

Nebraska's back in the NIT, will play UNLV in 1st round

By **DARREN IVY**
Senior staff writer

Inside Coach Danny Nee's house Sunday night, the Nebraska basketball team gathered to watch the NCAA Tournament selection show.

No national television cameras were present. No media were there. It was just Nee and his players, said freshman guard Cary Cochran.

With a 19-12 record, including 2-4 in its last six games, Nebraska players knew it was going to be a stressful evening.

The Cornhuskers felt they had a shot to be one of the 64 teams taken until they saw Oklahoma receive a No. 13 seed in the Midwest Region.

"When we saw that, we knew we weren't getting in," Cochran said.

Added Nee: "We knew it was a long shot. When we saw Oklahoma, we knew they were the last Big 12 team to get in."

NU is heading back to the NIT for the fourth time in the last five years. It will face Nevada Las Vegas on Wednesday night at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

UNLV, 16-12 and 9-5 in the Western Athletic Conference, is coming off a 71-70 loss to Southern Methodist in the quarterfinals of the WAC Tournament.

Junior college transfer Shawn Marion, a 6-foot-7 forward led Running Rebels during the season with a 18.8 point and 9.3 rebound per game average. Two other players, Kevin Simmons and Kaspar Kambala, both average in double figures as well.

Other than the statistics Nee doesn't know much about Bill Bayno's squad.

"I am just starting to look at tape now," said Nee Sunday night. "We know they are a fast-break, up-tempo team with some quality players."

UNLV and NU have played some common opponents, though. The Rebels lost to Kansas 78-50, Oklahoma State 81-69, but defeated Colorado State 80-77 and Tulsa 54-53.

The Huskers lost to Colorado State 75-49, Tulsa 52-49, Kansas 77-53 and Oklahoma State 60-48. NU also owns

Huskers doomed by big loss to Kansas in Big 12 Tournament

KU from page 13

22 points in the half.

"The difference was that our patience wasn't as good as it has been in the past," said senior forward Andy Markowski, who finished with 6 points and eight rebounds. "They shot the ball well; we didn't shoot the ball well."

Hamilton was still able to turn in his 17th double-double of the season with 12 points and 10 rebounds, but Florence was shut down in the second half, scoring no points and fouling out with 5:30 left.

For the Jayhawks, Gregory finished with 15 points, four assists, two steals and a blocked shot, the majority of which came in the second half. Boschee led all scorers with 16 points, joined by Robertson with 13 and Chenoweth with 15.

But despite that second-half effort on behalf of Kansas, Hamilton said that he felt something coming from the beginning, when Robertson hit a 3-pointer four seconds after tip off.

"They shot that first 3-pointer,

and that sent us a message that they were ready to play," Hamilton said. "Their intensity was high; we didn't match it."

Indeed, it was a harbinger that the Huskers didn't want to see, but couldn't ignore. The Jayhawks shot 47.1 (8-17) percent from the 3-point line.

"They kicked our ass," Nee said. "They really put the ball in the basket, and when we don't get ahead early, we get down on ourselves."

With flashes of brilliance that had been absent in the two other games with Nebraska, the Jayhawks, complete with the arena environment of a home game, started to look like the KU contenders of old.

Robertson said it felt good to be back on top in the tourney.

"I like any Kansas team that wins," he said. "We're pretty pleased."

On the Husker side of things, Markowski added:

"They came in and thrived off the crowd," Markowski said. "Their shooters started making shots, everything came into place."

64-59 and 84-69 wins over the Jayhawks.

The lopsided loss to KU was the straw that broke NU's NCAA hopes.

The omission from the NCAA is the final downer for a NU team that had its share of ups and downs this season.

Just after the holiday break, critics were calling for Nee's job as NU was 8-7 and 0-2 in the Big 12 Conference.

Then came nine wins in the next 10 games to put NU in second place in the Big 12. Then the disappointing last six games.

"We went from a lock to the NCAA, to on the bubble to not in the NCAA Tournament in a very short period of time," Cochran said.

Cochran pointed to a couple of wins

that may have elevated NU into the field.

The Texas Tech game, which NU basically lost in the last four seconds, ended up being a "really huge" loss, Cochran said.

"If we beat Tulsa or Minnesota earlier in the year, I think we're in (the NCAA Tournament)," he said.

While NU players are disappointed they don't get to go back to the NCAA Tournament for the second-straight year, they're glad to be in postseason play.

"We still get to play," Cochran said. "We will be in the NIT, as will a lot of other good teams. We might as well go win the NIT. That's the next goal we have to put in front of us."

Duke gets No. 1 seed, CU plays Louisville

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Top-ranked Duke, Michigan State, Auburn and Connecticut were selected Sunday as the No. 1 seeds in the NCAA tournament.

The Blue Devils (32-1), the first team to go 16-0 in the Atlantic Coast Conference, will take their 27-game winning streak into an opening-round game in the East Regional in Charlotte, N.C., on Friday against Florida A&M, which is in the tournament for the first time. The Rattlers (12-18), who won the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference tournament, are the only team in the field with a sub-.500 record.

Michigan State (29-4), the Big Ten champion, was chosen No. 1 in the Midwest Regional and will play on Friday against Mount St. Mary's, the Northeast Conference champions coached by 800-game winner Jim Phelan.

Auburn (27-3), which lost to Kentucky in the Southeastern Conference tournament semifinals, opens play in the South Regional on Thursday in Indianapolis against Winthrop, the Big South champions and one of five teams in the tournament for the first time.

Connecticut (28-2) was the only top seed moved out of its natural region. The Big East champions will play in Denver on Thursday against Texas-San Antonio, which won the Southland Conference.

The Southeastern Conference had one-fourth of the top 16 seeds, but the Big Ten tied the record with seven teams. The SEC had six teams invited, one more than the Big East and Big 12.

The other games to be played in Charlotte are: fourth-seeded Tennessee against No. 13 Delaware; fifth-seeded Wisconsin against No. 12 Southwest Missouri State; and eighth-seeded College of Charleston against No. 9 Tulsa.

At Boston it will be: second-seeded Miami against No. 15 Lafayette, which is making its first appearance since 1957; third-seeded Cincinnati against No. 14 George Mason; sixth-seeded Temple against No. 11 Kent; and seventh-seeded Texas against No.

10 Purdue.

The East Regional semifinals and finals will be held March 19 and 21 in East Rutherford, N.J.

In addition to the Michigan State-Mount St. Mary's game in Milwaukee, fourth-seeded Arizona plays No. 13 Oklahoma; fifth-seeded North Carolina Charlotte meets No. 12 Rhode Island; and No. 8 Villanova plays No. 9 Mississippi.

The games Friday in New Orleans feature second-seeded Utah against No. 15 Arkansas State; No. 3 Kentucky against 14th-seeded New Mexico State; No. 6 Kansas against 11th-seeded Evansville; and seventh-seeded Washington against No. 10 Miami of Ohio.

The Midwest Regional semifinals and finals are March 19 and 21 in St. Louis.

In the other games Thursday in Indianapolis, fourth-seeded Ohio State plays No. 13 Murray State; No. 5 UCLA meets 12th-seeded Detroit; and Syracuse plays Oklahoma State in the 8-9 matchup.

The other South subregional starts Thursday in Orlando, Fla., and features No. 2 Maryland against last year's surprise team, No. 15 Valparaiso; No. 3 St. John's against 14th-seeded Samford; No. 6 Indiana against No. 11 George Washington; and seventh-seeded Louisville, the school given a second chance at being in the tournament, against No. 10 Creighton.

The South Regional semifinals and final will be March 18 and 20 in Knoxville, Tenn.

In addition to Connecticut-Texas-San Antonio, the games Thursday in Denver feature No. 4 Arkansas against No. 13 Siena; No. 5 Iowa against No. 12 Alabama Birmingham; and No. 8 Missouri against No. 9 New Mexico.

In Seattle on Thursday second-seeded Stanford plays No. 15 Alcorn State; No. 3 North Carolina meets No. 14 Weber State; No. 6 Florida goes up against No. 11 Pennsylvania; and No. 7 Minnesota plays No. 10 Gonzaga.

The West Regional semifinals and finals will be March 18 and 20 in Phoenix.

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