

## Sooners outlast NU in physical game

### Huskers fight back, but can't upset OU

By Joshua Camenzind

Staff writer

In what could have been confused for a 12-round heavyweight boxing match in many venues, the Bob Devaney Sports Center saw another close home game slip away from the Nebraska basketball team.

The Cornhuskers fell 62-54 to No. 19 Oklahoma in front of 7,331 fans on Monday night. OU brought its physical game to Lincoln and duked it out with NU for 40 minutes.

Just ask Steffon Bradford.

"It was physical," said Bradford, who had five points and six rebounds. "Sometimes I was trying to go for the offensive rebound and (Sooner players) had me in a headlock. They had me by my jersey, slinging me down. I like types of games like that."

In a similar fashion to what occurred two nights ago against Iowa State, the Huskers fell behind early and rallied before halftime. NU ended the half on a 9-0 run to cut the lead to six at 32-26. NU then opened the second half with a 4-0 run to cut the lead down to two at 32-30.

Eduardo Najera, who led OU with 13 rebounds and 10 points, stopped the run with a jumper and the two teams exchanged blows, both literally and physically, for the rest of the half. Oklahoma's lead would never grow to more than nine. NU cut it down to one at 54-53 on a Larry Florence jumper with 1:18 left.

Then came the knockout punch. OU's Kelley Newton missed a 3-pointer with 52 seconds remaining and Sooner Renzi Stone rebounded the miss. He passed to J.R. Raymond and OU looked to milk some clock.

But Raymond fired up another 3-pointer and all but sealed NU's fate with the make.

"You talk to the kids so much about clock and time management," OU Coach Kelvin Sampson said. "I guess we need to throw that out the back window. In terms of shot selection, it wasn't the smartest shot in the world, but what a beautiful shot."

The shot, combined with 1-4 free throw shooting by NU and near-perfect shooting from OU provided the final separation.

Just another one that got away.

"I feel we are going to get one before the season is over with," Kimani Ffriend said. "We went out there and showed some pride but shots weren't falling and we weren't making free throws."

"They were making big shots, and we couldn't. We lost the game right there."



KIMANI FRIEND dunks on Oklahoma after a pass from Cary Cochran found Ffriend all alone under the basket. Ffriend finished with six points, 10 rebounds and four blocks in a 62-54 loss to Oklahoma.

Mike Warren/DN

### Sampson grateful guard made shot

By Matthew Hansen

Staff writer

Just 48 hours after a home loss to No. 9 Oklahoma State, which Oklahoma Coach Kelvin Sampson termed "easily the hardest of the season," the Sooners were back on the court against Nebraska.

It wasn't pretty. OU made only 6 of 23 3-pointers and shot just 34.4 percent from the field but left Lincoln with a win.

And that left Sampson with a smile on his

face. He said that despite the ugliness of the victory, it was a big one for his team.

"We basically played like shit," he said. "I mean, we played like shit. But, in the final minutes, we still had a chance to win, and we pulled it out. Coming off the game on Saturday, that is absolutely huge."

Coming into the game, Sampson already knew things weren't going to be pretty for OU.

"I told myself before the game that I wasn't going to be concerned with aesthetics," Sampson said. "I wasn't interested in prettiness, in how we shot the ball. I didn't care about that. I just wanted us to win the game."

One shot Sampson was concerned with was J.R. Raymond's 3-pointer with only 45 seconds remaining, just seconds after Stone had secured an offensive-rebound, resetting the 30-second shot clock for OU, which led by one.

Raymond, who was 2 of 9 from beyond the arc prior, said he didn't think twice about it.

"That shot was just a part of my game," Raymond said. "I take that kind of shot a lot. A shot like that takes a lot of courage and confidence on my part."

Sampson said while he wasn't surprised by his guard's shot, things may have been different if the attempt had hit the rim instead of the bottom of the net.

"He misses that, and they go back down and score..." Sampson said. "He may be hitchhiking all the way back to Norman."

The shot, and then the win, moved Oklahoma back into sole position of fourth place in the Big 12. Sampson said the win was critical for the Sooners.

"We have so much left to play for this season," he said. "We're an NCAA-tournament team, a team that's going to be playing in March. And when you have a team like that, you have to win games like this."

### —BIG 12 CONFERENCE—

## Cowboys starting to turn heads

■ A road win at Oklahoma solidifies OSU atop the Big 12 conference standings.

By Trevor Johnson

Staff writer

The way this season has gone, it's been hard to pick a clear-cut favorite in the Big 12.

■ Kansas (18-6 overall and 7-3 in the Big 12 Conference) has played worse than what's expected from the Jayhawks lately, but it's still Kansas.

■ Iowa State (21-3 and 9-1) came out of nowhere.

■ Oklahoma (19-4 and 7-3) has Eduardo Najera and is getting hot with a victory over Nebraska.

■ Texas (17-6 and 8-2) has Chris Mihm, possibly the first player taken in next year's NBA draft.

■ And nobody really wants to play the young but talented Missouri (14-8 and 7-3).

But after three straight weeks of

five teams swapping places in the top 25 (but none in the top 10), a leader of this conference might just be emerging in Oklahoma State.

The Cowboys (20-2 and 9-1) just got a No. 9 ranking in the coaches poll, tops among Big 12 teams, and they are 3-0 against ranked opponents. One might wonder why, with a 20-2 overall record, the Cowboys aren't ranked higher, with the likes of No. 3 Duke (19-3), No. 4 Arizona (21-4) or No. 5 Michigan State (18-6) — all teams that have worse records than the Cowboys.

As Texas Coach Rich Barnes, whose team plays the Cowboys on Wednesday, said, "They're a confident team, and they're playing as well as any team in the country, which is what they need to be doing right now."

And as a team OSU can hurt an opponent from anywhere. The Pokes shoot 48.8 percent from the floor as a team, with forward Desmond Mason hitting 48.9 percent of his 3-pointers and Brian Montonati shooting 55 percent from the field overall.

Guard Doug Gottlieb, described by Coach Eddie Sutton as having

"marvelous passing instincts," is averaging nine assists a game, dishing the ball to four players who average double digits.

Though they might not be given the attention they merit, the Cowboys are in a position for which they've been grooming for years. Four of five starters returned this year, and all are seniors.

The seniors demonstrated their experience in Saturday's 74-71 win at Oklahoma. While the leading scorer, Mason, spent most of the second half on the sideline with four fouls, Joe Adkins scored 21 in his absence, then came off the bench and hit a critical 3-pointer that gave the Pokes an eight-point lead with 1:42 remaining in the game.

Oklahoma whittled the lead down, but Montonati, also a senior, hit two free throws with just more than seven seconds to go, and the Cowboys walked out of Oklahoma with a 9-1 conference record tied with Iowa State for best in the league.

"Their maturity factor is much better than last year," Sutton said.

## Lamb's injury could hurt Nebraska in dual

By Jason Merrihew

Staff writer

It seems that the cards are in the favor for eighth-ranked Iowa State to revenge its home loss suffered at the hands of seventh-ranked Nebraska earlier this year when the two teams meet in a 7 p.m. dual at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Last weekend, the Cyclones eclipsed the Big 12 team record, which was previously held by the Huskers, by posting a score of 196.95 against in-state rivals, Iowa.

To make the situation more ominous, Nebraska's freshman sensation A.J. Lamb is only about 80 percent recovered from ankle injury she sustained a couple of weeks ago at Oklahoma.

Despite the question mark that surrounds Lamb's health, Coach Dan Kendig feels his team is ready to compete against ISU.

"We have to push ourselves to a higher limit," Kendig said. "Were capable of hitting six for six on each

event."

The role of freshman Jess Wertz will be increased for NU's second home meet of the year if Lamb is unable to compete in the all-around.

"Everybody is prepared for any spot," junior Amy Ringo said. "Everybody has been training hard enough that we feel anyone can do the job equally as well as A.J."

Tonight's dual features two of the best gymnasts in the country. Iowa State brings junior Betsy Hamm, a former NCAA beam champion at Florida, against Nebraska's senior All-American, Heather Brink.

Hamm, the reigning Big 12 gymnast of the week, turned in a school record 39.525 in the all-around last week. Brink recorded a season high in the all-around at Kentucky with a 39.425 performance.

Despite the circumstances, Nebraska is confident about its chances against Iowa State.

"Iowa State is going to come in and challenge us," Kendig said. "We are up for the challenge."