

## Huskers need road wins

**ROAD WINS** from page 7

have to execute on the road. You can't get off to a bad start."

And a bad start is what the Huskers had against Kansas. NU trailed 41-30 at halftime.

"Had that game been a road game," Sanderford said, "it would've been difficult to make a comeback."

The players who come off the bench will play a key role in the

Huskers look for a strong season finish, Sanderford said.

But the Huskers aren't looking past Oklahoma or any of the other four remaining teams they close the season with.

"We don't want to be sitting there on the Sunday that the seedings come out for the tournament thinking if we made it or not," Kubik said. "We want to get as many victories as we can to have confidence going into the tournament."

## NU prepares for tough invitational

By JAY SAUNDERS  
Assignment Reporter

A month before college basketball's March Madness, Lincoln will play host to collegiate track and field's February Fury this weekend.



Ingram

Invitational, one of the biggest track meets in the nation.

The invitational usually boasts some of the country's best athletes, but it has not always had college track's full attention. In past years, both Oklahoma and Iowa State held meets on the same weekend. But this year, the Husker Invite is the only big meet of the weekend.

The Iowa State meet and the Oklahoma meet were canceled, which has caused quite a problem for meet director Mark Kostek. Last year, the Husker Invite had 750

entries.

"It's a gigantic meet," Kostek said. "For the first time, I've had to contact coaches to have them limit entries."

If the teams that have competitors are any indication, Kostek might get his wish. This year's meet has some of the top teams from the Pac-10, Big 10, WAC and the Big 12 Conference.

Oklahoma will make its first appearance at the Husker Invite, Kostek said. The Sooners have the returning 4 x 400-meters relay national championship team entered.

The meet will not be scored as a team competition, which puts even more attention on individual performances. Most field events and some running events start at 4 p.m. today.

"This is usually a high-quality meet that is well thought of throughout the country," Kostek said. "The competition will be very tough."

Kostek said the Huskers are using this opportunity to perform in front of a home crowd to prepare for the stretch run of the season. High jumper Shane Lavy is the only Husker who has an NCAA automatic qualifying performance. There are several provisional qualifiers who are hoping to make the jump to an automatic qualifying performance.

Sports Opinion



Jay Saunders

## Big Dance out of reach once again

Here we go again. It's the same old song.

Every year, the Cornhuskers hit a stretch of the season where they win a few conference games. The buzz around Lincoln is that the Huskers are making a run for the NCAA Tournament. All NU needs to do is win at home and steal a few games on the road.

Then, around this time every year, the Huskers go into Columbia, Mo., or Boulder, Colo., and lose a heartbreaker. Then, the unthinkable: a loss at home to a mediocre conference team that should never have come out of Lincoln alive. Thoughts of that berth in the Big Dance shift to talk of the National Invitation Tournament.

Does this sound familiar to you? It should, because it has happened every year since 1994. It is beginning to sound like a broken record.

Nothing has changed this year. Not so long ago, the Huskers were riding high after wins at Oklahoma State and against Oklahoma. Then, NU lost big at Kansas State and Kansas to end its perfect home record. Just one week later, the Huskers lost in overtime at Missouri followed by another home loss to Kansas State.

Just another season of Nebrasketball. Everyone gets excited, and then the collapse comes. You can almost set your watch by it. Everyone wonders what the problem is. Is it the players? How about the coaching? Whatever the problem, a solution needs to be found quickly before fans get fed up with the roller coaster ride.

The roller coaster could go back up this year. If Nebraska wins the rest of its games and grabs a win or two in the conference tournament, a Husker berth in the NCAA Tournament would not be out of the picture; but don't hold your breath.

Not to worry, there is always the NIT. The good old NIT, the tournament that has welcomed the Huskers with open arms. Don't forget NU won the NIT two years ago. But, that is really nothing to be proud of. A good performance in the NIT only shows the potential of teams that couldn't quite make it.

If it comes to the NIT this year, maybe Danny Nee should consider what Eddie Sutton and Oklahoma State did in 1996: Do not accept the invitation. The Huskers would have nothing to prove except mediocrity. Crashing the NIT party might give NU time to regroup for next year so we don't have to hear that worn-out broken record again.

Saunders is a sophomore broadcasting major and Daily Nebraskan assignment reporter.

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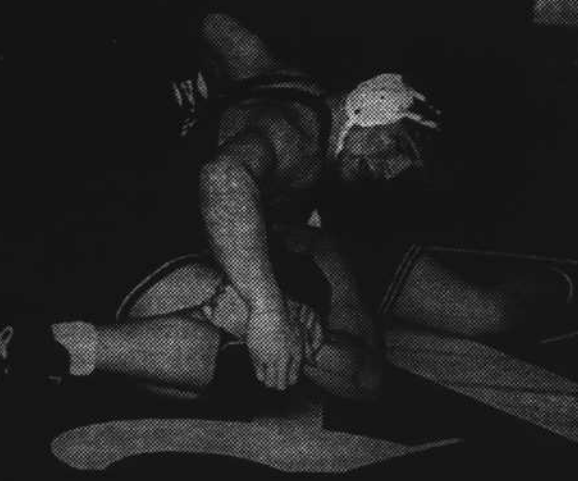
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