

— TENNIS —

Mills injured, but Nebraska coach still expects success

By Mike Callahan, Jr.

Staff writer

When your No. 1 tennis player is down with a foot injury, lady luck must hate you.

But despite that major setback for the Nebraska men's tennis team, life goes on, and everyone else's role just got a little bit bigger.

This weekend, the No. 64, nationally-ranked NU tennis team (2-2 overall and 0-1 in the Big 12 Conference) is heading east for some big non-conference matchups, battling Illinois State (2-3) Friday, and No. 36 Indiana State (7-1) on Saturday.

The Huskers were handled easily in their Big 12 opener against conference-title contender No. 17 Texas A&M (6-1), but bounced back nicely

on Sunday, pouncing in-state rival Creighton (6-1).

Coach Kerry McDermott has been forced to perform a juggling act with his lineup because of the foot injury of projected No. 1 player, Lance Mills.

Against Texas A&M Feb. 11, Mills attempted playing at the No. 4 spot, but dropped his match 7-5, 6-1 to Ryan Newport.

"His foot is currently in a boot, and the doctors are really not sure what's wrong with it," McDermott said. "We're gonna give it about 10 days, and from there we'll decide whether or not we should try to do a medical red-shirt this year."

While Mills nursed his foot, three worthy players have shared time at the No. 1 singles, juniors Adnan Adzalic, Kai Rieke, and Jorge Abos Sanchez. Junior doubles player Kelsey Moran

thinks NU is in good hands with these players.

"Sanchez is playing good as always and seems to win every match he plays," said Moran, "and Kai has proved he can compete at the No. 1 position."

Regardless of who's playing at the No. 1 spot, Indiana State are hot, McDermott said.

"Overall as a team, they're so strong," he said. "But we've beaten them in the past, so I think the guys will have a lot of confidence coming in."

The Sycamores are led by No. 1-slotted Jonas Piibor, who needed just two sets to take care of the nation's No. 47 singles player, Andrew Nisker from Vanderbilt.

Something one can expect, according to Coach McDermott, is a win against Illinois State's Red Birds.

— SOFTBALL —

Husker players taught lesson

A 1-5 weekend only motivates the Huskers

By Sean Callahan

Staff writer

Expectations were high for the 2000 Nebraska softball team.

With a roster full of players who played in the College World Series two years ago and the regional finals last year, the Cornhuskers had preseason thoughts of getting back to the promised land.

After a 1-5 finish in last weekend's Fiesta Bowl Tournament in Phoenix, the No. 13 Huskers were issued a wake-up call that they still have a long way to go to get to the level at which they would like to be.

They play six games this weekend in the 2000 UNLV Classic in Las Vegas.

"There wasn't any one thing that went wrong," NU Coach Rhonda Revelle said. "It was one of those week-

ends where you can either learn from it and go on, or we can just sit and mope."

In the Fiesta Bowl Tournament, Nebraska was outscored by its opponents 38 to 17 and out-hit 56 to 33.

To increase the woes, All-American pitcher Jenny Voss started off her senior season 0-3 with a 7.00 ERA. In a total of 15 innings pitched, Voss struck out seven batters but gave up 14 walks.

As a sophomore, Voss led the nation in wins with 40 and compiled 14 shutouts during that year. Last season Voss was 23-11.

Center fielder Jennifer Williams said that she was disappointed about NU's showing in Phoenix, but the tournament was a good learning process that will help the team get better.

Williams, a senior, said it was the little things like leaving runners on base that hurt Nebraska the most.

"Each person goes out there with the expectation of their self," Williams said. "We know that's not how we play. Everyone on this team knows what it's going to take to win."

The most devastating loss over the weekend didn't come on the field for the Huskers, but in the loss of third baseman Cindy Roethemeyer for the season.

Revelle said that she is unsure of Roethemeyer's future status because she is in her fifth year of eligibility.

Going into this weekend's games in Las Vegas, Williams has confidence that everything will turn around for NU.

"We know our level of play," Williams said. "If we play our game, we're going to come ahead. We're looking at making a statement this weekend. We have a lot of pride of who we are as players and who we are as Nebraska softball."

Women's hoops keep NCAA hopes up

By John Gaskins

Staff writer

The task that the Nebraska women's basketball team faces to keep its NCAA Tournament hopes alive is quite simple: The Huskers likely must win their last four regular season games.

With a 12-11 overall record and 6-6 record in the Big 12 Conference, NU will probably have to do more than just win.

It will need help from the teams above it in the Big 12, and the Huskers probably will have to win at least two games in the Big 12 tournament

Game one of the Huskers' must-win tour begins in Waco, Texas, on Saturday at 7:05 p.m. in a matchup against last-place Baylor (6-16 and 1-11).

"It's crunch time for us, big-time," NU forward Charlie Rogers said after the Huskers' 66-62 setback to 12th-ranked Texas Tech on Wednesday night.

"We just have to keep putting ourselves in position to win games."

The Bears might be the ideal opponent, as they come into the game ranked last in the Big 12 in nine statistical categories, including scoring offense and margin. But BU won its first conference game of the season on

Tuesday night in a 71-60 victory over Oklahoma State.

Also, Nebraska must beware of emotional drain after barely falling short against Tech. Last season's loss to BU, which snapped NU's 27-game home winning streak, came after an emotional 68-67 win over Iowa State.

Coach Paul Sanderford said he still believes NU's hopes should be high after its victory over No. 23 Kansas on Sunday and near-win at Tech.

"I'm comfortable with the scenario of where we are," Sanderford said before the Tech game, "because I think we should be better. But you've got to play the hand you're dealt."

Men gymnasts ready to roll after week off

■ No. 10 Huskers go to dual in California after using last week to heal.

By John Gaskins

Staff writer

Even though three-time national champion Marshall Nelson suffered a possible career-ending knee injury, the Nebraska men's gymnastics team had its best weekend of the season last week.

That's because the Cornhuskers didn't compete.

NU Coach Francis Allen decided not to send any of his gymnasts to the Winter Cup Challenge in Las Vegas, an open tournament to all amateur gym-

nasts, in order to "heal our wounds."

Ready or not, the 10th-ranked Huskers are on the West Coast this weekend and will duel with No. 20 UC-Santa Barbara (0-7) on Saturday night.

Allen is grateful, both for the rest and this week's competition.

Before his disaster at OU, Nelson had been the healthiest of Allen's key gymnasts. In breaking three school records in three weeks after a 21-month layoff, he carried NU while Jason Hardabura, last year's NCAA all-around champion, was out of competition with a sore back.

"I told everyone after we lost Marshall that we have to have some people step up," Allen said. "We still have the same team that ended up third at nationals last year. Once we really get going with (Jason) Hardabura back,

we're going to be OK."

Luckily for NU, Hardabura will return to competition this weekend in the floor, pommel horse and vault.

At 24, the junior from Ontario said the soreness is typical for a gymnast his age. Hardabura's back had been sore all winter, and he said he was trying to go "way too fast" in his rehabilitation and re-aggravated the injury just days before the first meet.

Since then, Hardabura has been taking it slow, thanks to Assistant Coach Jim Howard's more gradual and progressive recovery program.

"I've always put a lot of stock in my top gymnasts, maybe too much stock," Allen said. "This time the horse ate the wrong oats before the race. Jay's injury is nothing life-threatening. We just have to make sure he stays healthy."

— TRACK —

Athletes run for spot on conference team

By Jamie Suhr

Staff writer

Nebraska track and field team members will have one last chance to impress the coaches at the NIAC Invitational run on Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The coaches will use the final meet of the regular season to choose the remaining spots for the Big 12 Indoor Conference Championships in Ames, Iowa, Feb. 25-26. Final decisions will not be made until they meet again Monday. The coaches must decide on 52 athletes from a team of 121.

"It's an important meet for the kids," Coach Gary Pepin said. "They're battling for one of 26 spots on the conference team."

Mark Kostek, event coordinator and combined events coach, said about 20 spots are locked up for both the men's and women's teams.

"We're still trying to figure out our conference team, and what athletes we can use to maximize our points at the meet," Kostek said.

Kostek said the coaches will look to see who the other Big 12 schools select in order to get the best matchups.

In the NIAC, the Huskers will be facing schools that are Division III and NAIA.

"This is a flat tune-up," Kostek said.

But for Ryan Stairs, a long-jumper and triple-jumper, this isn't

"They're battling for one of 26 spots on the conference team."

Gary Pepin

Track coach

a tune-up.

"For me, it's definitely important," Stairs said. "This year I've been plagued with injuries. Right now, I'm borderline for the team."

Stairs, a sophomore who was on last year's conference team, said making the team has been much tougher than it was last year. Stairs said he was happy to see the meet have so few teams, giving him a better chance to advance to the final round.

While most of the Husker team is competing at the NIAC Invitational, six members of the team are in Norman, Okla., participating in the Sooner Relays.

Rene Pretorius and Emily Waibel will be competing in the hurdles while Lesley Owusu, Stella Klassen, Cheryl Harmon and Yelena Stanisavljevic will team up for the 4-by-400-meter relay.

The women will be competing against athletes from Texas, Baylor, Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Women gymnasts want perfection against Gators

By Jason Merrihew

Staff writer

The Nebraska women's gymnastics team heads to Florida to compete in a quadrangular against the No. 18 Gators, No. 19 New Hampshire and unranked Towson State.

The Huskers are heading to Gainesville, Fla., with a season-high 196.6 team score that they earned last Tuesday against Iowa State in Lincoln.

Coach Dan Kendig said his team still has room for improvement, except Heather Brink, who got a 10 on the vault against ISU.

The team's attitude reflects the coach's attitude.

"We didn't have a perfect meet, although many audience members

thought we did," senior Nicole Wilkinson said. "We had some falls and wobbles here and there. By all means it wasn't perfect. We have some room for improvement."

The strong freshman class this year has been the main reason Nebraska is ranked among the elite in the nation. Freshman A.J. Lamb's star continues to shine, as the Lincoln native is coming off a second-place finish in the all-around with a 38.7.

Jen French, a freshman from Greensboro, N.C., set a career high against the Cyclones on the balance beam with a 9.85. Freshman Julie Houk also set a career high when she earned a 9.90 third-place finish on the floor exercise. Houk also chipped in with a second-place 9.875 on the uneven bars.

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