

Big 12
Notebook

Texas center Chris Mihm has been named the Big 12 Player of the Week after leading the Longhorns to a 4-0 record thus far. Mihm has also been named the ESPN and the College Hoops Insider Player of the Week. He was named the MVP of the Puerto Rico Shootout as well after leading UT to wins over Michigan State and DePaul.

Terry Black of Baylor has been named the Big 12 Newcomer of the Week after big performances in the first three games in his Division I career. Black transferred to BU from Indian Hills Community College in Iowa. He averaged 24 points and 15.7 rebounds while shooting 74 percent from the floor.

Nebraska center Kimani Ffriend has 15 blocks in four games thus far. Cincinnati center Kenyon Martin had nine blocks in the Bearcats' win over Iowa State.

NU Coach Danny Nee's take on the poster situation in which some of his players allegedly made gang signs: "It wasn't gang signs. That is all I can tell you. The fact of the matter is that people were really reaching and was just not accurate. The police department stated that too.

"So it was an interpretation, and out of respect for the children in Nebraska we don't want anything at any time to ever insinuate or any similarity so that was the reason we thought it was very judicious to pull the poster.

"We really regret it happened, but I can guarantee they were not gang signs."

Texas continues its brutal schedule after already facing Michigan State and DePaul in Puerto Rico.

UT will play host to Arizona on Dec. 4, will play at Wisconsin on Dec. 7, at Utah on Dec. 22 and at Connecticut on Jan. 10. Longhorn Coach Rick Barnes is wary of the effects of the schedule on his team.

"What I don't like is our schedule," Barnes said. "I just didn't think it had a real good flow to it. We are off this week, which is maybe good and maybe is not. When you are playing well, you want to keep playing.

"We are not going to be able to hide behind a soft schedule. We are not going to be able to hide behind some ranking."

Kansas State is still looking for a reliable point guard through three games, and Coach Tom Asbury said four players are contending for the job.

"We have not been very efficient there yet," Asbury said. "I don't know exactly what I expected from there at this point of the year.

"We have not found him yet. We have four guys vying for that position, and nobody has stepped up and grabbed it by the throat.

"In lieu of the fact that is a key position we need somebody to evolve from that process and take the job. It has been a major portion of our offensive inefficiency."

Compiled by staff writer
Joshua Camenzind.

Big 12 teams off to quick starts

By JOSHUA CAMENZIND
Staff writer

Red-hot, on-fire and blazing are words that come to mind when thinking about the Big 12 Conference's start in the college basketball season.

Through the first two weeks of non-conference play, the league has compiled an overall record of 36-10, with 11 of 12 teams posting a .500 winning percentage or better.

Nebraska Head Coach Danny Nee, whose team is 2-2, said the start of the Big 12 is good for everyone.

"I am really pleased," Nee said. "I just want to congratulate Kansas and Texas because that is just really great. The higher the top of our league pulls, it is going to pull everyone up. This success early is going to be beneficial to the whole league and help us come tournament time."

Four teams won five tournaments altogether, and the same four are currently ranked in the top 30 of both major polls.

Kansas (4-0) is ranked No. 6 in The Associated Press Poll after winning the Great Alaska Shootout, Texas (4-0) is No. 9 after upsetting No. 2 Michigan State in winning the Puerto Rico Shootout, and Oklahoma State (4-0) is the last team in the top 25 at No. 21 while winning its own tournament in Stillwater.

OSU has five players averaging in double figures with Desmond Mason leading the way at just over 20 per game. The Cowboys' sixth leading scorer is point guard Doug Gottlieb, who is averaging 9.3 points and 12.3 assists. OSU Coach Eddie Sutton said his team has played quite well despite poor rebounding.

"We are deeper than we have ever been," Sutton said. "I think we have more depth than we have had for a while."

Oklahoma is receiving votes in both polls after starting 5-0 and winning the Top of the World and Sooner Holiday Classics.

Baylor joins those four at the top of the conference with a 3-0 record to start the season. Missouri is 4-1 after a season-opening loss to Wisconsin; Colorado (3-1) lost its first game Monday night to Virginia Commonwealth in overtime. Texas Tech has

won two road games since falling to Indiana. Iowa State (3-2) lost 75-60 in the championship game of the Big Island Invitational against No. 1-ranked Cincinnati.

Kansas State (2-1) and Nebraska round out the bottom, while Texas A&M is the only team in the Big 12 without an even record or better.

But the big story is the play of the top two teams—Kansas and Texas. KU knocked off Xavier, Georgia and Georgia Tech en route to its undefeated start, and UT upset the Spartans, who are without All-American guard Mateen Cleaves, and No. 18 DePaul.

Texas Tech Coach James Dickey said the Jayhawks and Longhorns are for real.

"Kansas and Texas are probably as good as anyone in the country," Dickey said.

The Big 12 joins the Pac 10 Conference as the only two conferences in the country with two teams in the top 10, as Stanford and Arizona are ranked No. 3 and 4 in the latest AP Poll.

Sutton agreed with Dickey while noting that maturity was a main factor.

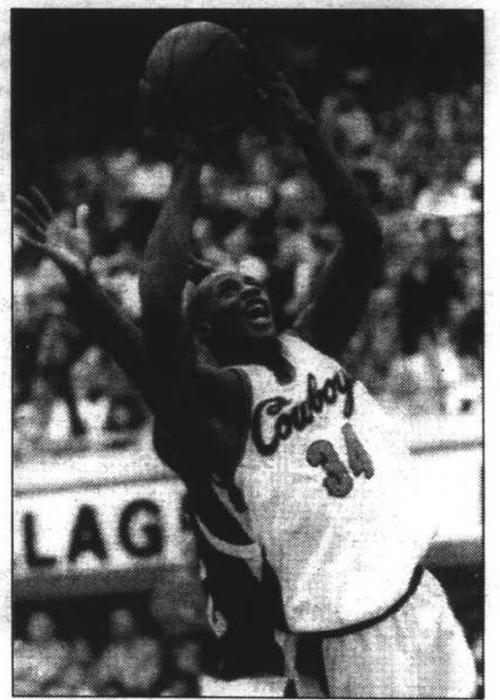
"I thought overall the league was down last year," Sutton said. "I think the reason was there was so many young players and young ball clubs. I think all the coaches expressed the fact that the league should be much stronger this year. Thus far it has been proven to be true.

"I don't think anybody in the country is playing better than Kansas right now. Texas evidently really played well down in Puerto Rico, and Oklahoma played really well in Alaska as well. It seems like to me that the league has showcased themselves quite well."

UT has made the biggest jump in the polls, climbing from No. 20 to No. 9. As expected, the Longhorns have been led by center Chris Mihm. Mihm has averaged 19.8 points and 12.5 rebounds per game. Forward Gabe Muoneke has also lived up to expectations, averaging 16.8 points and 7.3 rebounds.

KU has also been tearing up the court, averaging 95 points per game despite preseason All-American Eric Chenoweth's struggles. Picking up Chenoweth's slack has been no problem thus far for the Jayhawks, with six players averaging nine points or better.

Jayhawk Coach Roy Williams downplayed his



OSU SPORTS INFORMATION
FORWARD DESMOND MASON and the Oklahoma State Cowboys are off to a flying start at 4-0 and what Coach Eddie Sutton terms his deepest OSU team ever.

team's performance thus far.

"Just about every coach thought the league was going to be much stronger, and I tried to emphasize that," said Williams, who has used a rotation of up to 13 players this season. "I think that we have proven that is the case. Yet we all sit back and know that it depends on how you play at the end of the year.

"The league has shown that it is going to be one of the best leagues in the country and will continue to show that throughout the year."

NU's Cochran, Belcher out for weekend slate

■ Injuries may force a redshirt into action for the Ameritas Classic.

By MATTHEW HANSEN
Staff writer

With the limited role of Cookie Belcher because of an injured wrist and only three other scholarship guards, the Cornhusker basketball team was in no condition to sustain further backcourt carnage.

That's exactly what happened, though, as Cary Cochran injured his shoulder Sunday in the final game of the Hoop and Quill Classic against Rutgers. Cochran and Belcher, who played sparingly in the tournament, will both miss this weekend's Ameritas Classic.

Head Coach Danny Nee said at Tuesday's press conference that the loss of Cochran would hurt his team on both ends of the floor.

"Without Cary, we lose an important part of our offense, especially outside shooting," Nee said. "Defensively, we can't afford fouls because of our very thin backcourt. We won't be able to be as effective on the defensive end as we'd like to be because people like Danny Walker can't get into foul trouble."

Walker and Rodney Fields have been Nebraska's starting guards in each of the four games. According to Fields, the tandem will have to carry a heavy load until Cochran's return next week.

"It really falls on Danny and me to get the job done," Fields said. "We are going to have to play more minutes. We also have added responsibility out there."

For Fields, that responsibility involves playing both guard positions for Nebraska. Fields said he isn't entirely comfortable at the point guard but may have to relieve Walker some at the

position.

Meanwhile, Belcher's wrist problems continue. The leading returning scorer from last year made his first appearance of the year against Northwestern, scoring four points and grabbing three rebounds in 15 minutes. He was forced into action the following day against Rutgers after Cochran's first-half injury, despite his sore wrist.

Belcher's status for this season is still unclear. The senior has the opportunity to redshirt after participating in six games.

Fields said Belcher's absence and limited role has hurt the team in more than one way.

"Cookie is the guy for us," Fields said. "He's a great player, and he's our emotional leader. It's been pretty tough so far for us without him, and it'll be real tough without both him and Cary."

As a result of the extreme lack of depth, some lesser-known Huskers may see additional minutes at the guard spot. Nee cited Nick Lahners, a junior walk-on, as a player who will probably take the floor for the first time this weekend in relief of Walker and Fields.

"You had better go look him up in your media guides," Nee told reporters at the press conference.

Upon further inspection of the guide, though, it became clear that a person interested in Lahners would learn little. The Lincoln native, who earned a spot on the team during open tryouts, isn't even mentioned.

Both Nee and Fields professed confidence in Lahners and other little-used players to back up the guard positions. Fields, though, said the regulars would have to play better to make up for the losses of Cochran and Belcher.

"Everyone, including the forwards and the post players, are going to have to pick up the slack," Fields said. "We're going to need to work hard in practice this week, get the kinks out and come ready to play without Cookie and Cary this weekend."

Miron defies role of freshman for NU

MIRON from page 12

watch TV or do something like that. I like to lift. It kind of relieves stress for me."

Miron's sheer size doesn't pass on team captain, 197-pounder Brad Vering, who wrestles live at practices with Miron.

"He's a moose," Vering said. Strength alone won't make a great wrestler, Vering said. The mental capabilities need to be there along with the physical ones to combine for success.

"He makes a lot of high school mistakes," Vering said. "But you can't blame him for that. He's only been here for a couple months. He's wrestling guys that have been here for three or four years."

He has been going through what Neumann called typical freshman roadblocks, like adjusting to the strength of Division I wrestlers. In high school, Miron was used to pinning his opponents or beating them by a substantial margin.

In college, Miron wrestles people like Vering, the fourth-ranked wrestler in the nation at 197. Miron has had trouble setting him, and others, up for attacks, whereas in high school he was skilled enough that he didn't have to set anything up.

"He's had a tough time with the college adjustment," Neumann said, "because he's wrestled close matches with opponents that in a month he'll be beating by 10 points."

Miron has wrestled in two events this year, a dual vs. Lock Haven to open the season (a 2-1 loss), and an open meet in Ithaca, N.Y., on Nov. 20 hosted by Cornell, where he took second place in the heavyweight division.

In his first collegiate match, Miron was wrestling after NU had

"If you've got a hard-working guy at the end of your lineup, it makes everybody feel like they can work that much harder."

TIM NEUMANN
NU coach

already clinched the team victory after a Vering pin.

"I wasn't totally awake," Miron said. "I wasn't wrestling to my potential. I was disappointed with myself that I didn't perform like I can, and I was better than that wrestler, too."

The finals of the Black & Decker Cornell Classic found Miron wrestling the No. 12 heavyweight in the country, and the match was undecided, 0-0 until the last 40 seconds of the third period. Miron ended up losing by a point.

From here on, Miron has a chance to make a big impact on the collegiate wrestling world, Neumann said. It's up to Miron when he makes that impact and how big it is, the coach said.

Miron has to make a decision that he has to trust his technique, Neumann said, and not rely solely on the Paul Bunyan strength that he has.

And as soon as he does that, watch out.

"I honestly think that he can be in the top 10 or 12 heavyweights in the country this year," Neumann said.