

# Sports

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MATT MILLER/DN

NU FRESHMAN GYMNAST Amy Ringo's enthusiasm for the sport has rubbed off on her teammates and helped the Huskers this season.

## Energetic Ringo provides a lift

BY DARREN IVY  
Assignment Reporter

Odds are you won't see Nebraska freshman gymnast Amy Ringo walking around campus any time soon wearing signs that encourage people to come to the Nebraska gym meets.

Mainly because there are 4-foot snow drifts and negative temperatures, which canceled the Cornhuskers' rescheduled dual with Brigham Young Wednesday.

But earlier this year, the upperclass girls made Ringo and the other freshman wear signs that told people to come to the NU meet. Most people would have been embarrassed.

The outgoing Ringo had a ball.

"I love doing stuff like that," Ringo said.

"I am the cheerleader of the group."

Ringo has used her endless supply of energy to provide a boost for the No. 19 Nebraska women's gymnastics team.

Assistant Coach Teresa Ijams said Ringo provides the team with comic relief.

"She has a contagious personality and attitude," Ijams said. "She is always in a good mood and it rubs off."

Ringo said she's always happy because that makes gymnastics enjoyable for her. She said if one can't have fun doing gymnastics,

"*She has a contagious personality and attitude... It rubs off.*"

TERESA IJAMS  
NU assistant coach

one won't last in the sport.

Her personality helps her have fun, she said. It also got her started.

"I was a crazy little kid," Ringo said. "I would always run around the house, so one day my mom decided I could run

around on the gym mats instead."

Growing up, Ringo competed at Xtreme Gymnastics in Phoenix, Ariz. She credits her club coach, Stormy Eaton, for teaching her gymnastics and making her energetic. He died in 1995.

"I looked up to him a lot," Ringo said.

"When I go home and see everybody, it is tough because I think about him."

While at Eaton's club, she said she always looked up to the older girls.

Her mom insisted on going home after Ringo was done with practice, but Ringo often talked her into staying a couple more hours so she could watch the older girls practice.

Putting the extra time and work carried over as Ringo got older. She loves to practice.

"I cry if I miss a day of practice," Ringo said. "If I were going to sit in the dorms all day, I would be bouncing off the walls. (Gymnastics) allows me to put the energy toward something good."

Please see RINGO on 10

## Arkansas aims to hogtie NU

BY SAM MCKEWIN  
Senior Reporter

When you've coached in 35 NCAA Tournament games and won a national championship, not a whole lot can surprise you in the postseason.

That's the position Arkansas Coach Nolan Richardson is in going into his team's matchup with 11th-seeded Nebraska in a 9:20 p.m. game Thursday at the Boise State University Pavilion in Boise, Idaho.

And Richardson said he doesn't plan on taking his sixth-seeded Razorbacks out to the West regional to just show up.

Rather, he's taking a Mickey Mouse approach.

"My goal is to win and go to Disneyland," Richardson said. "I've never been to Disneyland, and there's still a lot of little kid in me. I look forward to trying to get to Disneyland."

The West region's championship game will be played in Anaheim, Calif., March 21.

Richardson said the experience of having won the NCAA Tournament in 1994 and having been to the Final Four twice (1994, 1995) helps Arkansas going into the Big Dance.

"I like this time of year," Richardson said, "because unpredictable things happen. Every year the best team doesn't necessarily win.

It's the team that does the best job over a three-week period."

But before the Razorbacks (23-8) can make a run at the NCAA title, Richardson said, he's focused on beating the Cornhuskers.

Richardson said he has seen Nebraska a couple times on television this season, including a 85-68 loss to Tulsa Dec. 1. But NU has improved since then, Richardson said, and has the looks of a quality foe.

"They won a lot of games late in the season and reached the Big 12 semifinals," Richardson said. "That tells me they are a pretty good team." In order to break the Huskers down, Richardson said, Arkansas will have to execute its patented "40 minutes of hell" pressure defense and force NU into mistakes.

During the season, Arkansas led the Southeastern Conference in forcing 22.7 turnovers per game, averaging 10.6 steal per game against opponents.

That same kind of defensive harassment would help the Razorbacks' chances Thursday, Richardson said.

"We like to score with our defense," Richardson said. "That's a major defense. We have to score with our defense."

Offensively, Richardson said, shooting becomes the main concern.

"*My goal is to win and go to Disneyland.*"

NOLAN RICHARDSON  
Arkansas coach

Three of the Razorbacks' four leading scorers are guards, and leading scorer Pat Bradley has scored most of his 15 points per game from the perimeter.

"It's easy to predict how we'll do," Richardson said. "If Pat Bradley and (guard) Tarik Wallace don't hit some shots we have a hard time winning because we don't have a great inside game."

As for Nebraska, Richardson said, he knows NU has a good point guard in Tyronn Lue and an up-tempo style.

It is a style that has greatly improved the Husker program and a style that gives NU a chance Thursday, Richardson said.

"Basketball has come a long way under Danny Nee," Richardson said. "It seems like in the old days Nebraska used to shoot the ball about once a week."

## Lobos hope Huskers don't destroy dream

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Senior Reporter

When reality finally sinks in for the New Mexico women's basketball team, the Lobos will still be living their dream.

New Mexico wrote a storybook finish Saturday to a mediocre season. After surprising the Western Athletic Conference by winning the league tournament and 14 of their final 16 games, the Lobos earned their first-ever NCAA Tournament berth.

The Lobos (22-6) finished their season as the WAC's seventh-place team but secured one of five league berths.

Eighth-seeded UNM travels to Norfolk, Va., to battle No. 9 seed Nebraska Friday at 6:00 p.m.

"Nebraska is a very good team," Lobo center Katie Kearns said. "But I'm excited. I can't say enough about this. I've always wanted to be in the tournament. I'm already packed."

New Mexico Coach Don Flannigan knows the Lobo's heads won't stay in the clouds for long. Flannigan said Nebraska presents a formidable challenge to the Lobos.

"(The NCAA selection committee) could have made it easier on us," Flannigan said, "but right now we just have to say, 'Bring 'em on.'"

Flannigan said his team has drawn confidence from the selection committee's faith in the WAC. Five league teams earned bids in the Big Dance, compared to four for the Big 12.

"The competition we've faced in the WAC will serve us well," Flannigan said. "Hopefully, everything will just carry over into the tournament."

"I hope the league teams do well. The conference deserves respect at the national level."

The Lobos hope to take advantage of their unlikely opportunity to lead the WAC charge for respect.

Much of the responsibility falls on forward Abby Garchek's shoulders. Garchek leads New Mexico with a 20-points-per-game average and set a WAC Tournament record with 81 points in four games on her way to earning the tournament's most valuable player honor.

But neither Garchek nor Flannigan is satisfied with the Lobos' tournament performance. Both want to hold onto New Mexico's dream season for just a bit longer.

"It's a privilege to play an outstanding team like Nebraska," Flannigan said. "It makes me feel anxious, but I feel really good about how we're playing."