

Runners set for home meet

BY LISA VONNAHME
Staff writer

With Division I, II and III teams competing Saturday at the Woody Greeno/Nebraska Invitational, the Nebraska men's and women's cross country teams are going to face many different calibers of athletes.



Dirksen

"There's a lot of runners out there," NU Coach Jay Dirksen said, "from the country's best to the pretty poor."

The meet, which is sponsored by NU and Nebraska Wesleyan, will be held at Pioneers Park in Lincoln and will begin with the women's race at 9:30 a.m. The men's race is scheduled to follow at 10:15 a.m.

Dirksen called the race a low-key, first meet of the season for most of the athletes.

"We didn't want a meet that was going to be real tough," Dirksen said. "But we wanted to have enough schools, so there were some people running out there."

In the past, the meet has been primarily made up of state schools that came into Lincoln the morning of the race.

This year, however, with Big 12 Conference schools such as Kansas State, Texas and Texas Tech entered, the competition will be up a level from last year.

The Big 12 schools, also including Oklahoma State in the women's competition, join the invitational to test out the course in preparation for the Big 12 Championships scheduled for Oct. 31 at Pioneers Park.

Dirksen said he is expecting a large crowd at the meet and sees the home-team advantage as a major benefit to the Cornhuskers. Freshman runner Jeanette Zimmer agreed.

"The course is difficult and a little confusing," said Zimmer, who was named Big 12 Runner of the Week on Sept. 7. "It's real easy to get disoriented because it's hard to figure out where you are and where you need to go."

Because the NU cross country teams have been focusing on long runs rather than race specifics and times, junior Tony Smith said the runs will help the Huskers on the 8,000-meter men's course and 5,000-meter women's course Saturday.

"It's a tough course, and endurance is really going to make the difference," Smith said. "We're in good shape, so we'll be able to deal with it."

With 501 athletes entered in Saturday's meet, Dirksen said the course is going to be full. NU entered eight men and 11 women. The top five from each team will be scored.

"One of the reasons this is a good meet," Dirksen said, "is that it gives us a chance to see where we're at without having the pressure of being against the top teams in the country."

LMU coach not afraid of NU

BY JAY SAUNDERS
Staff writer

A sold-out crowd for volleyball at the NU Coliseum has been known to intimidate even the most veteran teams.

But the pressure of playing in the Coliseum doesn't impress Loyola Marymount Coach Steve Stratos.

"There is a freeway here in Southern California called the 405," Stratos said. "I drive that every day to work."

"Now that is pressure." Loyola Marymount is one of three teams that will have to face a hostile crowd this weekend in the US Bank Invitational. Along with the No. 15 Lions, the No. 3 Cornhuskers entertain No. 10 Florida and Wyoming.

The field is similar to last season, when three of the teams were ranked as

well. If this year's tournament goes anything like the 1997 version, Wyoming (4-2) could have a long weekend ahead of them. George Mason, the only unranked team last year, didn't win a match.

The Cowgirls are also winless against Nebraska in 14 matches. Despite that, Wyoming Coach Susan Judge said, she is anxiously awaiting the opportunity to play ranked teams.

"Being the only unranked team," Judge said, "we are probably being considered the runts of the tournament. But we don't feel that limits our capability to compete and win."

Wyoming returns four starters from last year's 19-12 season. Loyola Marymount is in a much different situation. LMU (6-0) has only one senior on its roster. Stratos said the tournament will be a good experience for his younger players.

"The idea is to grow up a little for our very good conference schedule," Stratos said. "This has to be one of the finest tournaments of the year."

The tournament is made stronger with the appearance by the No. 10 Gators. Florida is the only team in this year's invite to have beaten the Huskers.

Florida (5-1) returns four starters from last year's Final Four team, including American Volleyball Coaches' Association Player-of-the-Year candidate Jenny Manz.

With the emphasis on strength of schedule in deciding NCAA tournament teams, Judge said the caliber of talent in the US Bank Invitational can do nothing but help all the teams involved.

"There is no such thing as a bad loss in this tournament," Judge said. "We are hoping to get better. That is why we are playing better teams this year."

Cookout Tonight

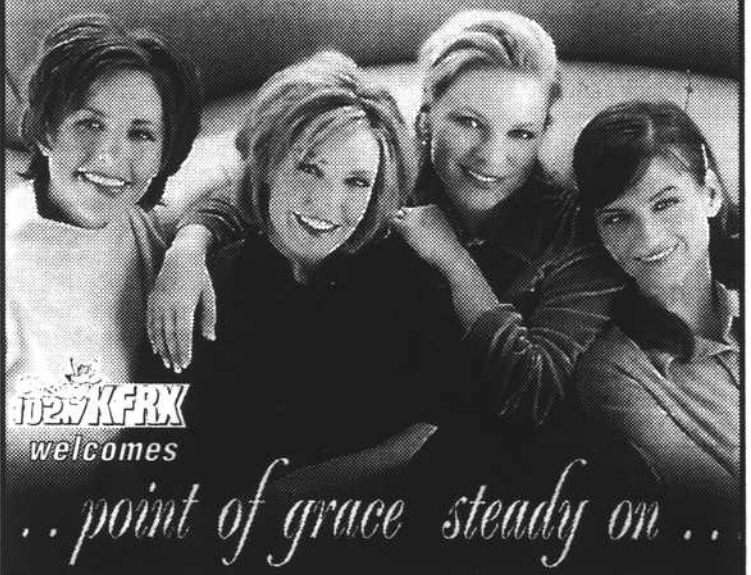
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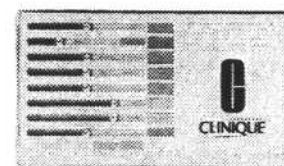
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