

NU diver hopes to make mark

■ Freshman Amanda Zins will compete in an exclusive NCAA meet this weekend in Texas.

By LISA VONNAHME
Staff Reporter

Amanda Zins has some big shoes to fill.

A freshman diver for the Nebraska women's swimming and diving team, Zins wants to prove she can fill the hole left by T.D. Rowe, a diver who transferred to Minnesota last year.

Starting Friday, Zins will get her chance.

This weekend, Zins will be one of two women and three men representing Nebraska at the NCAA Zone D Diving meet in Austin, Texas. A qualifying score is required by all athletes during regular-season competition for an invitation to the zone meet.

The two-day competition is the only chance Zins will get to qualify for the national championships March 19-21 in Minneapolis. The top six women from combined finishes on the 1- and 3-meter springboards will qualify for the NCAA's.

"I'm not counting myself in and I'm not counting myself out," Zins said. "You have to be solid. It's not a meet for screw-ups."

Because of her hard work this season, Zins said, she has been able to keep up with those who used to be out of her reach.

Zins placed fifth on the 3-meter and seventh on the 1-meter at the Big 12 Conference meet last month.

"I've competed with most of these girls before," Zins said. "This year I've been back and forth with some girls who used to just kick my butt."

Zins, whose athletic career originally began in gymnastics, feels like she's ready for the meet because she's worked harder this year than ever before. In high school, Zins only worked out with her coach once a day for four days a week. Now Zins works out morning and night, either lifting weights or practicing dives.

Zins said she also has tried harder because she has had someone push her this year: her roommate and fellow teammate, Molly McDonald.

"I think we work well together," McDonald said. "We're friends outside of the pool, and when we're in the pool we push each other in friendly competition. We help each other a lot."

Zins, along with McDonald, will be facing strong competition at the zones. The teams at the meet include the Big 12 schools plus Arkansas, Illinois, Southern Methodist and Houston.

"Texas has five girls that could be in there," Zins said. "They have five top divers."

NU senior Kubik adapts to new role

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"I don't know of many kids in my 20 years of coaching that I respect more than I do Jami Kubik," Sanderford said. "We've gotten everything out of her that she's had to offer."

Many coaches wondered if Kubik had enough to offer five years ago when the Cambridge native prepared to make the jump from Class C-2 high school basketball to collegiate basketball. Kubik received walk-on offers from both then-NU Coach Angela Beck and Volleyball Coach Terry Pettit, but did not catch the eye of other Division I programs.

Beck offered Kubik a scholarship at the last minute. Kubik decided to accept, but many questioned her ability.

"When I first got here, it even felt like the coaches were doubting me," Kubik said. "A lot of players can just come into college and everything is natural for them. I had to come in everyday and work hard. I wasn't going to play just because I was here. I had to work hard to prove myself every day in practice."

Kubik's hard work rarely goes unnoticed. Nicole Kubik, a starting guard for NU and Jami's younger sister, said Jami motivates her every day.

NU All-American Anna DeForge agreed.

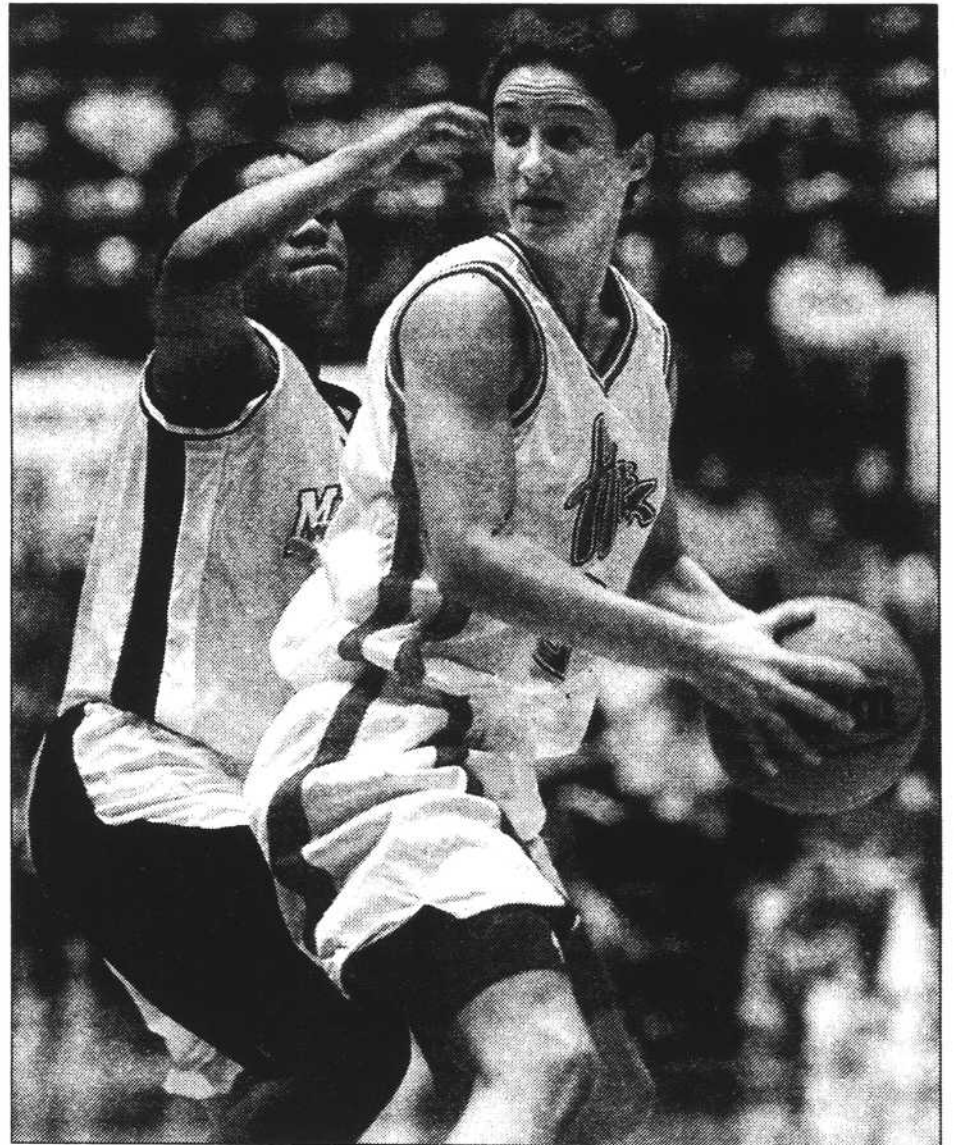
"Jami is kind of the unsung hero on our team," DeForge said. "She'll play gritty defense when we need it. She'll get the loose balls and grab rebounds and steals."

"She's also an offensive option. If she gets it from 15 to 18 feet, she'll knock the shot down."

But offensive statistics never have ranked high on Kubik's list of priorities, especially this year. In her final season as a Husker, Kubik knows exactly what she wants to happen for NU in the NCAA Tournament this weekend.

It's a black-and-white decision.

"I think we can definitely win some games if we go in and execute," Kubik said. "My ideal would be to play the hardest game we can play. I would be really sad to end my career any other way."



MATT MILLER/DN
NU SENIOR JAMI KUBIK has helped motivate the Huskers this season. Nebraska faces New Mexico Friday in the first round of the NCAA Tournament in Norfolk, Va.

Huskers, Lue mean business

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will have to defy their underdog odds – and the Razorbacks' "40 minutes of hell" full-court, pressure defense.

During the season, Arkansas was one of the nation's deadliest defenses, leading the Southeastern Conference in forcing 22.7 turnovers per game and in turnover margin, taking 6.1 turnovers per game more than they commit.

Nee said finding a way to dissect that pressure will pave the way to good looks at the basket.

"That's the key to the game – how we handle that tempo," Nee said. "They're going to make a 100-mile-an-hour-type basketball game. That's what Arkansas basketball is all about."

NU plans to counteract the pressure with Lue, a first-team All-Big 12 selection who averaged 21.3 points and 4.7 assists per game during the season.

Nee said Lue will more than likely play all 40 minutes against the Razorbacks and be responsible for breaking the press. Lue said he has no problems with that.

"I'm going to try to be the primary ball handler against the press and try and break it myself," Lue said. "I don't know how we're going to slow down the tempo, but I'm going to try to."

Offensively, Nee said, Arkansas is a team that runs "no set offense" and will take any shot, anywhere on the floor, whether players are guarded or not.

In a Monday press conference, Arkansas Coach Nolan Richardson agreed with that notion, adding that his team sets up its offense with its defense.

"We don't have a great inside game," Richardson said. "We have to

Men's Basketball Starters NCAA Tournament

Today
Boise State University Pavilion
Boise, Idaho 9:20 p.m.

Nebraska 20-11		Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	PPG	RPG
G	Tyrone Lue	6-0	175	Jr.	21.3	4.4
G	Cookie Belcher	6-3	205	So.	11.1	4.0
C	Venson Hamilton	6-10	235	Jr.	11.1	9.8
F	Chad Johnson	6-6	220	Fr.	3.8	2.9
F	Larry Florence	6-5	220	Jr.	9.0	3.7

Arkansas 23-8		Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	PPG	RPG
G	Pat Bradley	6-2	195	Jr.	15.0	2.8
G	Kareem Reid	6-2	165	Jr.	11.6	2.2
F	Derek Hood	6-8	215	So.	8.5	6.4
F	Nick Davis	6-9	205	So.	10.8	10.2
F	Brandon Davis	6-5	200	Fr.	2.9	0.9

rely on traps in our defense. We don't have a post-up offense."

If those traps are allowed to be set, Nee said, players like guards Pat Bradley (15 points per game) and Tarik Wallace (10.4 points per game) – could go off.

Another concern for the Huskers is depth. While NU uses an eight-man rotation, Arkansas regularly plays 12 men, with all 12 averaging more than 8 minutes per game.

That depth could take a hit today, with forward Derek Hood still nursing a sprained ankle that kept him out of the Razorbacks' '99-74 loss to Kentucky in the semifinals of the SEC Tournament. Richardson said that if Hood is at least 80

percent healthy by game time, he will play.

Hood or no Hood, Nee said, Arkansas can break teams with its waves of players.

"They have major, major depth," Nee said. "You never catch your breath with that tempo."

If Nebraska does defeat Arkansas, they will play again in the second round Saturday at 3:50 p.m. against the winner of the game between No. 3 seed Utah and No. 14 seed San Francisco.

A match with the Utes would reunite Lue with Utah Coach Rick Majerus, who coached Lue last summer for the USA 22 & Under World Championship Team.

Sutton teen set to defend title as ESPN pool winner

HASTINGS (AP) – After watching four to six college basketball games a week, reading numerous articles and listening to others' opinions, Aaron Plettner of Sutton said he's fully prepared to defend his title in the ESPN SportsZone Tournament Challenge – a tournament bracket contest on the Internet.

Plettner, who last year won a \$4,000 prize package – including tickets to this year's NCAA men's basketball Final Four – by collecting the most points

among 176,476 participants in the contest, finished filling out his bracket for this year's 64-team tournament Tuesday night.

Contestants have until Thursday to enter.

Plettner, who correctly picked Arizona to win last year's tournament, said he's banking on the Wildcats to win again this season.

"I've liked Arizona for a long time so to pick them to lose would be hard," said Plettner, a 16-year-old sophomore.

"That's why I picked them to win last year. When you like a team, it's hard to go against them."

Plettner chose Kansas in the Midwest region, Duke in the South and North Carolina in the East to join Arizona in the West in the Final Four, which will be played March 28 and 30 at San Antonio.

In addition to his Final Four teams, Plettner chose Purdue, Kentucky, Connecticut and Utah to reach the Elite Eight. Of those eight, only Utah – a third

seed – is seeded lower than one or two.

Plettner said he tried not to let personal bias for a team affect his picks, except for Arizona, Nebraska and Big 12 teams Kansas, Oklahoma State and Oklahoma.

He chose the Huskers, seeded 11th, to upset sixth-seeded Arkansas in the first round Thursday night.

"It's tough to pick against the home team," Plettner said. "I think Nebraska has a chance to win, but they're really going to have to play well. They've been a little unpredictable this season."

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