

NU looks to get needed victory

Huskers seniors vow that game against Texas A&M will be spirited effort

By **DARREN IVY**
Senior staff writer

Going from an almost shoe-in team for the NCAA Tournament two weeks ago to a team on the bubble, the Nebraska men's basketball team knows it can't have any more slip-ups.

Saturday's 12:45 p.m. game at the Bob Devaney Sports Center with Texas A&M is the last regular-season chance for the Cornhuskers to impress NCAA committee members and inch closer to the magical 20-win plateau.

Coming into the game with three straight losses, NU (17-11 and 9-6 in the Big 12 Conference) clearly is disappointed, but it surprisingly hasn't lost its positive attitude.

Written on the board in the NU locker room is a list of reasons "Why to be positive?"

The list includes: 15-6 in last 21 games, beat four-straight ranked teams, swept Kansas, beat Oklahoma on the road and last 10 games, you are 7-3.

The list concludes with the words "Do you want this all to go to waste 2-25-99?"

Senior Troy Piatkowski isn't ready for that.

"For the four seniors, Andy (Markowski), Larry (Florence), Venson Hamilton and me, we're going to try to bring everybody together," he said. "Everybody knows how important this is, with the losing streak right now. I think we have what it takes to come out and win."

"We showed that earlier in the year. Everybody has their ups and downs. We are just having our down part toward the end of the season. For sure, we will be back to where we want to be."

Florence said maintaining a positive attitude is the key to starting another winning streak.

"We know that if we can stay positive, there is always the chance for us to pick it up and start playing better," Florence said. "If we start getting down on ourselves and counting ourselves out, there is no way we are going to win."

Texas A&M, 12-13 and 5-10, broke its three-game losing streak with a 74-72 victory over Oklahoma on Wednesday. Coach Danny Nee hopes NU does the same.

"I didn't want (Texas A&M) coming in here on a four-game losing streak," Nee said. "They got their win. Now we need ours."

Markowski is questionable for the game after suffering a severe ankle sprain in the Kansas State loss.

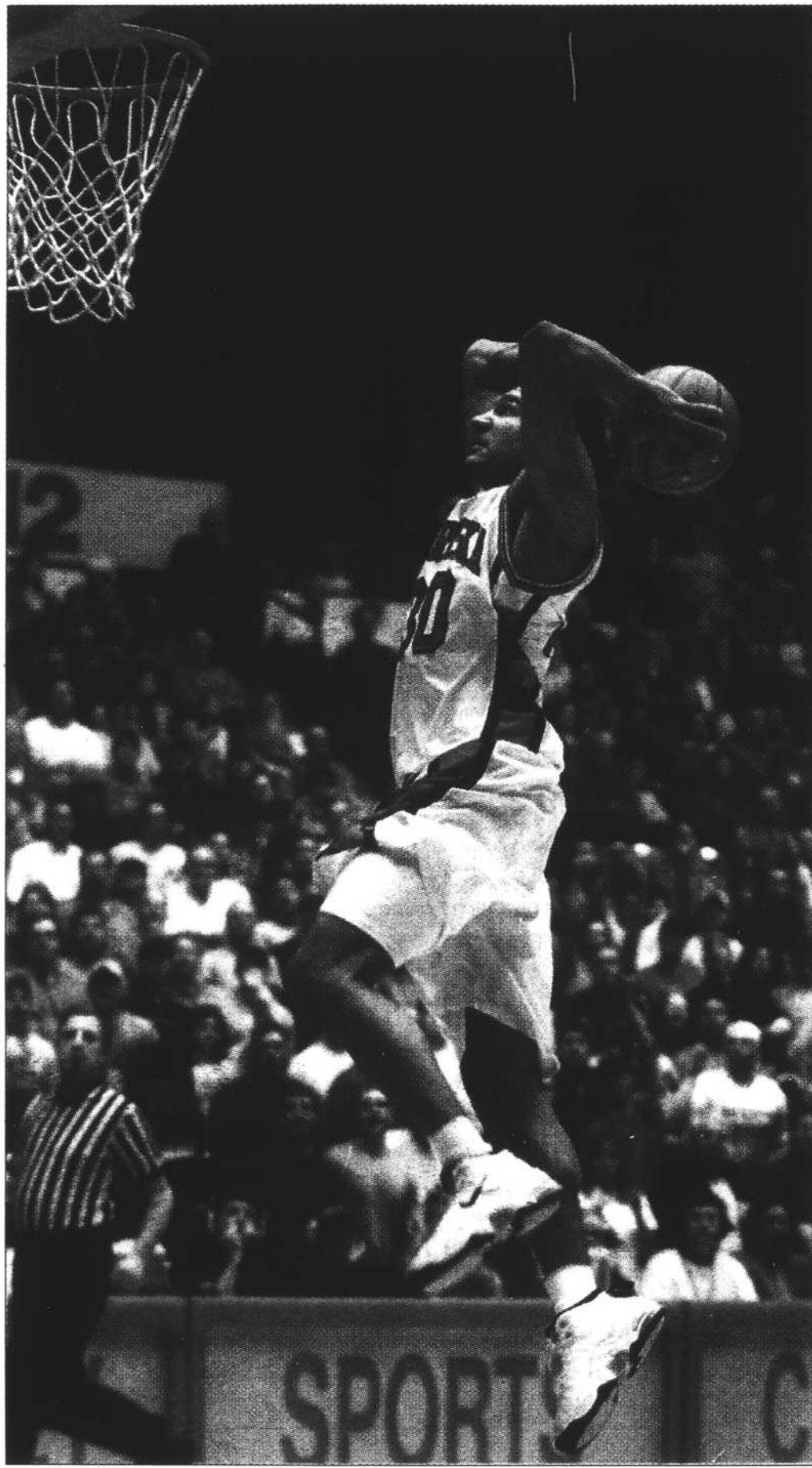
But his teammates are confident he will be in the lineup.

"The way Andy is, he would play with a broken leg," Piatkowski said.

Added Florence: "He'll be there."

Nebraska needs Markowski in the lineup. It also needs to cut down turnovers and shoot better, Nee said. Those problems were addressed Thursday.

"We tried a new offense (Thursday)," Piatkowski said. "I'm not going to tell you what it is. We have something up our sleeve. We will see how it works Saturday."



DN FILE PHOTO
COOKIE BELCHER goes in for a dunk in a game earlier this season. Belcher and the rest of the Nebraska men's basketball team are looking for a key win this Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center against Texas A&M.

NU ready for home opener

■ The Nebraska baseball team scoops snow to face off against Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

By **DAVID WILSON**
Staff writer

When nearly a half foot of snow was dumped on Lincoln earlier this week, Nebraska Baseball Coach Dave Van Horn was a little worried about the status of the Cornhuskers' home opener this weekend.

Thank goodness for shovels.

With the help of some 50-degree weather and a lot of scooping, NU will take to Buck Beltzer Field Saturday in a doubleheader against Wisconsin-Milwaukee beginning at 1 p.m.

"We can't afford to lose these games to weather," Van Horn said. "You have to fight to get them in."

The Huskers (5-5) opened their season with 10 consecutive road games, spanning over three weekends in southern states.

But this weekend, the players won't have to worry about travel schedules and they'll be able to sleep in their familiar beds the night before the game. For true freshman second baseman Will Bolt, that's

enough to make all the shoveling worth the effort.

"I'll do whatever it takes to get these games in," said Bolt, a Texas native who is a baseball-field-shoveling rookie.

Bolt, who has posted a .289 average while starting in all but one of NU's contests this year, has established himself in the NU starting lineup.

Van Horn said most of the players are beginning to develop into more consistent roles as the season goes on.

"Most of the positions are set - just as long as they keep doing a good job," Van Horn said. "I really like our batting order. We're set for now, but it could change."

Nebraska will use the same pitching rotation as it did last weekend. True freshman right-hander Shane Komine (1-0, 5.19) and junior left-hander Scott Fries (2-1, 2.33) will throw on Saturday, and Steve Hale (1-2, 1.93), also a right-handed true freshman, will get the nod on Sunday.

The trio helped the Huskers to a 2-1 record at the Marriott West Loop Invite last weekend, allowing six earned runs in 22 2/3 innings (2.38).

NU's one loss came to now-second-ranked Rice, who downed the Huskers 5-3. But that didn't stop the momentum from rolling on as Nebraska pounded Jacksonville State 15-2 the following day.

"Last year, if we would have played good against Rice, the team would have had the attitude, 'Hey, we played good against a top-ranked team,'" Van Horn said. "This year's team, after the game was over, they were very upset. It's just a little change of attitude around here. The expectations are high."

Wisconsin-Milwaukee (0-2) opened its season Feb. 13-14 with consecutive losses to now-13th-ranked Oklahoma State. The Huskers swept a three-game series against the Panthers last season, but Van Horn said NU won't take them lightly.

"We never take anybody lightly," Van Horn said, "but for sure not these guys. We have a lot of respect for them. They have a good offensive team



Van Horn

"We can't afford to lose these games to weather. You have to fight to get them in."

DAVE VAN HORN
NU baseball player

Husker women continue NCAA quest

By **JAY SAUNDERS**
Staff writer

Four seniors on the Nebraska women's basketball team said good-bye to the Bob Devaney Sports Center crowd with a 74-63 win over Kansas State on Wednesday.

The win moved the Cornhuskers closer to their goal of making the NCAA tournament.

But, the seniors and the rest of the team are not done.

NU (18-10 overall and 7-8 in the Big 12 Conference) plays its last regular season game when the Huskers travel to Stillwater for a game tomorrow night against Oklahoma State. Tip-off against the Cowgirls is 7:05 p.m.

"It's huge," NU Coach Paul Sanderford said. "I

told the kids one down, one to go."

The importance of the Oklahoma State game skyrocketed with Wednesday's win.

In that game, the Huskers did something they weren't able to do since beating Oklahoma on Jan. 3: score more than 70 points.

Junior Nicole Kubik, who had a game-high 20 points against Kansas State, said the team played a good overall game, especially on defense.

"Tough defense is the main thing," Kubik said. "We are just continuing to improve."

It is that kind of an attitude that hasn't been heard from the players in a long time. There is talk of increased confidence and peaking at the right time.

Validating those statements would involve a conference road win, something that has happened only

"I just want to win eight games and let the damn committee worry about it. That .500 is a magic figure."

PAUL SANDERFORD
NU coach

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