



# Positively Powerful

Story By David Diehl ■ Photos By Josh Wolfe

## Neumann's passion is infectious for Husker wrestling

**W**restling practice is a half hour from concluding, and Head Coach Tim Neumann sits, resting against a big red wall watching roughly eight to 10 groups of wrestlers sparring. His gray Nebraska wrestling shirt drapes over his shoulders, colored a dark gray from truckloads of sweat.

The scoreboard buzzer yells out, signaling the end of the seven-minute sparring period and telling the resting wrestlers to get ready to rumble.

Neumann is no exception. He rises to his feet and promptly takes to the mat with 184-pounder Charles McTorry.

**"I think they need to see that it's a passion in our eyes, not a paycheck."**

**TIM NEUMANN**  
Nebraska wrestling coach

If Frank Solich took to his practices with the same hard-nosed approach that Neumann applies to his wrestling, he wouldn't last halfway to Saturday.

"The two or three hours we get in the wrestling room," Neumann said, "where we actually get to work with the kids, if you talk to any coach — that and the competi-

tions — that's the pure part of coaching. That's why we all get into it.

"You almost have to get out of it if you can't get on the mat."

### Power of positivity

Neumann enters his 15th year of coaching at NU this season. Since he took the reigns of the Nebraska wrestling program in 1985, he has seen only one losing season (1987-88) and is 189-70-5, collecting the highest winning percentage in NU wrestling history.

The style Neumann brings to the wrestling mat is one

that is quite different from the one he saw in his three years wrestling at Northern Michigan. His coaches in college, he said, were negative and demanded perfection immediately. Neumann teaches the opposite.

"We really try to emphasize the positive," Neumann said. "If the kid is doing something wrong, we always make sure they hear a positive first, then constructive criticism and then we end it with a positive. That's our whole staff."

"Even in competition, if our guy loses — as long as he's given his best effort — he'll hear the positive, then we'll fix what he did wrong, then he'll see a positive. I think they need to see that it's a passion in our eyes, not for a paycheck," Neumann said.

During practice, Neumann's emphasis on the positive is abundant. Though he barks out orders and various messages to the wrestlers, each one is fully backed with encouragement.

One sparring match finds a wrestler hoisted in the air and then dropped awkwardly on his back, which gets abnormally twisted. The wrestlers stop to see if everything is all right.

"You're all right," Neumann yells from across the room from his position resting on the wall. "Get up. Wrestle. Let's go."

During the season, Neumann or another assistant will work with each wrestler about three times a week, preparing him for his next opponent, learning his ins and outs, strengths and weaknesses. This is in addition to the mornings they spend working on technique and the 2½-hour practices in the afternoon spent implementing those techniques.

"It's real intense, but it's real strategic," junior team captain Brad Vering said. "We look at guys down the road that we're going to wrestle, and we have a scouting plan for them. We know their weaknesses, we know their strengths."

"(Neumann) does a real good job that either he's working with you or he's got another coach working with you to make sure that you're going to be ready for your match."

Jason Kelber, a third-year assistant coach and former national champion at Nebraska, said with Neumann's good work ethic, the focus is on the fundamentals and bringing



**TOP:** Neumann demonstrates a proper hand movement to a wrestler at practice. In his 15 years at Nebraska, Neumann has established a perennial top 10 program in the Big Eight/Big 12 conference.

**ABOVE:** Tim Neumann confers with a wrestler after an intense practice session last Wednesday. Neumann often wrestles with his athletes in order to properly prepare them for opponents in the future.

Please see NEUMANN on 19