

Winter Sports Preview

Wrestlers adapting to new rules for dieting

BY LISA VONNAHME
Staff writer

For college wrestlers, gone are the days of plastic suits, saunas and hot rooms.

Gone are the days of procrastinating to make weight for a duel or tournament.

Now, because of new wrestling weight rules created by the NCAA Safety Committee in April, collegiate wrestlers around the nation are focusing on healthy lifestyles rather than quick water loss as their means of making weight.

And NU Wrestling Coach Tim Neumann said the new rules have made the sport of wrestling a "scientific game" in which the players must keep up with strict diets and training regimens.

"It's a whole new mind set now," Neumann said. "The guys used to stay 10 pounds overweight until 24 hours before they had to make weight."

"Now, they've had to act like they were in season two months before the season actually started. They have to eat right, sleep right and take vitamins. They simply have to be healthier."

And being healthier has been the focus of the Cornhusker wrestling team this year. Neumann, along with Assistant Coaches Mark Cody and Jason Kelber, has drilled into the NU wrestlers' minds the importance of staying hydrated and eating proper foods.

That concept has been difficult for the NU grapplers to grasp. In previous years of weight cutting, wrestlers became accustomed to dropping excess pounds by way of shedding water weight through the use of plastic suits, saunas and 85-degree work-out rooms.

"In the past, guys in general would procrastinate to lose their weight until too close to the time of weigh-ins," Kelber said. "Then we'd lose a lot of water weight, which is easy to lose fast, but it's hard on your body."



NEBRASKA WRESTLER Jose DeAnda of South Sioux City is one of the many wrestlers across the nation dealing with the new regulations the NCAA has implemented for this season. MIKE WARREN/DN

"Now the guys have to be more nutritionally sound. They have to be conscious of their diet instead of eating all junk food."

With the help of Dave Ellis, NU coordinator of performance nutrition, the Nebraska coaches began in late August to teach the wrestlers how to be more health conscious.

"Teaching this new lifestyle has been hard," Kelber said. "The guys had to watch their weight toward the end of the summer when most students were out having fun and eating cheeseburgers and pizza."

"They had to be disciplined enough to start watching their weight and trimming down so they could establish their minimum weight by Oct. 1."

On Oct. 1, the Huskers took a series of tests, including a hydration check and a body fat check, that determined the minimum weight at which they could compete at this season. The wrestlers' hydration levels will be tested again on Dec. 1.

Because of these early tests, the team had to begin intense training early in the season — something members had never done before.

"We've never gone this hard this early before," Neumann said. "These rules are making the wrestling season very long. We've been going hard for 2½ months, and we haven't even competed yet!"

With a few exceptions, the NU coaches agreed the team has done well with understanding that procrastination and water loss are not the ways to

shed excess pounds.

"I think the majority of the team has become really health conscious," Kelber said. "There's about a quarter of them who are still having a hard time, but it takes a lot of discipline to be so conscious of what you eat and how much you work out."

Because this season marks the inaugural year of these new rules, many consider this season as somewhat of an experiment.

"I don't know if all of these new rules are polished yet," Ellis said. "I think there will have to be some changes made next year, but this is definitely a step in the right direction for the sport of wrestling."

Sanderford builds upon success of NU's victories

NU coach focuses on promoting the program in new ways

BY JAY SAUNDERS
Staff writer

When people look at Paul Sanderford, they may think he is just in the business of coaching.

But the Nebraska women's basketball coach says he works in another profession: construction.

"Building a basketball team is a lot like building a house," Sanderford said. "You start with a solid foundation and good fundamentals and hard work."

When Sanderford came to Nebraska from Western Kentucky two years ago, he left a 15-year-old house behind.

With Sanderford as its foreman, WKU notched 365 wins and went to the NCAA tournament 12 times.

The Sanderford Construction Company started with a 23-5 foundation last season at Nebraska, but the coach said he doesn't want to make the Huskers a one-year phenomenon.

"I am not interested in having a good team," Sanderford said. "I want a good program."

"I want to win 25 games next year, and 28 the year after that."

Sanderford, who grew up on a farm in North Carolina, has never been accustomed to losing.

In his third season at Western Kentucky, the Lady Toppers made it to the NCAA tournament. And last season, Sanderford's first Cornhusker team advanced to the postseason.

But even before basketball, Sanderford achieved success. He was a two-sport athlete in high school, and was an All-American in baseball at Louisburg (N.C.) Junior College. That happens to be the same school NU Volleyball Coach Terry Pettit started his coaching career.

Sanderford went on to play minor league baseball five years as a catcher.

It was in the minor leagues, Sanderford said, that introduced him to all different kinds of marketing techniques.

He has carried that knowledge of marketing to Nebraska.

When he arrived in Lincoln, Sanderford wanted the Athletic Department to make home games free for students. He also sends shuttles to and from residence halls before and after games.

"I very much believe in promoting the program and the players," Sanderford said. "If I have to act crazy, I'll do it."

Perhaps Sanderford's craziest marketing scheme was the creation of "Heavy P."

Last season, in a commercial for the CableVision Classic, Sanderford rapped a song written by senior Kate Benson to promote the two-day tournament.

This year, "Heavy P" is back. But this time, he is singing the basketball blues. A bass player and three dancers fill out the Sanderford band.

"I think rap is more my style," he said. "But I think it is a good idea that I stick with my day job."

On the sideline and in practice, people may see Sanderford with a gruff exterior. His no-nonsense attitude on the court has gotten him victories, but it also creates headlines.

At a practice last season, Sanderford dropped a basketball into the stands at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Then there's the speaker system Sanderford uses in practice, which makes former Alabama Football Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant's tower pale in comparison.

Sanderford attaches a microphone to his shirt, making sure every player — and anyone who might be in Bob Devaney Sports Center at the time — can hear him when he yells at a player. It's Sanderford in stereo.

But those same players say the people that criticize Sanderford are the ones that don't know him.



NU WOMEN'S BASKETBALL COACH PAUL SANDERFORD says all he asks of his players is everything they have to give. This season, he is hoping to create a flurry of excitement and victories. MATT MILLER/DN

"There is Coach Sanderford on the court, and there is Paul Sanderford off the court," junior Brooke Schwartz said. "He's a teddy bear."

In his first season at Nebraska, it was Coach Sanderford the players had to deal with first.

Both Benson and Schwartz said Sanderford's style and coaching system was a far cry from the previous season when Angela Beck prowled the sidelines.

"I personally felt I wouldn't live up to his expectations," Benson said. "We weren't the players he recruited. But I felt it was an easy transition."

Schwartz said she respects Sanderford because he is not afraid to take the blame if something is his fault.

The 5-foot-9 guard from Gering said what she really loves is the Sanderford system of offense that encourages scoring and rebounding.

"I like his style," Schwartz said. "There is not a

better offense than what he has."

The offense is just part of the house that is the Sanderford system.

Last season, Nebraska led the Big 12 in scoring with 77.5 points per game. NU also tied a school record for wins in a season.

This year, Sanderford said he is hoping the team can take a step forward in building the Husker house.

"Some years you have wood siding, some years you go vinyl and some years you are able to use a brick siding," Sanderford said. "It just depends on how much you are willing to put in it."

Sanderford said he is willing to put a lot into his job at Nebraska, in part because coaching really beats the alternative.

"I don't know how to do anything else except for farm," Sanderford said. "And I don't want to go back to the farm."