

Tumblers ready for triumph

By JOHN GASKINS
Staff writer

Before the first Nebraska women's gymnastics meet last week, Head Coach Dan Kendig said one of NU's opponents, Michigan State, had an advantage because they already had a meet under their belt.

"Many teams improve the most between their first and second meets," Kendig said. "The jitters and rustiness is out of them, and they're ready to compete."

Kendig hopes this will be the case for his Huskers this weekend as they take to the road again for a triangular

Friday against No. 18 Arizona and No. 19 Washington at Seattle.

Judging by what the coach said after last weekend's quadrangular with the Spartans, Iowa State and Winona State, "there's plenty of improvement" for his team this weekend.

It won't be easy. NU captured individual titles in the all-around (Heather Brink), balance beam (Courtney Brown, who tied a school record) and Misty Oxford (floor exercise), not to mention the all-around team title.

The performance was solid enough to jump NU's national ranking from 11th to seventh this week. Assistant Coach Rhonda Faehn-Tetreault's balance beam team is second nationally.

"Being a past Olympian (1988) and coach (UCLA assistant 1993-94), she's really been a great addition to our staff," Kendig said. "And all the girls seem to like her a lot, too."

Improvements will be tough to come, though, considering the team's short practice week because of travel.

One gymnast who will be more than excited about the trip to the Northwest will be Misty Oxford, who currently ranks ninth nationally in the floor exercise.

The meet will be a homecoming for the senior, a native of Kelso, Wash., and Kendig said it will be a huge night for her in front of her family and friends.

Letterwinners lead men

By JOHN GASKINS
Staff writer

As he begins his third decade as the Nebraska men's gymnastics Head Coach, Francis Allen has plenty to look back on and be proud of.

Eight national championships. Seven NCAA runner-up finishes. Thirteen conference titles. Thirty-eight individual national champions. Eleven Olympians. But the most important thing for Allen right now is what he has to look forward to.

Five returning letterwinners. A No. 4 ranking in the preseason national coaches poll. And the 10th time in history that Lincoln will play host to the NCAA Championships, at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on April 22-24.

The road home will begin this weekend as the Huskers start their season Friday and Saturday at the Rocky Mountain Open in Colorado Springs, Colo.

"We're looking to win this weekend," Allen said. "We would like this week to set a base for the rest of the season."

Allen said NU's toughest competition will come from Brigham Young and Oklahoma.

Of the returning letterwinners, three are All-Americans: all-arounders Marshall Nelson, a senior; senior Jim Koziol; and junior Derek Leiter.

But NU will be without Nelson indefinitely because of a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee.

Still, Allen believes the Huskers will hold up with two Canadian National Team members, sophomore Jason Hardabura and freshman Martin Fournier, rounding out the all-around lineup.

"Any time you take away a gymnast who is capable of scoring a 9.8 or 9.9 on five events, it is going to be difficult," Allen said, "but we have five all-arounders who are as good as anyone in the country."

Numbers, depth favor NU

By CRYSTIE NICHOLS
Staff writer

The Nebraska men's and women's track and field teams return to the Bob Devaney Sports Center for the Nebraska Open after claiming two Big 12 Conference titles on the men's side, and two second place finishes from the women's.

NU will be opening its home indoor season Saturday at 9 a.m. with the meet. About 900 athletes will be competing from 17 schools.

Head Coach Gary Pepin believes the Huskers are going to be well-represented by the team consisting of 115 talented athletes.

"The school with the largest number of athletes would be Nebraska going away no contest," Pepin said.

Senior Shane Lavy's high jump performance in the Kansas State/Oklahoma State Invitational qualified him for the

NCAA Indoor Championships with a provisional qualifying mark of 7 foot 3 1/2 inches - just an inch and a half short of an automatic mark.

Senior All-American pole vaulter, Kim Stewart, who placed third last week, has been nursing an Achilles' tendon injury.

"She has been battling injuries," Pepin said, "but right now it's on the upswing, so I hope she will get better and improve."

Though the team is still early in the season, Pepin believes the team's strength in balance gives them a positive outlook for Saturday's meet and the remainder of the season.

"We've just had one meet and I don't think that's told us a whole lot, but our teams - men and women - have some quality and in some areas, we have depth and pretty good balance," Pepin said. "Across the board by balance, I mean, we have some pretty good athletes in almost every event."

Grapplers to battle with Beavers

From staff reports

The No. 7 Nebraska wrestling team will travel to Portland, Ore., this weekend to face a ranked team before coming back to the Cornhusker State to entertain some of its western Nebraska fans.

The Cornhuskers will face Oregon and No. 18 Oregon State on Saturday at the Oregon Wrestling Classic. There are 19 teams in the tournament.

Then, NU will travel to Ogallala for its outstate meet against Air Force. It's NU poster day, and posters of the team will be available.

OSU looks to be the main competition, with a 9-4 dual record overall.

The Beavers will bring in five ranked wrestlers. OSU lost to No. 2 Minnesota 26-12, No. 9 Michigan 23-18, No. 14 Cal-State Bakersfield 22-16 and 16th-ranked Cornell 20-12.

Oregon State's top wrestler is senior Oscar Wood at 149 pounds.

Wood, currently No. 1 in the nation, pulled off the rare feat of losing his first match at the NCAA Championships and working his way back through consolation matches to finish third overall.

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