

Gomez to return for Wyoming dual

■ The senior is finally through academic and injury problems.

By David Diehl
Staff writer

Nebraska's wrestling season, two months old, has reached its midpoint, but for Paul Gomez, it's just beginning. After beginning the year ranked sixth by Amateur Wrestling News, Gomez has faced some obstacles that made his match with Wyoming on Saturday only his third of the year.

First there was the NCAA. Gomez, 23-5, 16-2 last year and an NCAA qualifier, failed to qualify academically for the first semester and wasn't eligible to wrestle until Dec. 21.

"I don't think that really hurt the team," Gomez said. "I think it should motivate the team, if anything. They did pretty darn good without me."

Assistant Coach Jason Kelber said sitting out really was a thorn in Gomez's side.

"He was really stressed out the first semester," Kelber said.

After the institutional setback, a physical setback was his next obstacle.

A sprained ankle, two matches (both wins) into his season put the year on hold again. So Gomez is approaching the dual this weekend as a coming-out party of sorts.

But the party might not be a full-blown fiesta because the ankle is still healing, Gomez said.

"It's as good as it's going to be for now," the senior said.

The 125-pounder returned to action just last week. He said the injury was coming along well until he aggravated it again this Monday, which limited his practice time.

"I haven't gone through a full grind of practice because I get tired," Gomez said, "and then I start getting lazy with it. That's when I'm going to get it hurt."

Kelber, a former NU national champion who works with the lighter weights, said Gomez should win his match with Wyoming's Cisco Gonzalez, but also said it would be a test for the senior.

"He's only at about 65 percent of what he's going to be for the national tournament this year," Kelber said. "He's got a lot of room for conditioning and improvement yet. So it will be interesting to see how he handles a full seven-minute match under pressure."

Gomez said Joe Malia, who went 11-7 in Gomez's place, did an outstanding job. However, Gomez said he thought he provides the team with a spark being back in the lineup.

"I can kind of get them going a little more," he said. "I can't explain how it is. I think it's just more confidence. The team just has somebody there with experience."

State Coach Fennelly likes Cyclone's position

By Sean Callahan
Staff writer

Anytime you knock off the top women's basketball program in the nation, better things are expected in the following season.

When the Iowa State women's basketball team knocked off No. 1 Connecticut in the NCAA tournament last year, the expectations of the Cyclone program immediately rose.

The average attendance of an Iowa State women's basketball game this season is 9,701 per game, fourth in the nation behind Tennessee, Stanford and Texas Tech.

This season ISU is already off to an impressive 11-2 start and ranked eighth in the country.

Iowa State Coach Bill Fennelly said he and his players are not used to the hype they are receiving.

"There are a lot of expectations, and sometimes that's hard to handle," Fennelly said. "It's a new thing here to have those kind of expectations."

Overall, Fennelly said his players have handled those expectations well.

Most of the weight for this season has been thrown onto the shoulders of All-American Stacy Frese. So far, Fennelly said, the senior from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has lived up to her billing.

"I think her ability and just the threat

of her on the court has really helped the team," Fennelly said. "She's a senior, she's been through a lot of things, doesn't get flustered about much of anything and has done the kind of things you want your senior point guard to do."

Fennelly said Frese is one of the best point guards in the nation, no matter what her statistics read. Currently, she is averaging 15.2 points per game.

To Fennelly, the only statistic that matters is the win-loss column. Frese, according to Fennelly, played her best game of the season against the Drake Bulldogs, though ISU lost the game. The Cyclone's other loss, to Stanford, also occurred on the road.

Frese said she will do all it takes this season to get ISU to the next level.

"If the team needs me to score, then I'll be ready to score. If other people are hot that game, then I'm trying to get them the ball," Frese said. "I'm just trying to do the things it takes to win."

Fennelly thinks Frese has the tools and capability to take Iowa State to the Final Four.

"I think at this point she is one of the best players to ever play at this school," Fennelly said. "Over the last three years she's played here, she's really changed this program dramatically. She's put us in a position to be a contender for the Big 12 championship and to be a contender in the post season."

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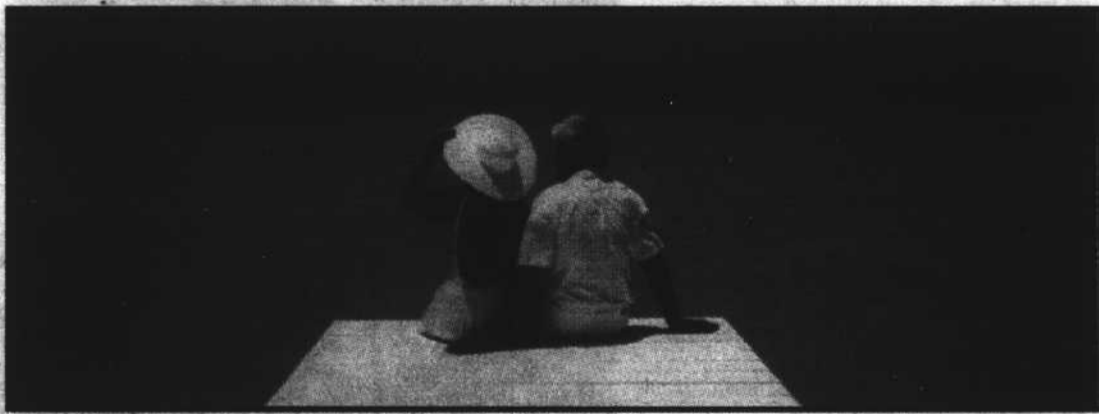
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