

Basketball prepares for new season

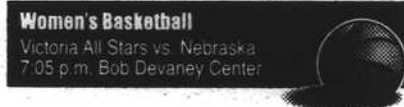
BY ANDREW STRNAD
Staff Reporter

If Nebraska Coach Paul Sanderford had his way, he would play the NBA Chicago Bulls in the preseason, but tonight's game against the Victoria All-Stars should provide the Nebraska Women's Basketball team a legitimate challenge.

The 7:05 p.m. contest at the Bob Devaney Sports Center is the last pre-season contest before NU, ranked No. 26 in The Associated Press preseason poll, plays host to Miami (Ohio) in the first round of the Women's NIT on Friday night.

The Victoria All-Star team is from Australia and beat Big 12 Conference opponent Oklahoma State 70-66 on Sunday.

"We need to work on everything that relates to basketball," Sanderford said. "We still have to get better effort in our defensive transition and our half-court defense. We also still need to get the jitters worked out."



Sanderford said he expects the Victoria team to push the ball up the court and to shoot the ball well.

Last Friday, the Huskers fought off a three-point barrage from Slavyanka (Russia), and defeated the Russian team 83-78.

The Huskers expect to play all 16 players, with the exception of sophomore guard Brooke Schwartz, who will be out for two weeks because of appendectomy surgery she had last week.

First year Assistant Head Coach Jeff Walz said the Huskers are ready for the season to begin, but isn't dismissing exhibition games as simple practice.

"We're trying to prepare for an entire year," Walz said. "It's a long process, and we haven't put everything in right now, and that's why we play these games; but we feel comfortable enough right now that we could start the season."

Sanderford, who is in his first year with the Huskers, has brought in a new high-octane offense, which the players are liking.

Sophomore center Charlie Rogers, who had 13 rebounds and 17 points in just 14 minutes of action against Slavyanka, said the up-tempo style provides everyone with a chance to get more playing time and get more looks at the basket.

"It's a lot of fun," Rogers said. "We're always looking to move the ball up the floor quickly and pressure people on defense. So I think that's going to get a lot of other teams in trouble."

Last year the Huskers were unable to put teams away in the second half of games. That was clear in NU's final six games as they finished 2-4.

Rogers said playing to win is something Nebraska has had to learn.

"I think that was our biggest problem last year, especially the last nine games or so," Rogers said. "It still seems to be a problem, and we need to fix that soon."

NU wins 4th straight

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late the block because the ball was never on the net. We're a small team, and we can't do things like that."

Primarily a young team, the Red Raiders - who upset No. 14 Texas A&M last Saturday in College Station, Texas - were also unable to counter Nebraska's scoring runs. The Huskers grabbed the first game of the match 15-7 after stringing together a 9-1 run that included seven straight points - including two service aces - from junior setter Fiona Nepo.

Then in the second game, Tech blew a 7-4 lead, again succumbing to an NU 11-0 run.

"We're a young team, and we're a little immature," Nelson said. "We've struggled with those runs all year. It was like re-watching three or four of our other games this year."

"If we start tough the first game, we're fine. But if we don't, then it seems like we struggle."

Offensively, the Huskers hurt the Red Raiders from all positions on the net. Outside hitters Angie Oxley and Lisa Reitsma led NU with 11 and 18 kills, while middle blocker Megan Korver pounded 10 with a .318 hitting percentage.

Martin led the Red Raiders with 18 kills.

Pettit said the win was a big one for Nebraska. After losing four of eight matches in October, Nebraska has now won four straight.

"I don't think you look at it as 'We're coming back,'" Pettit said. "It's always a process. Our skills aren't that dominant that if we don't practice hard, we'll just go out and win. We lost two great defensive players in (Renee) Saunders and (Jaime) Kroniak, and it takes a while to get those types of things turned around."

The Huskers will play host to Kansas State Friday and Kansas Saturday before traveling to Tech and Baylor next weekend.

Husker setter ties season best with 3 ace serves

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have to serve some more."

Nepo finished the match with three serving aces, in fact, she was the only Husker to have an ace serve. Her three-ace performance tied her personal match best. She's had three aces twice before.

Nepo added more than serves, though. Over the three games, she had three kills on only eight attempts with a .375 hitting percentage. She had 42 set assists, as is normal for the setter.

Nepo worked on her jump serve all last season, but is more powerful and accurate this year.

"She has a much better jump serve this year," Pettit said.

In game three, Nepo was the Huskers' first server and got Nebraska out to a 2-0 lead. She would add one more Nebraska point later in the game to make it 9-5.

Pettit said the force of Nepo's serve had Tech reeling all night.

"It's one of those things if you get one, the receivers tend to tighten up a little bit," he said. "If it's not a great jump serve, it's an easy ball to pass."

"Fi has the strength to snap it off and make it a tough serve."

Huskers ready to attack ISU

BY SAM MCKEWON
Staff Reporter

Fans might want to sympathize with Iowa State, because the Cyclones won't get any condolences from Nebraska Saturday.

Several Cornhuskers said Tuesday that the close 45-38 overtime victory last Saturday at Missouri and a subsequent drop from No. 1 to No. 3 in The Associated Press polls left the Huskers (9-0 overall and 6-0 in the Big 12 Conference) with something to prove in their last home game of the season.

"I'd feel sorry for the team that plays us this week," junior I-Back Ahman Green said. "We've been rolling all season long and to have a close game in Columbia like that, we just want let it all go these last couple weeks."

Despite the comeback, many NU players saw the Missouri game as the least inspiring game Nebraska had played all year. The Huskers gave up 38 points - the most since 1991 - 386 total yards and 20 first downs. NU's offense did rack up 528 total yards, but had three turnovers, leading to 14 Tiger points.

Senior quarterback Scott Frost, the Big 12's offensive player of the week, said he was unsatisfied with just barely winning.

"Sunday I woke up, and I had a sick feeling to my stomach because we had come so close to losing," Frost said. "This team should never come that close to losing a game like that."

This week NU faces an Iowa State team that has an 1-8 overall record and is 1-5 in the Big 12 conference. The Cyclones have the worst record in the conference, but came close to upsetting Colorado in a 43-38 game last week in Ames, Iowa.

Senior left end Grant Wistrom said another bad game against ISU at home could further damage the Huskers' national image.

"If we go out and have a bad performance against Iowa State, we slip even further in the polls," senior left rush end Grant Wistrom said. "There's no shortage of motivational factors this weekend."

With Iowa State, Nebraska has a chance to exercise what Frost called the "revenge factor" - a chance to work out the kinks in the offensive and defensive schemes and a chance to vent the frustration of a close game in Columbia.

"It makes me kind of mad that we almost gave away what we had worked so hard for," he said. "People talk about having that revenge factor after you get beat, but I hope we have that same attitude even after a close win."

Green saw the game as a big chance to reestablish NU's dominance in the Big 12 and nationally.

"We just want to make sure that people out there who vote still consider us for the title," he said.

NU Coach Tom Osborne didn't speak of revenge, but said he wanted to see his team's emotional response a week after a tight game.

"Our confidence was shaken a little bit," Osborne said. "I'm anxious to see to see how they respond."

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NCAA upsets soccer

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committee seeded some of the teams.

"(The ACC) has been there and done well," Uppinghouse said. "At the same time, when you play those teams and beat them, it's frustrating because the Big 12 isn't getting any recognition."

However, the Huskers now have to prepare for the Wolverines, who finished the season 18-3-1. If NU is to advance past the first round, their tournament road most likely will lead through South Bend, Ind., for a show-

down with No. 2 Notre Dame.

"Optimistically speaking, we are looking forward to playing Notre Dame," Hornbacher said. "We have to take care of business first against Michigan."

Walker said he thought the pairings would resemble the NSCAA Poll. No. 6 Portland is also in the same bracket as Nebraska, Notre Dame and Texas A&M.

"A lot of seeds surprised me," Walker said. "If you look in our bracket, you have four of the top seven teams in the country."

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