

SPORTS

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Hamilton player of the year

■ The 6-foot-10 NU center was the runaway winner in the balloting.

From staff reports

Entering the season, Nebraska men's basketball player Venson Hamilton knew he had a chance to make a name for himself outside of

Tyrone Lue's shadow.

Now, he's made a bigger one.

Hamilton was the runaway winner in the Associated Press balloting for Big 12 player of the year Tuesday, picking up 16 votes for the award. Chris Mihm of Texas was second with five votes. There were 24 votes overall.

Hamilton averaged 16.0 points 10.5 rebounds this season for the Cornhuskers, helping NU to a 18-11 regular season record. He is the third

NU player in 1990s to be named to a first team All-Big 12 team behind Lue and Eric Piatkowski.

Furthermore, Hamilton is the first player since Andre Smith in 1980-81 to pick up the award for NU. Smith was a two-time selection to the list.

Facing double teams for most of the Big 12 season, Hamilton upped his scoring average in conference play to 18.3 points per game. In addition, he was the only unanimous selection to the

All Big 12 first team.

Earlier this season, Hamilton joined Danny Manning, Waymon Tisdale and Byron Houston as the only players in Big Eight-Big 12 history to score 1,000 points, grab 1,000 rebounds and block 200 shots. Hamilton averaged 2.5 blocked shots this season.

NU will play Texas Tech in the first round of the Big 12 Tournament on Thursday.

Big 12
Tournament
Notebook

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Clifton Cook of Texas A&M was named the Big 12 newcomer of the year in an easy victory over Missouri Keyon Dooling. Kansas' Jeff Boschee, a guard from North Dakota, was named the Big 12 freshman of the year.

No. 8 seed Kansas State survived a furious comeback from No. 9 Colorado. The Wildcats' 55-51 win moves KSU into the second round where it will face No. 1 seed Texas Tech.

Kansas State led by as many as 17 points in the second half, but Colorado cut the lead to three with a minute remaining. KSU's Nicky Ramage scored a game-high 18 points and teammate Brandy Harris had a career-high 16 rebounds.

While Nebraska junior Nicole Kubik had only one steal in the Huskers' 82-71 win over Texas A&M, it happened to be an important steal in more ways than one.

That steal helped fuel a 6-1 run during the Aggies' second-half comeback. More importantly, Kubik's steal tied her with for the Nebraska career steals record with Megan Yedsena.

No. 10 seeded Missouri pulled off the first upset of the tournament with a 60-55 win over No. 7 seed Baylor.

MU's Kesha Bonds hit two free throws with five seconds left to complete the upset. Julie Helm had a 26 points for the Tigers. Missouri plays Iowa State Wednesday.

"In some people's eyes, I'm sure this is an upset," Missouri Coach Cindy Stein said. "But that's not what I want our team to focus on."

Colorado's loss to Kansas State marks the first time the Buffaloes have been knocked out of the tournament since 1990.

On the flip side, Missouri won a first-round game for the first time since 1994, the season the Tigers won the Big Eight Tournament and went to the NCAA Tournament.

Baylor's loss more than likely ends any chance the Bears had of reaching the NCAA Tournament. This leaves a possible berth in the women's NIT, a tournament BU reached the finals of last season. But BU Coach Sonja Hogg said doesn't want to go back to the WNIT.

"I think that would be almost anti-climactic," Hogg said.

No. 11 seed Oklahoma State defeated No. 6 seed Oklahoma 70-56 in the final game of the evening. OSU will play No. 3 seed Kansas.

A crowd of 2,956 at the Municipal Auditorium saw the first two games of the tournament and 3,264 saw the third and fourth games. Both are records for the first and second sessions of the women's Big 12 tournament.

Big 12 Tournament notebook compiled by staff writer Jay Saunders



LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN

NEBRASKA FORWARD Naciska Gilmore helped lead a spirited Nebraska frontcourt in a 82-71 victory over Texas A&M Tuesday. The Huskers now move on to play Texas.

NU proceeds in Big 12 tournament

Kubik comes up big for the Huskers with 27 points, 18 in the last 10 minutes

By JAY SAUNDERS
Staff writer

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Nebraska women's basketball team wanted to make sure of its fate early in the first round of the Big 12 Tournament against Texas A&M.

It didn't want a repeat performance of Saturday, when the Cornhuskers were taken to the wire in a 60-57 win at Oklahoma State.

Against the Aggies Tuesday, NU jumped out to a 24-7 lead on the way to an 82-71 win. Victory means Nebraska (20-10 overall) will advance to play Texas at 2:20 p.m. in the second round of the tournament Wednesday.

"We were in control of the ball-game the whole time," NU Coach Paul Sanderford said. "That good start really gave us some confidence."

A balanced scoring attack led the Huskers in the first half. Seven players scored, led by junior Monique Whitfield with 9 points. NU shot 60 percent from the field in the first half and led 41-24 at halftime.

A&M didn't quit in the second half. Nebraska built a 52-35 lead with 13:30 left in the game. That's when the Aggies (7-20) mounted a charge.

Led by juniors Prissy Sharpe and Kera Alexander, A&M slowly cut into the Husker lead. With 1:30 remaining, the Aggies pulled within 6 points at 77-71.

"No team Peggie Gillom coaches is going to lay down," Sanderford said. "We knew they were going to come back and play hard."

When A&M got close, junior Nicole Kubik, as she has many times this season, took over for Nebraska. She scored 18 points in the last 10 minutes of the game.

Kubik opened the gap to 79-71 with 1:24 left after junior Naciska Gilmore stole a pass. Kubik hit a free throw 21 seconds later to finish the Aggie comeback. That gave Kubik a game-high 27 points.

Fellow junior Brooke Schwartz finished with 11 points.

"Kubik was a one-man game," A&M Coach Peggie Gillom said. "She did about everything she wanted to do."

Whitfield led the Huskers' inside attack, which hurt a shorter A&M team. Senior Cori McDill had six rebounds in the first half as NU won the battle of the boards, 35-30. That is quite a contrast to the Aggies' last regular-season game, in which they grabbed 55 rebounds against Colorado.

Nebraska's post players combined for 26 points and fed the guards three assists.

"We had to have an inside-out game," Whitfield said. "Our guards played good and our post players did good, too. That's the key to winning."

With a first-round win in front of a session-one record crowd of 2,946 at KC's Municipal Auditorium, the Huskers can now focus on the Longhorns. NU takes on Texas, the No. 4 seed. UT is led by junior Edwina Brown, who was on the All-Big 12 first team.

Texas beat NU 80-75 in Austin.

“
Our guards played
good and our post
players did good, too.”

MONIQUE WHITFIELD
NU forward

Texas, on Jan. 9. Sanderford said that loss still haunts him, and he hopes his team won't forget that 5-point loss.

"That was a hard loss for me personally," Sanderford said. "Our kids remember that game."

It's still unknown if the A&M win or the matchup against Texas will determine NU's NCAA future.

But, Schwartz said, when the team's back was against the wall, winning four of its last five games shows character — a lot of it.

We put pressure on ourselves. Winning today maybe got us out of that pressure. That shows the mark of a good team."