

## Second-half spurt helps NU nail Aggies

BY DARREN IVY  
Senior staff writer

Nebraska	87
Texas A&M	68

Senior forward Andy Markowski wasn't going to miss senior day for anything.

Not even a severely sprained ankle that Coach Danny Nee and trainer Mike Gooding didn't want Markowski playing on could keep him out of the starting lineup.

"I owe it to Him upstairs," Markowski said. "I spent a couple of days in prayer and He gave me the strength to compete a little. I wanted to contribute any way I could. I didn't want to remember this day by me sitting on the sidelines."

Though his numbers, 4 points and three

rebounds, were below average, his presence on the court was invaluable, Nee said.

Nee compared Markowski's performance in Saturday's 87-68 victory over Texas A&M to Willis Reed's performance in game seven of the 1970 NBA Finals in which the New York Knicks defeated the L.A. Lakers 113-99. Reed had injured his hip in game five and was but hobbled out for the final game and gave his team a lift.

"(Markowski) gave us inspiration," Nee said. "He really got on people when they didn't do what they were supposed to be doing. I think he

really elevated the whole team for the second half."

Markowski and other three seniors all came up big in their final regular-season games, helping NU break a three-game losing streak and keeping its NCAA Tournament hopes alive.

NU is the No. 6 seed in the Big 12 Tournament in Kansas City, Mo., where the Huskers will play Texas Tech (13-16 overall and 5-11 in the Big 12 Conference) in a 8:20 p.m. game at Kemper Arena on Thursday.

After the pre-game ceremonies to honor the seniors, NU (18-11 and 10-6 in the Big 12

"(Markowski) gave us inspiration. He really got on people when they didn't do what they were supposed to be doing."

DANNY NEE  
Nebraska men's basketball coach

Please see **AGGIES** on 11

## Nebraska victorious in Masters

■ Laurie McLaughlin sets a school record on the beam as NU defeats three opponents.

BY JOHN GASKINS  
Staff writer

Laurie McLaughlin finally received the attention she deserved Sunday. Lots of it.

Like the attention you get standing on top of the awards stage in front of 1,691 fans at one of the premier gymnastics events in the nation. Twice.

The senior Nebraska gymnast won both events she competed in, and set a school record on the balance beam in helping the No. 7 Cornhuskers capture their fifth consecutive Masters Classic title at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

NU followed a season-high performance on Monday with another solid performance, scoring an 195.725, narrowly edging No. 8 Arizona State (195.250) and No. 24 Maryland (195.200). California finished last of the four competitors with a 188.850.

A pair of Terrapin freshmen topped the individual all-around leaderboard. Gillian Cote was first at 39.175, with Laura Moon right on her heels at 39.125.

The victory brought Nebraska's meet winning streak to five, and pushed its season record to 13-2. It also brought the home winning streak to 24.

"Well, we sure made it interesting, didn't we?" a pleased NU Coach Dan Kendig said after the meet.

"I'm glad the girls went out and did what they needed to do on the floor (NU's final event) to keep the streak alive."

The Huskers led the Sun Devils by .45 points after two rotations and heading into the beam, their strongest event coming into the meet.

But senior Misty Oxford, who eventually finished fifth in the all-around, fell off the beam.

The fall caused a half-point deduction that could have seriously hurt both the individual and team's fate. To boot, seasoned veterans Heather Brink, a junior All-American, and senior Courtney Brown, also fell from the beam.

But McLaughlin, a 1997 All Big-12 beam performer and defending champion in the event at the Masters, stepped right up after Oxford and bravely stuck a 9.95, smashing the school record that Brown set in the team's first meet of the season with a 9.925.

"It's never good to go after someone falls," a low-key McLaughlin said.

"The pressure got that much more intense. And the score was so close. The teams were right on each other's tails and we had to keep ahead."

And McLaughlin did just that for NU. In a season where clean performances and senior leadership have gone unnoticed, thanks to the dominance of three of the team's all-around performers — Brink, Nicole Wilkinson and Oxford — McLaughlin made her mark in team history Sunday.

It was the first time a NU gymnast has won an event two years in a row at the Masters.

"It's nice to finish (at the Masters) like this."



ABOVE: NU ASSISTANT COACH ROB DRASS hugs senior Misty Oxford after she scored a 9.85 on her uneven bar routine.

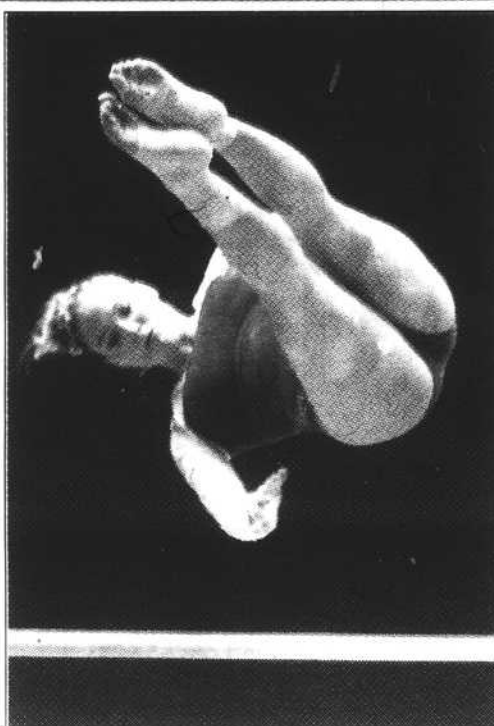
RIGHT: NU GYMNAST JESS SWIFT performs an exhibition on the uneven bars at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on Sunday. The Huskers overcame their worst beam performance of the season to win the Masters Classic over Arizona State, California and Maryland.

McLaughlin said.

"Courtney was pointing out to me the other day that the all-arounders usually get all the attention because they're all-arounders. I guess if I'm only doing two events, I better do them well."

"Laurie, what can I say?" Kendig said. "That was the type of performance we've expected from her all year. Now that her confidence is up, I'm sure we'll be seeing more of that from here on out."

Brown, another perennial event specialist who won the floor exercise Monday, showed her versatility again by taking the vault Sunday with a career-high 9.90.



## NU nabs important road win

BY JAY SAUNDERS  
Staff writer

STILLWATER, Okla. — The NCAA tournament picture looks a whole lot clearer for the Nebraska women's basketball team.

Nebraska	60
Oklahoma State	57

NU Coach Paul Sanderford said all season that an 8-8 Big 12 Conference record should be enough for the Cornhuskers to advance to the tournament.

The Huskers got to that 8-8 mark with a 60-57 win at Oklahoma State.

"8-8 was the key, I thought," Sanderford said. "We got that monkey off our back."

Helping remove that monkey is an apparent resurgence of junior Nicole Kubik. The point guard was carrying the bulk of the NU offense on her back, and her back was beginning to bend.

When it looked like Kubik was running out of gas, Sanderford moved Kubik to shooting guard, hoping to find an answer to the team's offensive problems.

Against Oklahoma State, the problem was solved. Kubik shined again with a team-high 21 points in the 3-point victory.

"She made some huge plays for us," Sanderford said. "She has to score for us to win."

The Huskers' postseason future was cloudy when Nebraska (19-10 overall and 8-8 in the Big 12 Conference) trailed 30-25 at half-time.

NU was behind by as many as 6 points in the second half, but clawed its way back into the game.

Senior Cori McDill made a free throw with three minutes and 57 seconds left in the game to tie the score at 53. Nebraska would never trail again as Kubik, playing with four fouls, took over.

A jump shot with 1:18 remaining gave the Huskers a 58-55 lead. Then, with 22 seconds left, Kubik stole a Nikki Harmon pass and called a time-out while falling out of bounds.

"I started falling and called a time out," Kubik said. "Thankfully (the referee) gave it to me."

Kubik kept the NU possession alive, but she wasn't done. After Harmon hit a baseline jumper to cut the lead to 58-57, Kubik was fouled.

Please see **ROAD WIN** on 11