



BRAD VERING AWAITS his next wrestling meet Saturday after being beaten by the No. 1 wrestler in the country 3-2 last Sunday. Vering and the No. 10 NU wrestling squad will head to Iowa City, Iowa, this weekend for the National Duals. RYAN SODERLIN/DN

A VERITABLE SUCCESS

Vering wants more than wins; he wants a national title

BY LISA VONNAHME
Staff writer

Brad Vering doesn't like to lose. It's not in his nature.

He's never satisfied with a loss, even if it's to the No. 1-ranked wrestler in the country. Sometimes, he's not even satisfied with a win.

The NU wrestler from Howells doesn't settle for just anything, which he proved last season as a redshirt freshman. Vering became just the third Husker in history to claim a conference title as a freshman, and he was named the nation's freshman of the year at 177 pounds.

Even with those accomplishments, Vering still expects more this season.

"I'd never be satisfied unless I beat a guy really bad," Vering said. "And even if I did, I still wouldn't be satisfied. I'd come back and keep working, so I could beat him again at the end of the season."

But this week, during midseason, Vering (12-4 overall and 6-2 in the Big 12 Conference) and the rest of the No. 10 Nebraska wrestling squad are concentrating on the National Duals in Iowa City, Iowa, this weekend.

It was at last season's National Duals that Vering, who is ranked seventh at 184 pounds,

began to dominate his opponents. He won 15 of his last 16 matches heading into the NCAA Championships.

However, the NCAA Championships themselves turned out to be a disappointment for seventh-seeded Vering. He finished the season with a 1-2 mark at the meet and returned home without realizing his dreams of All-American status.

"I've been thinking about nationals last year since the day we stepped off the plane and got back to Lincoln," Vering said. "Since that tournament, the coaches have told me not to worry about it too much, but to keep it in the back of my mind."

"Right now, I'm not even thinking about the national tournament. I'm just training to get better every day."

And NU Coach Tim Neumann is glad to hear that.

"Brad is focusing on improving. That's what he needs to be doing," Neumann said. "Last year, he wanted to be an All-American so bad that it just killed him."

While the national meet last year was a "terrible experience" for Vering, it was also an experience that made him stronger. He now knows he can't have wrestling on his mind constantly.

But because wrestling has always been a part of his life, Vering has a hard time not think-

ing about wrestling — especially when he has two practices per day and spends six hours in the NU wrestling room working out, watching film and cutting weight.

"The best wrestlers don't dwell on wrestling all the time," Vering said. "The quicker you can block it out when you walk out of practice, the better you'll be."

While Vering loves the challenge of wrestling, he has been able to find a balance between wrestling and other areas of his life.

That balance and his work ethic, motivation and intensity in the wrestling room have earned him respect from his teammates.

"I've looked up to Brad ever since I got here," said Bryan Snyder, a redshirt freshman at 157 pounds. "He might be the person on the team that I look up to the most."

However, Vering doesn't see it that way. He sees the team aspect as an important part of wrestling, which he said is why he chose to attend Nebraska.

"On the mat, I think this team has 10 team leaders," Vering said. "Everybody has been stepping up at different times. This team is doing a really good job of staying focused and staying together."

Coming from a small town, Vering had a

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goal of wrestling at a college in which he would be with a team. He didn't want to feel like he was competing alone.

At Nebraska, Vering said he doesn't feel that way.

"The team is the most gratifying thing for me right now," Vering said. "I look around the room, and I don't feel like I'm doing it by myself."

Vering sees those guys on the wrestling team, who, like him, stay after practice to work on drills with a coach or those who stay late to watch film. For Vering, it's the extra dedication that counts the most.

While Vering remains quiet about his own hopes this year, he does admit he's had to make several sacrifices to be where he is today.

"(NU Assistant Coach Mark) Cody always tells me, 'It's lonely at the top,'" Vering said. "I'm not saying I'm even close to the top yet, but it's going to be lonely to get there."

"It's hard to be so dedicated. But in the end, that's what will pay off."