



MATT MILLER/DN
ABOVE: GRANT CLINTON REACHES for the horizontal bar.

RIGHT: SENIOR JIM KOZIOL earned All-American status with a sixth-place finish on the still rings in the individual championships Saturday night at the Devaney Sports Center.



NU gymnasts pick up third

By JOHN GASKINS
 Staff writer

As they intensely watched each individual teammate fight for every last point in the final event of Friday's NCAA Men's Gymnastics team Championships, members of the Nebraska gymnastics team were quietly smiling.

But they couldn't help but notice members of Michigan's bench right next to them celebrate in chaos as the Wolverines closed out a runaway national team title and wonder if it could have been them.

Instead, Michigan, a program that went winless just three years ago and had suffered four consecutive losing seasons before this year, capped off one of the most remarkable comebacks in college sports by taking an early lead and never relinquishing it on NU's home floor, the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The Wolverines scored an NCAA-team season high 232.550 points to better second-place Ohio State (230.850). The Huskers finished their season as the nation's third-best team (229.600).

"I said in order to beat them, we needed to get on them early, but we didn't," Nebraska Head Coach Francis Allen said.

"Michigan got hot and stayed hot all night. We started breathing down

“*We started breathing down their neck but they wouldn't fall apart. We didn't have a chance.*”

FRANCIS ALLEN
 NU gymnastics coach

their neck, but they wouldn't fall apart. We didn't have a chance.”

Michigan Coach Kurt Golder, who had the advantage of picking his team's event order by virtue of their highest team qualifying score from Thursday's qualifying meet, picked the pommel horse to start the meet.

It was a surprise considering it allowed NU to go in its usual order of floor exercise first and high bar, their best event, last, which had allowed the Huskers to come from behind and beat top competition all season long, especially on their home floor.

But Golder apparently knew what he was doing. The pick allowed his team to finish on their most powerful event, the vault, in which they led the

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Hardabura captures floor championship

■ **Blake Buckacek gets second on the horizontal bars for Nebraska.**

By DARREN IVY
 Senior staff writer

As a child, Nebraska junior gymnast Blake Bukacek would arrive at the Bob Devaney Sports Center after school each day and train at the Nebraska School of Gymnastics.

He watched Jim Hartung, Phil Cahoy and all the other great NU gymnasts of the early 1980s and dreamed that someday he would have the success they did.

Saturday at the Devaney Center during the NCAA Championships Bukacek took his first step toward greatness by finishing second on the horizontal bar with a score of 9.8375.

And this time it was the former NU gymnasts who were in the stands watching him.

"It's a special feeling knowing they are up there watching," Bukacek said. "I still don't consider myself in their level."

"Hopefully next year I will be up there with those guys."

Bukacek wasn't the only NU gymnast who had success. Sophomore Jason Hardabura and senior Jim Koziol also earned All-American honors for the Cornhuskers on Saturday night during the NCAA Championships individual competition.

NU Coach Francis Allen was pleased with the outcomes.

"I had 155 All-Americans before the meet," Allen said. "Now I have a whole bunch more."

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Miscues haunt Nebraska in losses to Missouri

By SAM MCKEWIN
 Senior editor

Things went sour for the Nebraska baseball team in a 7-1 drubbing at the hands of Missouri on Saturday. They didn't get a whole lot sweeter on Sunday.

Despite scoring five runs in the final two innings, the Cornhuskers dropped their second game in a row to the Tigers, this time losing 9-7 in a rain-delayed contest Sunday at Buck Beltzer Field.

It was the first time this season NU (30-13

overall and 13-8 in the Big 12 Conference) lost a series at home. Mizzou, which came into the series winning eight of its last nine, moved to 28-15 and 10-11.

After Nebraska escaped with a 8-7, extra inning win on Friday, Missouri pummeled NU on Saturday. The Tigers' Chris George got the complete game win, a game that left NU Coach Dave Van Horn seething afterward and questioning his team's character and commitment to fundamentals.

Sunday, the Huskers gave the effort that Van Horn wanted but lacked execution in critical spots. "We played hard, as hard as we had played in

about two weeks," Van Horn said. "But every time we made a mistake, Missouri took advantage of it."

The most glaring miscue came in the top of the eighth inning with Nebraska and Missouri tied at two, after J.R. Warner, the Tiger right fielder who had been 0-13 in the series, doubled off NU starter Scott Fries down the right field line to score W.T. Hoover. Out went Fries and in came Jerod Bearinger.

With Warner at second and two outs, Bearinger forced MU batter Jake Epstein into a grounder to third. But Husker third baseman Danny Kimura bobbled the ball, failing to make a throw.

Jon Williams singled in Warner. Epstein scored

on a wild pitch. Williams and Tiger Ryan Stegall scored when Aaron Wilson doubled them in. The error opened up the gates for four more runs and left MU up 6-2.

"That isn't the first time it's happened," Van Horn said of Kimura's error. "It's frustrating for Danny, and it's frustrating for the team."

Nebraska came back in the bottom half of the eighth, scoring three runs to cut the lead to 6-5. Kimura ended that inning with a strikeout.

Missouri pounced again, this time off NU pitcher Brandon Penas. Penas gave up five hits and

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