

# Freshman Hale takes mound vs. Oklahoma

BY DAVID WILSON  
Staff writer

Granted, this year's Oklahoma baseball team may be a little younger than previous Sooner squads, but Nebraska pitcher Steve Hale knows that in Norman, Okla., some things never change.

"They've always been an offensive team," said Hale, who grew up 30 minutes from the OU campus. "That's what I've always heard."

A native of Yukon, Okla., Hale will make his first Big 12 Conference start Saturday as the Cornhuskers (8-5) travel to Norman for a three-game series with the Sooners (10-6).

Through 16 games, OU has posted a .324 batting average. But Hale, who has allowed opponents to hit .225 this year, isn't intimidated.

"It will probably be pretty tough, but it would be nice to go down there and sweep them," Hale said.

Hale, a true freshman, began the year for NU coming out of the bullpen, but has since worked his way into the Huskers' three-man starting rotation.

In 21 2/3 innings, Hale owns a team-low 2.49 earned-run average and has struck out a team-high 26 batters. His early success, Nebraska Pitching Coach Rob Childress said, made the decision to try Hale as a starter a no-brainer.

"He was just so consistent every time he got the ball," Childress said. "He was throwing strikes and getting people out. More than anything, he earned the start and has done well since

he's been in the rotation."

For the right-handed Hale, the transition from high school to college ball hasn't been too difficult — with the exception of a few mistakes.

"It was a little hard at first," Hale said. "If you make a mistake, in high school, you can get by with it — here they'll hammer it."

Along with Hale, left-hander Scott Fries and righty Shane Komine will also make starts on the mound this weekend against the Sooners.

Komine, also a true freshman, has 21 strikeouts in 22 1/3 innings.

"Those guys aren't freshmen any more," Childress said of Hale and Komine. "Throughout the fall and the last four weeks, they're as game-ready and as conference-ready as any junior or senior."

While NU will start three pitchers with no Big 12 experience, Oklahoma likely will send at least one veteran, ace Jared Hoerman, to the mound vs. NU.

Hoerman (4-0), a senior, owns a 1.10 ERA and has struck out 43 batters in 32 2/3 innings.

"I know their No. 1 is as good as anybody's in the league," Childress said. "He's going to be tough to beat, but I feel good."

And Childress isn't worried about his staff's lack of experience.

"Right now, I've been throwing well," Hale said. "I just need to keep doing that and give my team a chance to win. It makes it easy to go out there and pitch when you have a good defense behind you, and you know your offense can score runs for you."

# Huskers ready for NCAAs

Lavy, Klassen highlight field for NU track team

BY JOSH CAMENZIND  
Staff writer

The Nebraska track and field team will be sending eight athletes to Indianapolis this weekend for the NCAA Indoor Championships.

The men will be sending two competitors, high jumper Shane Lavy and 35-pound weight thrower Joe Erdkamp. The women who qualified are Dalhia Ingram in the triple jump, shot putter Becky Beachler and the 4x400 meter relay team.

The relay team consists of Lesley Owusu, Cheryl Harmon, Seneik Saavedra and Stella Klassen — who also is competing in the 800-meter run, in which she is ranked

No. 10.

Klassen is excited about the team's chances at the nationals.



Pepin

"I'm hoping that they (the 4x400 team) are going to be in a high scoring position," Pepin said. "They are a group that is going to continue to run better and better, and each per-

"We are peaking at the right time, and I think we are going to run even faster this weekend," Klassen said.

Head Coach Gary Pepin is also optimistic about the relay team's chances.

son has improved a lot this year. I am hoping they will place high in the meet."

Beachler will be competing in the shot put, in which she is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the nation. Erdkamp will be throwing the 35-pound weight, in which he is also ranked 13<sup>th</sup>.

Lavy will be contending for the title in the high jump, in which he is currently ranked third in the nation.

"Shane is in a position to win, but he must have a good meet to do that," Pepin said.

Overall, Pepin is pleased with those who have qualified and anxious to see how they do.

"If you can duplicate your qualifying performance, you have a chance to score."

# Gymnasts travel to BYU

BY JOHN GASKINS  
Staff writer

When they arrive in Provo, Utah, tomorrow for a double dual with Brigham Young, one Nebraska gymnastics team will look like a well-oiled machine, while the other will look like an infirmary unit.

The healthy and deep No. 7 NU women will be riding high on a five-meet win streak, while the hobbling No. 9 men will be trying to recover from a nasty hangover they suffered after a brutal loss to No. 6 Oklahoma last week.

The mayhem of the double dual with the Cougars (No. 24 men and No. 22 women) will start at 8 p.m. on Saturday. The men's meet will also feature No. 7 Michigan State.

NU Women's Coach Dan Kendig said competition for the six spots in every event had been intense, as it had all season, thanks to the team's lack of major injuries.

"We're as healthy as we'd like and expect to be," Kendig said. "We've got seven, eight, nine people who can get the job done in each event."

Junior All-American Heather Brink, who missed two weeks of meets in a row thanks to a sore ankle, will follow up her return to competition last Sunday at the Master's Classic and compete in every event except the floor exercise. Junior Nicole Wilkinson is the only definite Husker to compete in the all-around.

Meanwhile, the men are looking to get back on their feet after crashing hard last weekend at OU after rolling to a 7-0 start.

# NU wrestlers ready for OSU at Big 12 meet

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man. Although Vering is not expected to earn the top seed in today's seeding meeting, he is not looking at his seed as a setback.

"I'm going to go out there and wrestle as good as I can," Vering said. "I expect to win all of my matches."

Neumann predicted Thursday 157-pounder Bryan Snyder and heavy-weight J.R. Plienis would earn top seeds for the tournament — something that serves simply as a confidence booster.

"It's nice to be the No. 1 seed for confidence reasons," Plienis said. "But my weight class is pretty balanced. Anything can happen."

Neumann and the Huskers agree they would like to return to Lincoln as conference champs. In order to do that, NU must upset favored OSU — something Neumann said "is possible if the guys wrestle like they have all year."

Notes: Questions remained concerning the 165-pound weight class following Thursday's practice. Freshman starter Josh Henson injured his Achilles tendon, and Neumann said he was unsure if he would compete. If not, Zac Dominguez will wrestle in his spot.

# Defense shuts down Texas Tech

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he was presented with the Big 12 player-of-the-year award.

Hamilton also received a lot of scoring help. Freshman Louis Truscott had a season-high 12 points, Larry Florence chipped in 11 and Belcher added 10.

By the time the rout was over,

1,500 people remained in the Kemper Arena.

It was a win that pleased Nee, especially since a loss would have spelled doom for the Huskers' NCAA Tournament chances.

"I think this will help us with getting a tournament bid," Nee said. "We deserve to play in the NCAA Tournament."

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**NU battles another  
ranked foe in Kansas**  
■ The men's tennis team  
to battle KU, while the  
women's team is at home.  
BY JAKE BLEED  
Staff writer  
The storm hasn't quite passed for  
Nebraska men's tennis. Saturday's  
match against Kansas will be the  
Huskers' fourth against a ranked oppo-  
nent in five matches, a series that NU  
hasn't quite dominated.  
Saturday's match will give  
Nebraska, at 4-5 overall and 1-2 in the  
Big 12 Conference, the chance to even  
both their overall and Big 12 records.  
Kansas (6-1 overall) will go into  
Saturday's match on a five-match win-  
ning streak. The Jayhawks have a repu-  
tation for hosting a loud match.  
"They like to get me rowdy,"  
Coach Kerry McDermott said. "That's  
OK, though; we like it, too."  
No. 1 singles player, Dinko Verzi,  
has his work cut out for him. KU's No.  
1, Luis Uribe, is ranked No. 9 in the  
nation and will be looking to take his  
100<sup>th</sup> career victory against NU.  
The status of No. 5 Juan Hamdam is  
still questionable. Hamdam threw out  
his shoulder Feb. 21 against Texas Tech.  
The match has been scheduled for 1  
p.m. to 6 p.m. in Lawrence.  
Nebraska women's tennis will  
return to Lincoln this weekend, playing  
host to Wichita State and Montana at the  
Woods tennis complex.  
NU will ride into this weekend's  
matches after almost taking No. 6 Texas  
in the Lone Star state.  
"The kids are feeling pretty confi-  
dent," Coach Scott Jacobson said.  
The Huskers will meet Wichita  
State (1-4) on Friday at 5 p.m. WSU has  
struggled this season, but Jacobson said  
they were usually able to field a strong  
squad.  
Montana, on the other hand, will  
arrive in Lincoln after having romped 3-  
0 over Gonzaga, Eastern Washington  
and Portland State.  
"We're going to have to be ready to  
play this weekend," Jacobson said.  
Riva Wick is still out, leaving the  
Huskers with the minimum six players  
in playing condition. Jacobson said he  
liked being able to give everyone play-  
ing time but was worried about a poten-  
tial injury.  
Adding to Jacobson's worries, new  
national rankings are due out sometime  
next week. Jacobson said he was unsure  
of how NU would fare.