

NU to face Villanova in Alaska

By ADAM KLINKER
Staff writer

The Nebraska men's basketball team takes to the north tonight with a first round game against Villanova in the Top of the World Classic in Fairbanks, Alaska.

The Cornhuskers are 1-0 in the regular season with a 79-59 win over North Carolina-Greensboro and will face a Nova team that is opening its regular season and coming off its worst season in six years.

Before last season's 12-17, the Wildcats had put together five straight 20-plus win seasons, made three NCAA Tournaments and won an NIT title in 1994.

"They've got a good squad," said NU point guard Cookie Belcher. "We're going to have to play a lot better than we have been playing."

In the young season, the Huskers have been troubled by turnovers and inconsistent play on offense, Belcher said.

Though NU shot 62 percent from the field against UNC-Greensboro, the Huskers also turned the ball over 22 times and exhibited an up-and-down personality in the second half, said NU center Venson Hamilton.

"Villanova is going to be a tough game for us," Hamilton said. "We're going to have to practice hard and focus on trying to get over some of these problems we've had."

Top of the World Classic, 12 a.m. CST, Fairbanks, Ala

Nebraska (1-0) Rankings: None

Pos.	No.	Name	H/L/Yr.	PPG	RPG
F	15	Chad Johnson	6-8/Sr.	6.0	3.0
F	44	Andy Markowski	6-8/Sr.	10.0	4.0
C	4	Venson Hamilton	6-10/Sr.	13.0	11.0
G	30	Cookie Belcher	6-4/Jr.	18.0	3.0
G	21	Joe Holmes	5-11/Jr.	2.0	2.0

Villanova (0-0) Rankings: None

Pos.	No.	Name	H/L/Yr.	PPG	RPG
F	15	Mark Allen	6-10/Jr.	8.3	5.8
C	31	Rafal Bigus	7-1/Sr.	8.2	5.1
G	22	Howard Brown	6-5/Sr.	13.1	5.3
G	13	John Celestand	6-3/Sr.	13.2	4.1
G	10	Jermaine Medley	6-0/Sr.	6.2	1.8

JON FRANK/DN

Nova returns four starters from last year's squad including senior guard Howard Brown, who averaged 13.1 points per game in 1997-98 and also pulled down 5.3 rebounds per game.

Also returning is 7-foot-1 senior center Rafal Bigus, who will match up with Hamilton underneath the boards. Last season, Bigus averaged 5 rpg. So far this season, Hamilton leads the Huskers with 11 rpg.

Among the other teams in the Top of the World Classic are Arkansas, New Mexico State and Virginia, Washington State, Wisconsin and Alaska-Fairbanks, the host team, rounding out the rest of the field.

"We're going to see some good teams up there," NU Coach Danny Nee said. "(Villanova) is going to be a good opponent for us."

ND coach says Irish wary of NU

By JAY SAUNDERS
Staff writer

No one can blame the Notre Dame women's soccer team if it is remembering the second round of last year's NCAA tournament.

That's because last season, the Fighting Irish handed Nebraska its worst loss of the season; a 6-0 performance that sent the Cornhuskers home.

After beating Michigan 3-0 in this year's second round, Notre Dame is looking at a familiar name in the tournament bracket.

The No. 4 Fighting Irish (20-2-1) will play host to Nebraska at 6:30 p.m. Friday.

"I am sure it will be a good game," Notre Dame Coach Chris Petrucelli said. "(Nebraska) has obviously done very well."

The Huskers did do well in the second round, beating Big 12 Conference rival Texas A&M 7-0 to set up their meeting with the Irish.

Petrucelli said he doesn't care about game scores. That is because last season, Notre Dame beat Big East rival Connecticut 6-0 in the conference final.

The Huskers turned around and upset Notre Dame in the NCAA tournament.

"I don't pay much attention to what the score was," Petrucelli said. "The fact that they beat A&M makes them a quality team."

Notre Dame has also had some quality wins coming into this weekend. The Fighting Irish

have allowed only one goal in their last five games. Notre Dame's attack-style offense has accounted for 21 goals in that same time frame.

Junior goalkeeper LaKeysia Beene has allowed only 13 goals all season (0.60 goals against average), and five came in one game against then-No. 1 North Carolina.

Although Notre Dame relies on a junior to stop shots, the Irish are led on offense by three seniors who won the national championship three years ago under Petrucelli.

Senior forward Monica Gerardo is the Notre Dame career leader in goals scored, with 72. Gerardo needs just 1 point to tie Cindy Daws as the Irish's all-time points leader.

Petrucelli said the senior leadership on this year's team has helped propel the Fighting Irish this far.

"I think it makes a big difference for us," Petrucelli said. "We have three players that are wearing a ring, and I know that helps us out."

What Petrucelli said also helps his team is playing at home. The Irish have a 44-game winning streak at Alumni Field.

Notre Dame is tough at home, and in the month of November. The Fighting Irish have won 21 straight games in November, including 15 shutouts.

Petrucelli said those two factors make the Irish a formidable opponent.

"We are playing our best soccer right now," Petrucelli said. "We are peaking at the perfect time."

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