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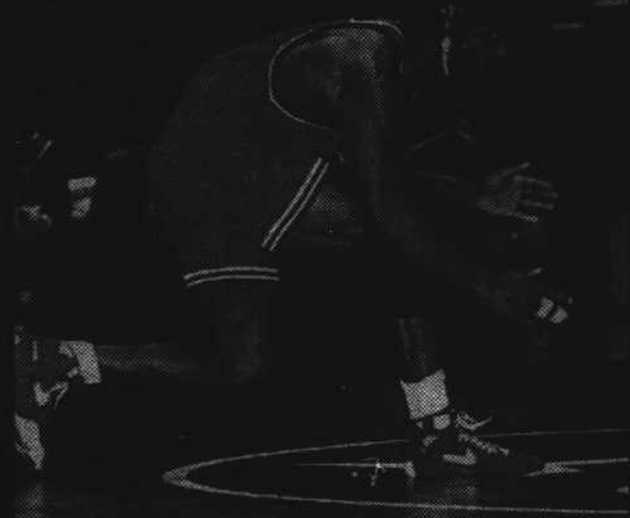
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NU looks to preserve level of consistency

Team nets best start in five years

By LISA VONNAHME
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's tennis team is off to its best start in five years, and consistency will play a key role in determining whether the Cornhuskers can keep it up, NU Coach Kerry McDermott said.

The Huskers get the chance to maintain their consistency this weekend in Wichita, Kan. Nebraska (4-2) will take on the Wichita State Shockers (1-1) Saturday at 6 p.m. Both teams are ranked in the top eight of Region Five.

"It's hard to tell where (the Shockers) are," McDermott said. "We expect a tough match down there. They are a well-coached team, and it is difficult to win there."

The Huskers may be without two of their top six players this weekend.

Junior Joakim Larsson, who is currently listed as the team's No. 6 singles player, will miss the match because of a knee injury and is expected to be out for three weeks.

Senior co-captain Magnus Grahn suffered a groin injury

against Texas Feb. 14 and is questionable for Saturday's match. Grahn is the team's No. 1 singles player.

"Magnus practiced yesterday," McDermott said. "But we still don't know if he'll be able to play. We're just going to have to wait and see."

The team's current high level of play and its consistency will be tested this weekend, McDermott said, especially if both Larsson and Magnus are unable to play.

"The consistency of our play is going to boil down to concentration," McDermott said. "We always have to compete, no matter what the score is or who the opponent is."

Along with continuing their consistent play, the Huskers' goals for the 1998 season include a Big 12 Conference top five finish and making it to the NCAA Region Five playoffs. Nebraska finished 9-15 last year.

Overall, NU hopes to prove itself as the hardest-working team in the country, McDermott said.

"Our schedule consists of teams ranked in the top 45-70 nationally," McDermott said. "Playing these teams will help improve our rankings and confidence."

NU hopes to rebound from losses

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now that they're worried about messing up. They just need to relax and play hard."

Junior infielder Craig Moore, who is hitting .500 through NU's first three games, said the Huskers needed to be confident in their ability to win.

"We had some defensive lapses up there," Moore said.

Van Horn said NU has been working this week on basic communication on the field and taking more control at the plate.

Van Horn said he didn't know much about the Panthers, who finished last season 28-30. The 28 wins was a school record for Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which also finished third place in the Midwest Collegian Conference with a 13-11 record.

The Panthers haven't played a game this season but return six position starters and eight pitchers. Wisconsin-Milwaukee Assistant Coach Scott Doffek said the Panthers didn't know much about their opponent either.

"We have never played them and have never coached against them," Doffek said. "We know it's going to be a challenge."

"We're just happy to get outside and play. We haven't been outside to practice or play yet this season. I hear they are going to have 60 degree weather. That's as good as it gets for us."

Doffek said the Panthers hope to play quality baseball this weekend. However, he does know that UWM pitchers aren't ready to pitch a nine inning game.

"We're not going to treat it like spring training," Doffek said. "We are going to go out there and try to win every game."

Moore said the Huskers weren't overlooking the Panthers but were hoping to get a sweep this weekend to even their season.

A sweep, or at least two wins, Van Horn said, would give NU momentum for its tournament next weekend at Louisville, Ky.

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