

**Big 12** **XII**  
**Jayhawks dominate conference**

BY ANTONE OSEKA  
 Staff Reporter

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — For many Big 12 conference teams this year, it's the Big 11 and the Kansas Jayhawks. In reality, many conference coaches are already planning to chase the Jayhawks through the regular season.

At the Big 12 Men's Basketball Media Day Thursday, coaches were discussing the possibility of Kansas running through the league undefeated on their way to the NCAA Tournament in March 1998.

"We won't compete with Kansas," said Oklahoma State Coach Eddie Sutton. "Kansas is at a different level than the other 11 teams in the league. But, that doesn't mean Kansas is going to go undefeated."

The Jayhawks went 34-2 last season, but lost some key players from that team. However, returners Raef LaFrentz and Paul Pierce make the Jayhawks tough competition at home or on the road. Kansas currently holds a Division I record for the longest home court winning streak: 44 straight at Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence, Kan.

Kansas Coach Roy Williams admits he has two of the premier players in the country running the KU front court.

"If the NBA draft were held today, I think Paul and Raef would be in the top five," Williams said. "I'm happy we have two players who can outright score — it is called a scoreboard."

Other coaches around the league know that LaFrentz and Pierce can be a lights-out shooting combination for the Jayhawks.

"The great thing about Kansas is that when you look at great players across the country, you see two from Kansas — Paul Pierce and Raef LaFrentz," said Texas Tech Coach James Dickey. "You see great players all over the country, but two of the top five can be at Kansas."

Missouri Coach Norm Stewart



MATT MILLER/DN  
**JUNIOR ANDY MARKOWSKI and the rest of the Huskers took Kansas to overtime in the Allen Fieldhouse last year before losing. This season KU is predicted to win the Big 12, while the Huskers were predicted to finish fourth in the league.**

said this Kansas team might be even better than the team that narrowly went undefeated last season, but he and many other coaches were quick to agree the talented teams in the Big 12 can hand Kansas a loss at any point during the conference season.

"There are enough quality teams in this league that Kansas shouldn't go undefeated," Sutton said. "It's hard to win on the road."

Colorado Coach Ricardo Patton said, "On any given night, anybody can beat anybody. I believe every night your players must be ready to lace it up and play."

Patton should know. He admitted his team used to be the easiest win in the Big 12, but this year's Buffaloes team is picked to finish ninth by both the coaches and the media. Many coaches see teams like Oklahoma,

Texas and Nebraska as threats to KU if the Jayhawks aren't ready to play.

"I think Oklahoma is the real deal and Nebraska is loaded. Roy (Williams) is loaded again, no question," said Baylor Coach Harry Miller.

All that adds up to the Big 12 having success on all basketball courts across the country.

Sutton said Kansas' success only adds to the conference as a whole. If you have a team that is in the top 10 in the country, he said, it's just great for your league.

Other coaches around the conference agreed.

"This is one of the great and premiere conferences in the country," Dickey said. "I look forward to the future."

**Runners plan for championships**

BY SAM MCKEWIN  
 Staff Reporter

All season, Nebraska cross country Coach Jay Dirksen talked about his team preparing for the big meets at the end of the year.

The first of those meets arrives this weekend, as both the men's and women's cross country team run in the Big 12 Championships in Stillwater, Okla., Saturday.

"Both teams are ready to run about as well as they're going to run all year," Dirksen said. "We're looking forward to seeing just how well we can do."

For both the men's and women's divisions, Colorado, which is ranked in the top-five in the nation, is favored. On the women's side, Dirksen said he sees Nebraska in a fight with Iowa State and Missouri for the second place position.

Dirksen said Nebraska has to keep its fourth and fifth runners near the top of the pack to win the duel among the three teams.

**Cross Country**  
 Saturday Nov. 1  
 Big 12 Championships  
 Stillwater, Okla.



"It's important to make sure our runners who aren't at the top run a great race," he said. "There are situations where a team's fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh runners can be make the difference when points are close."

On the men's side, the senior-freshman combination of Cleophas Boor and Jeroen Broekzitter will again pace the Huskers. Boor had his best race of the season two weeks ago in Michigan, where he finished third at the Wolverine Inter-regional. Broekzitter has consistently placed in the top 10 this season, as well.

Dirksen said both are ready to break out with their top race.

"Both haven't come anywhere near their best race so far this year," he said. "Jeroen and Cleophas have both had a week to get ready for this thing and they

look like they're going to run very well."

Nebraska took a week off from heavy training and, combined with the snowstorm, NU runners have been able rest up for this week's Big 12 Championships.

"This is the first week where the team has really had a chance to rest its legs and prepare for a big meet," Dirksen said. "It should help us to be fresh for the meet and give us a little better stamina."

The course for the Big 12 Championships should be a good challenge for all the teams, Dirksen said. The course features many hills and changing elevations that will test the stamina and speed of the runners.

Overall, Dirksen said he sees both teams making a big move in Big 12 Championships.

"It's good to see, that with all the things that have happened this season, we haven't been a bunch of dogs and stay in the bottom of the conference," he said. "We've fought hard all year."

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