

Depth helps NU for Masters Classic

BY JOHN GASKINS
Staff writer

It is becoming a world of Darwinism at the Nebraska women's gymnastics team's practices and meets lately — only the fittest survive.

The team is deep in every event, causing constant changes in the lineup, not to mention stiff competition in practice, where every hit and every fall count for the next meet.

Such competition has enabled the team to notch a No. 7 national ranking, two straight season-high scores and wins at four straight meets, a perfect momentum swing to be in when they play host to the 10th annual Masters Classic at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on Sunday at 1 p.m.

The Huskers will take on No. 8 Arizona State, No. 24 Maryland, and California. They are going for their fifth straight title in what is considered one of the premiere meets in NCAA women's gymnastics.

"I think we're such a deep team because we didn't graduate anybody from last year," NU Head Coach Dan Kendig said, "and, at the same time, brought in some freshmen who are making great contributions for us."

"Yes, it has gotten pretty competitive here, but that's only making the girls push each other to do better."

They'll have to be doing a lot of pushing this weekend. The Sun Devils come into Lincoln as one of the nation's best teams, having finished sixth at last year's NCAA Championships.

"I'm glad we're going up against some great teams," Kendig said. "If we had three easy teams, there would be no challenge, and that wouldn't do us any good."

Senior Courtney Brown earned Big 12 gymnast of the week honors with her victories in the floor exercise and bal-

ance beam Monday night in NU's victory over Oregon State and BYU. She also scored a career best on the vault with a 9.875, finishing second in the event.

"She's been earning that kind of respect all year," Kendig said. "Her confidence is up as always."

"Truthfully, I thought we'd get co-players of the week from Courtney and (senior) Misty (Oxford)."

Kendig may be right. The senior All-American Oxford has the numbers to back him up, as she won her fourth career all-around title Monday, her first this season.

Right on Oxford's heels in the all-around was junior Nicole Wilkinson. Wilkinson is currently ranked 7th in the nation in the event and also 14th on the balance beam. One name has been missing from NU's stellar all-around assault: junior All-American Heather Brink, who has been hampered with an Achilles injury and missed the last two events.

Regardless, Kendig said, the three all-arounders, Brink, Oxford and Brown, shouldn't get distracted by the fact that they each have shots at winning every time out.

In other gymnastics news:

The No. 8 men's team, coming off a huge victory over No. 4 Iowa on Sunday, will travel to Norman, Okla., to take on the No. 7 Sooners tonight at 7 p.m.

It will be the third meeting between the teams this season. The Huskers defeated the Sooners both at the Rocky Mountain Open in Colorado Springs on Jan. 23 and in Lincoln on Feb. 3.

Jason Hardabura, who won the all-around title against Oklahoma in Lincoln and is coming off a national-best 58.15 performance against the Hawkeyes, will lead NU, who will be in Norman again March 26-27 for the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation conference championships.

NU faces ranked foes at tourney

BY BRANDON SCHULTE
Staff writer

The Nebraska softball team will take on a host of high caliber opponents at the NFCA Lead Off Classic in Columbus, Ga., this weekend.

The tournament will consist of a day-and-a-half of round-robin play and over a day of tournament competition.

Including the No. 8 Cornhuskers, six of the top ten teams will be at the tournament, along with more than half of the top 25 teams, as 13 will be present at the classic.

Top-ten ranked teams participating at the classic include No. 1 Fresno State, No. 4 Washington, No. 5 Michigan, No. 9 Louisiana State and No. 10 Massachusetts.

In the pool-play competition, the Huskers will first face No. 21 Florida State (5-5), a team that they defeated 4-1 on Feb. 13.

Next, No. 11 De Paul (4-2) will take on NU. The team is lead by a solid pitching staff, which has given up an earned-run average of 1.00 for the season.

Colorado State steps to the plate last against Nebraska.

As always, the women will be lead by All-American junior pitcher Jenny Voss who is coming off of Big 12 Co-Pitcher of the Week honors.

In the first tournament of the year, the Fiesta Bowl Tournament, Voss pitched three complete games, for a 3-0 record, and allowed only one earned run over the span for a 0.37 ERA.

Junior Jennifer Lizama will try to keep her hot hitting alive for the Huskers. She brought the wood to bear to the tune of a .462 average at the Fiesta Bowl Tournament.

NU sends athletes to NCAA qualifier

BY JOSH CAMENZIND
Staff writer

The Nebraska track team will be sending participants to two different meets this weekend.

Six Cornhuskers will be competing at the USA Indoor Championships in Atlanta, while 21 others will try to gain marks good enough for the NCAA Championships at the Iowa State Last Chance Qualifier in Ames.

The six athletes competing at the Indoor Championships will include Shane Lavy in the high jump; Dalhia Ingram in the long jump; Lesley Owusu, Cheryl Harmon, Stella Klassen and Seneik Saavedra — who all make up the 4x400 meter relay

team. Harmon said he was looking forward to traveling to Atlanta and competing against other top-notch athletes.

"I don't know about place-wise, but I think our time will be good enough to qualify for nationals there," Harmon said. "I think we will be ready, and our fresh legs will help out a lot."

Those competing in Ames will be doing so with a disappointing finish at last weekend's Big 12 Championships as motivation.

Head Coach Gary Pepin praised the high level of competition at that meet, but also relayed a general tone of disappointment around the team.

"I think some of our athletes kind of got a rude awakening," Pepin said.

Huskers need road win

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once this season.

It will also involve winning back-to-back games, which the Huskers haven't done since early January.

"I think this win will carry to Oklahoma," senior Monet Williams said. "If we do the same things Saturday, Oklahoma State is going to have problems guarding us."

Oklahoma State dropped to 4-11 in the conference with an overtime home loss against Kansas.

Sanderford said Nebraska will go to the Big Dance if they can finish .500 in the conference. The Huskers would move to 8-8 in the Big 12 with a win at Stillwater.

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

Not only could an NCAA tournament berth be on the line, but a victory could get the Huskers rolling into the Big 12 tournament.

"If we can win Saturday, it gives us some momentum going into the (conference) tournament."

PAUL SANDERFORD
NU coach

A successful showing in the conference tournament, which starts Tuesday in Kansas City, could alleviate any doubt as to an NCAA berth for the Huskers.

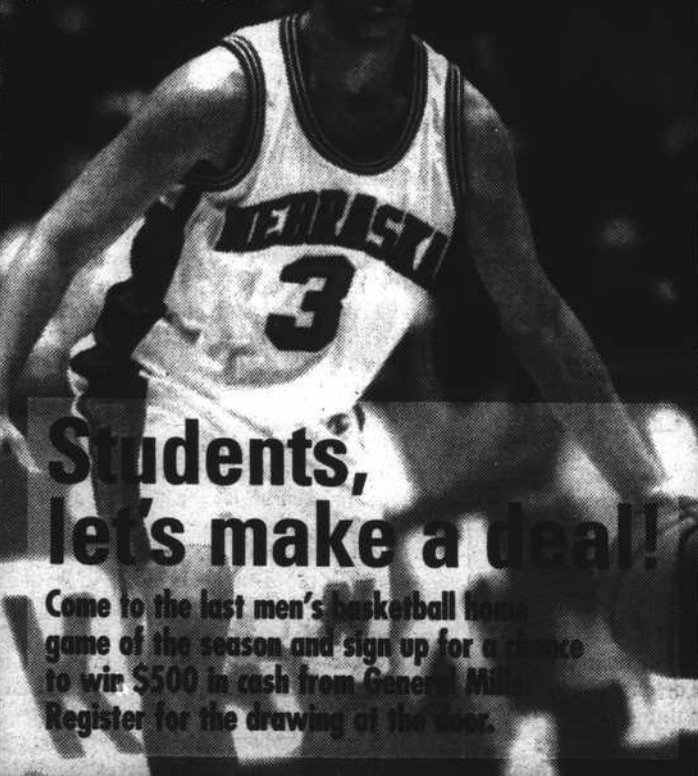
"If we can win Saturday," Sanderford said, "it gives us some momentum going into the (conference) tournament."

Catch the Huskers this Weekend:

Admission is free for all UNL students with ID (except men's basketball)

Men's Basketball Big 12
Tournament tickets are
now available.
Sessions 3-6: \$120;
All-Session: \$180

Call 472-3111 or 1-800-8 BIG
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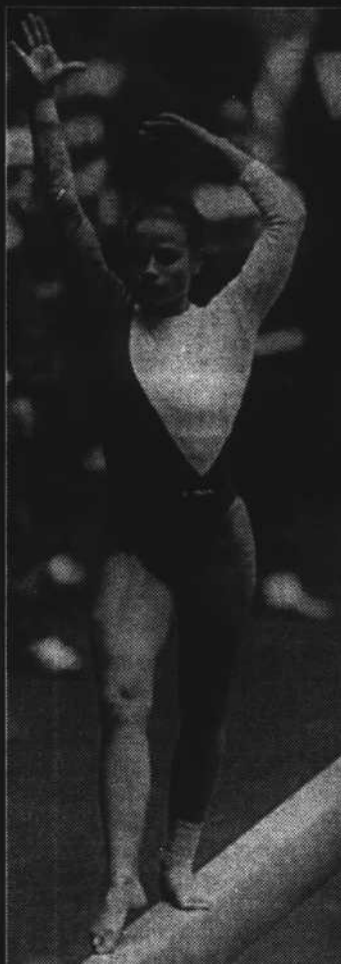


Students,
let's make a deal!

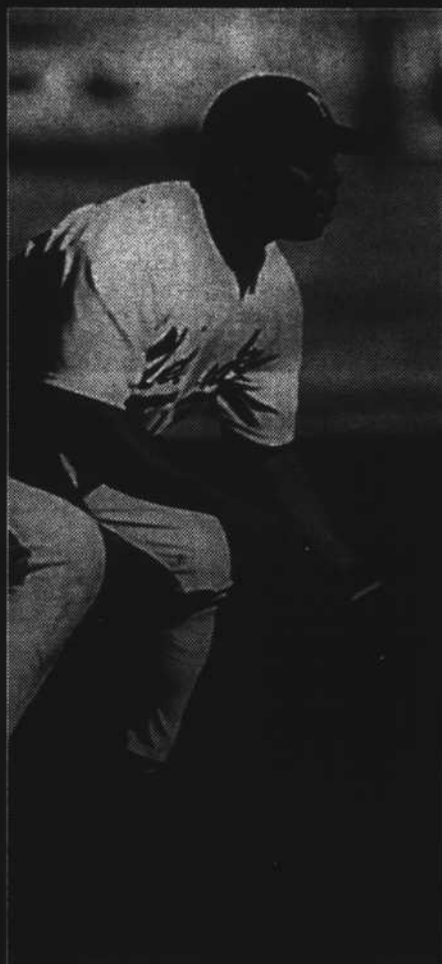
Come to the last men's basketball home game of the season and sign up for a chance to win \$500 in cash from General Mills. Register for the drawing at the door.

Saturday, February 27 at 12:45 pm
NU Men vs. Texas A&M
Bob Devaney Sports Center

Misty's
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Sunday, February 28 at 1 pm
Women's Gymnastics
MASTERS CLASSIC
Bob Devaney Sports Center



Saturday, February 27 at Noon (DH)
Sunday, February 28 at 1 pm
Baseball vs. UW-Milwaukee
Buck Beltzer Stadium

NU tennis to take on UT, Tech

■ The Huskers want to shut down the No. 6 Longhorns Sunday.

BY JAKE BLEED
Staff writer

It's redemption time for the Nebraska women's tennis team. The Huskers will travel south this weekend to meet two Big 12 conference rivals in Texas Tech and Texas.

The Red Raiders (3-5 overall, 1-2 in the Big 12) handed NU two 5-4 losses last season including one in last year's conference tournament.

Texas Tech beat Iowa State 7-2 in Lubbock. But Texas Tech is just the weekend's appetizer.

The weekend's main course will be served Sunday when No. 66 NU meets No. 6 Texas in Austin.

NU will go into the weekend's matches following a strong victory over in-state rival Creighton 9-0 Wednesday.

No. 2 singles freshman Katarina Balan and No. 3 singles sophomore Ndali Ijomah lead the team with 4-2 records. No. 1 singles Sandra Noetzel, who missed a number of practices last week, will be back and in good shape for this weekend's match.

The men's tennis team plays Southern Methodist and Texas-Arlington this weekend.