Wrestlers survive weekend

Cornhuskers go 3-0 despite brutal travel schedule

BY BRANDON SCHULTE
Staff writer

OGALLALA – In front of 800 fans in the Ogallala High School gym, the No. 7 Nebraska wrestling team wrapped up a perfect 3-0 weekend by beating Air Force 29-16.

The undefeated mark was part of a strenuous weekend which included wins against Oregon 24-17 and No. 18 Oregon State 19-12.

After a 6 a.m. flight back for Sunday's meet and a victory over the Falcons, NU Coach Tim Neumann said the Huskers weren't all that excited about the "home away from home" meet in Ogallala.

"There's not a guy (on the team) that wanted to be here," Neumann said, referring to the nine-hour drive. "We all would have rather had a hard practice in Lincoln."

Neumann went on to say the reason for the Ogallala meet was to market the team to the entire state. In the past, NU has gotten larger crowds against unranked opponents elsewhere in the state than they would have in Lincoln.

Neumann said that after wrestling poorly early in the weekend, the team had a meeting in Oregon.

"It doesn't matter – sick, cold or whatever," Neumann said. "When we come to wrestle, we wrestle hard. We were going to forfeit any matches that the guys couldn't give 100 percent. Make them show their manhood."

The Huskers wrestled hard against the Falcons as six wrestlers won against Air Force. At 157, Billy Gabel got a reversal at the end of the third period to win 5-4. Scott Munson, at 197, won in a technical fall 24-7 and Tony Denke won 6-4.

In the heavyweight class and 133, J.R. Plienis and Todd Beckerman, both had pins at 2:33 and 2:44, respectively. Paul Gomez won by forfeit.

Gabel won despite an injury to his left arm that he sustained at the National Duals, which took away several moves. Filling in for Bryan Snyder, who is resting, Gabel wasn't surprised by his close win.

"I used my squirm move," Gabel said. "I just stood up and did a switch."

Gabel was happy with the win, but said he would rather be elsewhere.

"I'd rather be in church," Gabel said. "I love wrestling. So I guess this sort of a worship session for me."

Neumann said he was happy that some of the backups could get in and the team could still come away victorious. It was also a chance for some much needed rest for Jose DeAnda, Snyder and Joe Henson.

Nebraska beats No.5 OU in strong opening meet

From staff reports

As expected, the No. 4 Nebraska men's gymnastics team opened its season with the best collegiate team score at the Rocky Mountain Open in Colorado Springs, Colo., Friday and Saturday.

The Huskers finished with a team score of 221.150, ahead of No. 5 Oklahoma, which had 221.050, No. 10 Brigham Young (220.250), No. 19 Air Force (211.150) and No. 14 New Mexico (208.900). Arizona State rounded out the colleges with a score of 193.700.

The U.S. Olympic Training Center team, comprising individuals not in college but training solely for the 2000/2004 Olympics, had the best score of the meet with 223.100.

NU sophomore Jason Hardabura finished third in the all-around competition with a score of 55.700.

Hardabura's best score came on the high bar, where he tied USOTC's David Kruse for first with a score of 9.750. Hardabura tied for first on the rings with two other gymnasts, too. He finished second on the pommel horse.

The Huskers also got strong production from junior Derek Leiter, who won the vault with a score of 9.750, as well.

Martin Fournier of the Huskers also won the parallel bars with a score of 9.650.

Nebraska next competes against Oklahoma at home Feb. 5 and will face No. 12 Minnesota on Feb. 19.

Hawaiian lineman says he'll go to NU

From staff reports

In the footsteps of Nebraska linebacker Tony Tata and center Dominic Raiola, yet another standout athlete from St. Louis School in Honolulu appears destined to become a Cornhusker.

According to Georges Gilbert, the sports information director at St. Louis school, Tamotu Tagoai, a 6-foot-3, 280-pound defensive lineman, verbally committed to Nebraska over the weekend.

Though high school athletes cannot sign letters of intent until Feb. 3, Tagoai is the 18th senior to verbally commit.

Tagoai, who also considered California most heavily, recorded 39 tackles – including 11 for losses – last season.He played behind Tata until he was a senior.

Linebacker Joe Siofele, who visited Lincoln, along with St. Louis High School teammate Tagoai earlier this month, verbally committed to Arizona on Sunday.

A third Hawaiian, lineman Toniu Fonoti, who made the trip to Nebraska with Siofele and Tagoai, visited Arizona Sunday and was not able to be reached Sunday night.

Nebraska is expected to sign around 22 players on national letter-of-intent signing day.

Harmon gets win in first meet as Husker

BY CRYSTIE NICHOLS
Staff writer

The Nebraska track and field team opened its home indoor season Saturday with the Nebraska Open.

Nine hundred athletes attended competing for the No. 1 spot and the chance to qualify for the Big 12 Indoor Championships in Manhattan, Kan.

Standout freshman Cheryl Harmon claimed first in the 400-meter dash with a time of 55.82 seconds and helped her 4x400 meter relay team run away with the victory.

"I think I ran really well," Harmon said. "I wanted to be under 56 (seconds) and I met it."

Though Harmon is excited about next week's meet, she said at times the intensity of the meets can be intimidating.

However, sprints and hurdles Coach Billy Maxwell, believes Harmon is ready for the challenge.

"Next week in the quarter I want to do better," Harmon said, "like 55 and if I run the 600, 124."

Junior sprinter Vince Brown who came off injuries from last season to win in the 60-meter dash and clocked in with a time of 6.66 seconds to notch a NCAA provisional qualifying mark.

Maxwell who had said Brown could be one of the elite sprinters in the country this year, was happy to see he has lived up to his potential.

"Vince ran really well," Maxwell said, "but we have some other sprinters we haven't ran yet, so he'll have some more competition."

Adding to the first place finishes, senior All-American high jumper Shane Lavy cleared 7-foot-2¼-inches to take first place and picked up his second NCAA qualifying provisional mark.

Inconsistency plagues women in Washington

From staff reports

The No. 7 Nebraska women's gymnastics team might have been the highest-ranked team at the GTE Challenge in Seattle, but NU finished last in the three-team meet with inconsistent performances.

The Huskers finished with a score of 190.25, behind No. 19 Washington, which won with a 193.00 and No. 18 Arizona, which had a 190.35.

NU (3-2) did get two individual titles as junior Nicole Wilkinson won the beam with a 9.70 and junior Heather Brink won the vault with a 9.70. She won last week at Iowa State with a score of 9.75.

In the all-around, NU got unexpected support from freshman Bree Dority, who led all Huskers in fourth place with a score of 38.225. It was the first collegiate all-around competition in her career. Lanna Apisukh won the all-around with a score of 38.95.

"I was happy with Bree's performance," NU Coach Dan Kendig said. "The thing I was most pleased with is her mental toughness. She did a good job on all four events."

Kendig said he was disappointed in the Huskers' inability to get consistent performance through the entire rotation. It hurt NU's uneven bars performance the most, where Nebraska failed to place an individual in the top three.

"This loss might be a good thing," Kendig said. "We will have to go back to the gym and work harder and become mentally tougher."

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