's cross country teams on Saturday.

The Huskers will face 10 top-25 teams this weekend as they travel to the Furman Invitational in Furman, S.C.

The invite is largely considered a preview to the NCAA Championships, as it is run on the same course as the championships and features the best regular-season field around.

"I'm really excited to see how well the teams match up down there and how good some of our individuals are," Coach Jay Dirksen said. "This is pretty much the toughest meet of the year, short of the NCAA Championships."

Participating in the field on the women's side will be four of the top five teams in the nation, including No. 1

Cross Country
Saturday
Furman Invite at Greenville, S.C.

Stanford. The Cardinals are also the top-ranked team on the men's side of the draw where three of the top five teams in the nation are participating.

Dirksen said the competition throughout the field will test the Huskers.

"It's a great meet to show who's good and who's not, and how far a team has to go to be a certain level," he said. "I doubt that anybody will get close to Stanford, though."

What Nebraska is shooting for from both the men's and women's teams is a finish inside the top 10, which Dirksen said might be more attainable for the women than the men.

Again pacing the NU women will be freshman Amy Wiseman, Dirksen said. In NU's two invitationals this season, Wiseman has finished third and

11th and Dirksen said she will have a chance at the top 20 in South Carolina.

"Amy certainly has the talent to be up there and the good thing about her is that she has the experience that we're looking for," Dirksen said.

One runner Dirksen said has helped the Huskers immensely this season is freshman Kate Centerwall. Centerwall finished 29th at the Griak Invitational.

"Kate's been a lifesaver," Dirksen said. "She runs really smart races and doesn't get caught up in what everyone else is doing. She ends up catching a lot of people at the end."

On the men's side, freshman Jereon Broekzitter and senior Cleophas Boor look to lead NU.

The men's lineup will be filled out by senior Aaron Johnson, freshman Marcus Witter, and junior Lou Petricca.

"We'll run as hard as we can," he said. "We'll find out how good we are this season."

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