

# Women start hoop season

By JAY SAUNDERS  
Staff writer

For three weeks, the Nebraska women's basketball team members have been beating up on each other in practice.

The closest the Cornhuskers have gotten to real competition is Myjava of Slovakia.

But this weekend, the season starts for real. NU takes on South Alabama in the first round of the CableVision Classic. Tonight's game tips off at 8:05 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"It is a really big weekend," junior Charlie Rogers said. "Not only is it our

first game, but we have some really big teams coming in here."

If Nebraska wins, the Huskers will face the winner of tonight's other semifinal between Arizona and Wisconsin-Green Bay.

The championship game will be played at 3:35 p.m. Sunday. Friday night's losers will play in the consolation game at 1:05 p.m. Sunday.

Rogers said the Huskers don't plan on playing in the first half of Sunday's doubleheader.

"There is always pressure to win at home," Rogers said. "When you're at home, and it's your tournament, it adds something."

This week, while the Huskers pre-

pared for the CableVision Classic, NU Coach Paul Sanderford also started to solidify the program's future.

Four recruits signed letters of intent during this week's early signing period.

The recruiting class is highlighted by 6-foot-2 Stephanie Jones out of Omaha. Jones is joined by forward Paige Sutton out of Las Vegas. Sutton, who is also 6-foot-2, chose Nebraska over Northwestern, Rice and New Mexico.

NU also signed Shahidrah Roberts, who is from Overland Park, Kan., was the Eastern Kansas League player of the year in 1997. Fellow Kansan Keasha Cannon rounds out the Huskers' early season signings.

# Meet will make or break title hopes

By LISA VONNAHME  
Staff writer

The stakes are high for the Nebraska men's and women's cross country teams this weekend.

If the Cornhuskers finish in the top two at the Midwest Regional Championships, or if they earn an at-large berth, the teams will qualify for the NCAA meet, and their seasons will continue. If not, the Huskers will be running in their last meet of the season Saturday.

"Based on what we've done this year, I don't think people are expecting a whole lot from us," NU Cross Country Coach Jay Dirksen said. "But I do think the women have a legitimate shot at qualifying for the NCAA meet."

# Hamilton, Belcher keys to strong season for NU basketball

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hard," Belcher said. "He was motivated."

Hamilton said he can't understand how he can be overrated when he was never rated in the first place. But he said he doesn't let it bother him too much.

Instead, Hamilton is concentrating on being a go-to player. Coaches expect Hamilton to be double- and triple-teamed each time he touches the ball. Hamilton said he's worked at reading defenses and finding the open man.

"I have a lot of confidence in our shooters," Hamilton said. "When I throw it out, I expect them to hit it."

Belcher is one of those men Hamilton has confidence in. Over the summer, Belcher worked on his shooting while playing on an All-Star team that went to Greece.

Belcher has started all 55 games in a Nebraska uniform, but most of them have been in the shadow of other superstars. As a sophomore, he was third on the team with an 11.1 points-per-game average. This year, Belcher is seen as a top scoring threat on the outside.

"Everyone looks at me to be a go-to guy," Belcher said. "I want to get my name out, so people know who I am."

At point guard will be Joe Holmes, a 5-foot-11, 195-pound transfer from Tyler (Texas) Community College.

Against Pella Windows, Holmes was a bit shaky, but he showed he is capable of leading the team, Nee said. Holmes had 1 point, one assist and no turnovers.

"We don't need him to score a whole lot," Nee said. "We look at him as an assist man. We want him to be a floor general, getting us into our offense and defense."

Freshman Cary Cochran also may see some action at the point this season.

Junior Larry Florence and senior Andy Markowski are the other returning starters. Another player, sophomore Chad Johnson, started 10 games last season.

"(Johnson) is one of our most improved players," Nee said. "He's very versatile. He can play the two, three or four position. He played the four last season. We need him to concentrate on his consistency. He has the talent and ability."

Nee said there are many other quality players on the bench, which makes him think depth will be a team strength.

"We are going to try to develop the bench early," Nee said. "Tyronn played 35 minutes a game last year. I don't want anyone playing over 30 minutes this year. We think we have a good player to back up the starter at each position."

"Hopefully, this will save us so we can be a better, healthier team in March."

While the Huskers have the national meet in the backs of their minds, the NU men and women are approaching Saturday's meet in Wichita, Kan., with different outlooks.

The women, who are ranked fourth in the region of 30 teams, are coming into Saturday's 5,000 meter race with the NCAA meet as their primary focus, NU team captain Melissa Wilson said.

"We're thinking that this race is our key to nationals," Wilson said. "If we were thinking that this could be our last race of the season, then we would be doubting ourselves, and that would be to our disadvantage."

The Nebraska women will be assisted by the return of sophomore Amy Wiseman, who has been unable to compete during most of the season because of illness. Wiseman finished fifth in last year's regionals, and she and freshman Jeannette Zimmer are expected to lead NU, Dirksen said.

"With Amy healthy, there's definitely a good chance the women will be in the top two," Dirksen said. "An at-

large berth is doubtful for the women.

"If they want to run at NCAAs, they must be one or two. They're going to have to run their best times to do that."

The NU men are going into regionals with the opposite approach of the women. The Huskers, who are not ranked in the region, are looking at Saturday's 8,000-meter race as their last of the season, NU sophomore Marcus Witter said.

"There's a little added pressure for this meet, because we're approaching it like it will be our last," Witter said. "If it's not, that's great. If it is, we're going to really show them what we can do."

Witter and Dirksen said much of this attitude came from the loss of All-American Jeroen Broekzitter. Because hamstring cramping did not allow him to finish most of NU's races, Broekzitter created a question mark for the men's team.

"Losing Jeroen absolutely took our chances away of competing in championships," Dirksen said. "He was going to be a way for us to get to NCAAs."

# Sanderford sets sights on bigger crowds, faster action for women's hoops

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"But if we get offensive rebounds, we have a chance."

He then gave a grocery list of good reasons why the Huskers need to follow their own shots.

"Most of them are inside and close to the basket. We get second shots and put-backs. We go to the free-throw line. We need to create those opportunities to score."

Freshman Candace Blackbird said the team is getting the message.

"We work on it every day," she said. "Rebounding is everything. If we lack in every other area, we can make up for it by rebounding the basketball."

Sanderford said it is more important for his Huskers to win in March. He said the effects of controlling the boards in the postseason are well-documented.

"Look at Louisiana Tech and Tennessee last season," he said. "They finished No. 1 and No. 2 in rebounding."

Consequently, they also played for the NCAA Championship.

Blackbird said the Huskers have big postseason expectations.

"Our goals are to win the Big 12 and get to the Sweet 16," she said.

# Nebraska to challenge Aggies for third time

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Guerrieri, however, said all the advantages are with NU because it has won both games. To upset the Huskers, Guerrieri said A&M has to put away its shots.

"We need to find a way to finish our opportunities, which is something we couldn't do in San Antonio," Guerrieri said. "We had chances, and Karina (LeBlanc) made some monster saves."

Nebraska, meanwhile, has to be more aggressive and concentrate on its defense, Eddleman said.

"We have to be a lot more physical," said Eddleman, who was red carded in the last meeting. "They were being stronger than us - knocking us off the ball."

Both teams will play hard, but how this year's saga will end is an unknown.

"Anything can happen," Eddleman said. "We've been in these situations before, so we know what we have to do to get the job done."

# Baylor faces tough odds against No. 3 Nebraska

By JAMES NICAS  
Staff Writer

Tonight, Baylor doesn't figure to have much of a chance against the No. 3 Nebraska volleyball team.

The Bears are going into the match having never won a game in six previous meetings against the Cornhuskers. In those matches, BU has never scored more than 22 points in a match.

So excuse BU Coach Brian Hosfeld if he wants his team to walk before it can run against the Cornhuskers.

"We are going in looking to win points, and then hopefully a game," Hosfeld said. "If we focus on getting points, anything could happen."

If the Bears keep playing like they have been, Hosfeld might be right.

Baylor enters the match winning six of its last seven matches, including a victory over Texas A&M. Last weekend, BU swept both Kansas and Oklahoma.

"They've played some good matches recently," said NU Coach Terry Pettit. "(Elisha) Polk is a really talented athlete, they are a well-coached team, and they are playing hard."

Polk, the reigning Big 12 player of the week, figures to be a key in the match. She leads the Big 12 in kills, averaging 4.94 per game.

"Elisha felt like she didn't play her best game the first time we played Nebraska," Hosfeld said. "She is certainly going to show up and play one of her better matches."

Hosfeld said he knows Baylor will be facing one of the best teams in the nation when they play Friday night.

This season, the Huskers have swept 20 of their 23 opponents, while allowing an average of 7 points per match. NU currently ranks first nationally in blocks per game (4.05), and sixth nationally with a .304 team hitting percentage.

After watching the Penn State-Wisconsin match last weekend, Hosfeld said the Huskers stack up favorably to the Nittany Lions.

"They appear to be a better team in depth and speed than Penn State," Hosfeld said. "The speed of their offense makes it very difficult to play against them."

Nebraska plays Texas Tech on Saturday. The Red Raiders are ranked No. 23 in the nation. The matches will represent the last home matches for the Huskers this season.



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There's a reason it looks like goose bumps.

The Husker women's basketball team hosts the CableVision Classic.  
Friday, November 13 -- NU vs. S. Alabama at 8:35 p.m.  
Sunday, November 15 -- Consolation game at 1:05 p.m.  
-- Championship game at 3:35 p.m.  
All games at the Devaney Center.  
For tickets call 472-3111.

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