

NU hopes win rekindles NCAA hopes *Eligibility standards differ*

By JAY SAUNDERS
Staff writer

With four games left in the regular season and a 5-7 Big 12 conference record, the Nebraska women's basketball team is putting a lot of labels on the final stretch of the season.

Crunch time. Gut-check time. In order to get to the NCAA tournament, NU Coach Paul Sanderford said starting with tonight's game at Texas A&M, it's a "must-win situation."

"We need to win three of four, so every game is a must-win," Sanderford said. "I'd like to win four out of four and get some momentum."

Momentum is something the Huskers have been unable to find since December, which is the last time NU won three games in a row.

Another thing Nebraska isn't easily stumbling across is points.

"We have a tough time scoring," Sanderford said. "The way we are struggling, we wouldn't take Hobart State lightly."

Hobart State is a fictional team Sanderford describes as an easy win.

But one won't find a Hobart State in the Big 12, which is the second-toughest conference according to the latest Ratings Percentage Index.

Texas A&M may be the closest thing to Hobart State on the schedule. The Aggies (7-15 overall and 2-10 in the Big 12 Conference) are in last place in the Big 12.

Something has to give tonight. The Aggies have not won a conference game at home this season. In contrast, Nebraska is 0-6 in road conference games.

"We lost games we weren't supposed to," junior Brooke Schwartz said. "Now it comes down to these games, and we have to win them."

First-year Coach Peggie Gillom's Aggies are in the middle of a five-game losing streak.

To make matters worse, starting point guard Kim Tarkington has a bruised wrist and will see limited action.

The possible loss of Tarkington limits A&M's options. The Aggies usually use a seven-player rotation.

"A&M is struggling right now," Sanderford said. "But they are struggling close with everybody. We still have to prove we can get after it."

Schwartz said the goal of three wins in the next four games would help the Huskers charge towards the NCAA tournament, part of which is during Nebraska's spring break.

"I think our team is coming together when other teams are starting to fold," Schwartz said. "I don't have any tickets to Cancun; I plan on tying up my sneakers."

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qualifiers.

The Pac-10 copied the same initial eligibility standards of the Big 12, and developed the exact policy, said Bill Morgan, assistant athletic director of compliance at the University of Arizona.

The Southeastern Conference has similar standards as the Big 12 and the Pac-10, but it's a little less restrictive.

Four male partial qualifiers (two in football, one in basketball and one in any other male sport) and four females (one in women's basketball and three in other sports) are allowed each year, said Associate Southeastern Conference Commissioner Jim McCullough.

"Our presidents' felt that only these individuals had the best chance to graduate," McCullough said.

In 1997, McCullough said the SEC added the clause that one nonqualifier

could also be accepted, provided he or she posts at least a 2.25 grade point average and an 820 SAT, or a sum score of 68 on the ACT. The nonqualifier then counts against one of the four partial-qualifier totals.

Since the new rules in the Big 12, Nebraska Basketball Coach Danny Nee said he hasn't felt the negative effects he originally feared.

He hasn't lost recruits to other schools with more lenient conference rules. But he still doesn't like the change.

"I didn't think there was anything wrong with the old way," Nee said. "It wasn't being abused. It was successful for several athletes. It cuts down on giving kids opportunities."



While NU hasn't felt the effect in basketball, Morgan said it could only be a matter of time.

"Those schools that do have standards and such rules for preventing nonqualifiers put themselves at a recruiting disadvantage," Morgan said.

And Osborne contends that there is a recruiting disadvantage, especially when searching for the big-time, high-profile athlete.

"If that player is on the bubble and hasn't gotten the ACT score yet," Osborne said, "he probably is going to choose Ohio State because he knows he can sit out, pay his own way and then play his second year if he doesn't get the score."

the Author

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Markowski plays as coach on the floor

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say, 'Don't foul. Foul. Who to foul?' because it's tough to communicate in a lot of arenas, just with the noise. I want to think I am kind of a player/coach on the floor."

Tonight, Markowski plays against one of the best coaches in the NCAA, Eddie Sutton. Sutton, in his 29th year, has compiled a 624-249 overall record, and has taken four different teams to the NCAA tournament.

"Coach Sutton has a huge winning percentage, so I pay attention to what he does," Markowski said. "The Big 12 is a conference of quality coaches. I get the scouting reports and jot down notes as to how they do things, plays they run and I pay attention to that stuff."

Markowski gets exposure to various styles of play in the Big 12. Oklahoma State will slow the ball down and try to make it a half-court, ball-control game, Markowski said. Other teams NU has played push the ball up and down the court.

When Markowski starts coaching, he wants his teams to find a happy medium.

"Everybody has a unique philosophy," Markowski said. "I want to be an up-tempo team, yet I want them to understand time and score. I want my players to be patient when it's time to be patient. I took stuff from Tim Floyd. I take stuff from Coach Nee. I take stuff from Sutton. I got the Kansas break written down."

"I think I'm in a great position to be a coach just because I have had the opportunity to play against all these (coaches) and to see the different schemes these teams run against us."

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