

**Sports Opinion**



## Sam McKewon Blue-collar Tobin hears final whistle

CLEVELAND - Crawling north on Interstate 77, you catch your first glimpse of the Cleveland skyline.

Actually, only half of it. The tops of the three skyscrapers that dot the horizon are shrouded in smog and smoke, freshly emitted from the numerous steel mills and ore plants that line the highway.

Cleveland, you see, is a working man's town, one of muscle and might. The industry that lives on the banks of Lake Erie may not be all that pretty, but it gets the job done, produces efficiently and puts food on the table.

Nebraska senior wrestler Ryan Tobin was a great match for Cleveland, home of the NCAA Wrestling Championships March 19 to 21.

Tobin is the working man's champion. He brings his lunch pail to the mat every day. Known for his consummate preparation, Tobin doesn't win in a flashy manner, he just wins.

But what Tobin wanted most was a national title at 190 pounds. He took a redshirt year in 1997 to prepare for it. And best of all, the championships were in Cleveland, a town suited for his style. The stage was set.

If hadn't been for Braveheart, Tobin just might have stolen the show.

Braveheart was the nickname of the top-ranked wrestler at 190 pounds, Jason Robison of Edinboro (Pa.) College. On the cover of Edinboro's media guide, you can find Robison sitting on a horse with his face painted, wielding a sword. Apparently, Edinboro thought Robison looked a lot like Mel Gibson.

Still, Robison buried his opponents. Up until his match with Tobin, Robison had pinned all of his opponents - quite easily.

When Robison met Tobin, there was no pin. Both were in for a match that would come down to the end.

Tobin tied Robison 3-3 after the first period and executed his game plan the way he wanted to.

"Ryan did everything he was supposed to in the match," NU Coach Tim Neumann said. "Robison did nothing we hadn't prepared for."

But in the end, Robison wore Tobin down. Both were dead tired, and Robison had a little more in the tank to win 10-7. It was a disappointing end to a quest that had begun 24 months before.

"Ryan couldn't have done anymore to prepare for this match, for this championship, than he did," Neumann said. "He worked very hard to get here. He just didn't win."

Tobin knows he did what he could. In the working man's world, that's not always enough. After finishing fourth Tobin told reporters that "retirement was looking better and better."

Spoken like a true working man.

Sam McKewon is a sophomore news-editorial and political science major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.

## New leaders rush ahead

### Kelsay, Rucker to fill shoes of seniors

**Spring Football '98**



BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Senior Reporter

People are watching Mike Rucker and Chad Kelsay. They are watching the Nebraska rush ends in the weight room, off the football field and on the field during the Cornhuskers' spring practices.

They are watching because Rucker and Kelsay have big shoes to fill and even bigger names to replace. Gone are NU All-Americans and first-round draft picks Grant Wistrom and Jason Peter, whose leadership roles stretched beyond their statistical dominance.

And Rucker and Kelsay, both preseason All-America candidates, know they have to fill the void.

"Where before, you took your helmet off between drills, you don't any more. And you say something to those that do," Rucker said. "You do that one extra rep in the weight room instead of cutting a couple out. You play for the team, but you play for yourself and the pride you have."

"Whether you know it or not, people are watching you."

Rucker and Kelsay have commanded the attention with their success on the field in 1997 and strong work ethic throughout winter conditioning. NU Defensive Line Coach Nelson Barnes said.

The two alternated at left rush end in 1997, but Rucker will move to the right side to replace Wistrom. Kelsay finished last season as NU's 10th-leading tackler with 34 total and 13 solo stops. He ranked fourth on the team with 14 quarterback hurries.

Rucker ended the year eighth in tackles with 38 (17 solo) and second in sacks and tackles for losses.

But because of the loss of Wistrom and Peter, Barnes said, Rucker and Kelsay will have to produce more than just statistically next fall.

"Around here, there's a tradition that when the senior class leaves, the next few guys have to step up and take that leadership role," Barnes said. "And it didn't just start last year with Grant Wistrom. Guys like Jarod



MICHAEL WARREN/DN

**AFTER RUNNING DRILLS with the rush ends in Schulte Fieldhouse, Nebraska senior Mike Rucker wipes the sweat from his brow while waiting for the next set of drills to begin.**

Tomich were All-Americans and established that great defensive-line tradition. Mike and Chad just know that it's their turn.

"Both have stepped up big time. They're no longer taking that back-seat attitude."

Rucker and Kelsay will lead a talented group of defensive linemen in 1998.

Four letter winners with limited experience will back up Rucker and Kelsay at the rush end positions this

fall: Kyle Vanden Bosch, Brandon Mooberry, Travis Toline and Aaron Wills.

Steve Warren and Jason Wiltz return at nose tackle and defensive tackle.

Providing leadership to the group has been a necessary adjustment.

"Last year, we were behind guys that were stars," Kelsay said. "When you have athletes like that, it's easy to

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## NU still winless in conference

BY ANDREW STRNAD  
Staff Reporter

Missouri slugged 11 home runs Wednesday night in a doubleheader sweep of the Cornhuskers at Simmons Field in Columbia, Mo.

The Huskers (12-10 overall and 0-3 in the Big 12 Conference) were out-slugged in the first game 21-9 before dropping the night cap 12-8.

NU led the Tigers 8-5 after seven innings in game two, but Missouri scored seven unanswered runs in the eighth inning.

The Tigers were led by right-fielder Ryan Fry who went 6 for 8 in the doubleheader with four homers, seven RBIs and six runs scored.

Fry hit a pair of home runs in both games and became the school's all-time RBI leader in the second game.

Sophomore right-hander Chad Wiles started the second game for the Huskers and pitched four innings, surrendering five runs, before junior lefty Jay Sirianni took over.

Sirianni pitched until the middle of the seventh after allowing two runs to the Tigers.

Senior Tevis Arnold (0-1) came on with one out in the seventh and gave up the go-ahead runs and the Huskers couldn't recover.

Third baseman Danny Kimura drove in half of NU's eight runs with a 2-for-4 effort.

Husker right-fielder Donny Starkins also clubbed a homer, his fourth of the season.

The first game was disastrous from the beginning for Nebraska as the Tigers scored 14 runs in the first three innings.

NU starter Kenny Duebelbeis (1-3) lasted only one inning. The senior was shelled for six runs on six hits.

Junior Jarod Beringer pitched the next two innings and gave up eight runs on seven hits. After the second game, NU's team earned-run average had risen from 4.23 to 5.29 in one day.

Missouri feasted on the Huskers in the first game, hitting a Big 12-record nine home runs.

Fry, Griffin Moore and Jake Epstein each jacked a pair of round trippers.

The game was called after seven innings because of the Big 12 doubleheader mercy rule.

The Huskers will continue Big 12 play this weekend as they play a three-game weekend series in Manhattan, Kan., against Kansas State.

## Ringo, Huskers look for win in Arizona

BY DARREN IVY  
Assignment Reporter

When asked how she felt about going back to Arizona Saturday to compete at the NCAA Regional meet, Nebraska freshman gymnast Amy Ringo got a wide grin on her face and said, "I'm so excited."

"My whole club, family and relatives will be there."

This isn't the first homecoming for the Phoenix native.

At the Feb. 20 Arizona State Classic, Ringo, who was sick the entire week before the meet, posted a 9.15 in the vault, a 9.60 on the floor exercise and a 9.275 on the balance beam.

But she is healthy this time.

"I will show them what I can

really do," Ringo said.

NU Coach Dan Kendig hopes Ringo and the rest of the Husker gymnasts will show the same stuff they did at the Big 12 Championships - where Nebraska posted the second-best score in school history - and qualify for the NCAA Championships held April 16-18 in Los Angeles.

Standing in No. 10 Nebraska's way is No. 3 Utah, No. 9 Arizona State, No. 11 Brigham Young and No. 22 Arizona.

"We have a strong, if not the strongest, region in the country with four teams in the top 11," Kendig said. "I think that each of the top four teams should qualify for nationals if they hit their routines this weekend. It all comes down to who hits."

Kendig said Utah has won the region every year, but he said he thought NU had a good shot at winning this year.

"This is the time of year where you have to be at your best," Kendig said. "I feel that if the girls all stay focused, they are capable of doing that right now."

What the Huskers have going their way is that they are performing in the same rotation they did at Big 12s and at last year's regional when they finished third.

NU sophomore Heather Brink said the rotation will be especially beneficial to her.

"I've always done well with beam first," said Brink, who posted a school-record all-around score of 39.575 at the Big 12 meet. "It's nice to get beam done early."

For its rotation, NU will have a bye to start off and then go on balance beam. After beam they go bye, floor exercise, bye, vault and end up on uneven bars.

Normally, teams don't have byes, but junior Jess Swift didn't think the Huskers would have trouble adjusting. During the byes, Swift said, the girls will relax and visualize their next routines.

"We start on the beam, and the momentum will build," Kendig said.

Kendig said he hoped a good start would translate into a lot of energy for the vault and floor exercise routines.

If that happens, Kendig said, NU will meet its goal.

"We are looking at (the meet) to be a means to the end," Kendig said. "A means to the NCAA."