

Swimmers currently in third place



DN File Photo
The Nebraska women are in third place after the first day of the Big 12 Championship in College Station, Texas.

From Staff Reports

If there is a way for swimmers to turn their swimming caps into "rally cap" mode, the Nebraska women should gather in the hotel room and turn their lids likewise, because a rally is in order.

Third place is where the Husker women stand after completing six events at the Big 12 Conference Swimming Championships in College Station, Texas, with the good news being that Nebraska has two days to claw their way back into it.

Texas took command of the first day with 280 points, followed by Texas A&M with 209. The Cornhuskers are locked into third with 166 points, with Kansas right on their heels at 156.

UT took over on the boards and the relays in Thursday's introductory act.

The Horns wrapped up first through third place finishes in the one-meter diving finals, with the nearest Husker being ninth-place-finisher Molly McDonald.

Texas also claimed the 200-yard freestyle relay event with a time of 1:31.39, ahead of A&M

and third place NU's time of 1:32.55.

Nebraska watched its southern rivals add insult to injury by capping the night with a team win in the 400-yard medley relay race finishing at 3:42.46 compared to Nebraska's second place time of 3:43.45.

Despite Texas' success, Nebraska's All-American Shandra Johnson still lies unbeaten in individual conference races after adding conference gold medal No. 10 to her collection in the 500-yard freestyle with a time of 4:47.35.

Johnson made it look easy against her nearest competitor Emily Ballenger of Texas' time of 4:50.10.

However, Nebraska's Helene Muller was knocked off in the 50-yard freestyle event, finishing in 23.00 seconds and touching the wall barely behind Colleen Lanne of Texas with her time of 22.68.

Diving proved to be a major asset for the Longhorns on day one as Nebraska diving coach Jim Hocking had feared.

Texas accumulated 60 of its points on the board, with Nebraska only banging out nine.

Men's basketball: shooting for .500

By Joshua Camenzind

Staff writer

You might say that the Nebraska basketball team has its back to the wall. Five regular season games remain, and all five must be won for the Cornhuskers to reach .500.

NU will face one of its tougher tests Saturday night in Oklahoma when it faces Oklahoma State in Stillwater at 6:05 p.m. The game will be televised by ESPN.

"Everybody is talking about how our season is over."

Cory Cochran
Nebraska guard

Bradford said.

With a losing season, a coach who refers to next year in every other breath and a postseason appearance looking less likely everyday, many could envision the Huskers giving up.

Not guard Cary Cochran.

"We got a lot of goals left," Cochran said. "Everybody is talking about how our season is over."

If NU doesn't put together a big run, it might be. Nebraska is on the brink of not making a postseason appearance for the first time since the 1989-90 season.

A spot in the NCAA tournament is feasible only if the Huskers win the Big 12 Tournament, and a berth in the National Invitation Tournament requires at least a winning record.

But Cochran points to close losses to Missouri and Oklahoma as bright spots, as well as a team that plays in the Big Ten Conference - Illinois.

Cochran said his father, who is a high school basketball coach in Iowa, pointed out to him on Tuesday night that the Fighting Illini were struggling much like NU and finished 3-11 in the Big Ten conference regular season in 1998-99.

Illinois was able to come together for the conference tournament and reach the finals before losing to Michigan State.

"That is the same scenario we are in," Cochran said. "We are not saying that is the only game. We want to come in and play well, get a couple wins and then go down to the Big 12 Tournament and play well."

OSU, ranked ninth in the country, is 20-3 and second in the Big 12 at 9-2.

These are not numbers that would inspire many members of a 10-14 team that has managed only three conference wins compared with eight losses.

Steffon Bradford said the Huskers should have a desire to play well against a team that Coach Danny Nee calls the "best team he has seen on film all year."

"If you can't be up to that, you are in the wrong business,"



Heather Glenboski/DN
JUNIOR FORWARD Steffon Bradford has averaged 12.4 points this season, leading the team in scoring so far. Nebraska will take on Oklahoma State this Saturday at 6 p.m.

Huskers look for improvement

By Dane Stickney

Senior editor

Last weekend did not go the way the Nebraska baseball team had hoped it would.

The team blew a one-run lead in the ninth inning to lose 8-6 to Northwestern State (La.) and lost 2-1 to No. 7 Rice before rebounding for a 10-3 win against Arkansas State.

NU also lost pitcher Scott Fries for a month after the senior left-hander and opening-day starter broke his foot in an off-the-field incident.

Despite the setbacks, the team is expecting to rebound in a big way, pitcher Shane Komine said this weekend at the University of Texas-

Arlington, Arlington Morning News Invitational pitcher Shane Komine said.

"We're planning to go 3-0 this weekend," Komine said. "Last weekend we planned on going 3-0, but a couple breaks didn't go our way."

But Cornhuskers' Coach Dave Van Horn said the competition could be better this weekend.

"This is going to be a super-tough tournament," he said.

The Huskers (1-2) open Friday at 3:30 p.m. against Texas-Arlington (7-3), which beat powerhouse Texas earlier this season.

On Saturday, NU faces Washington State (3-4), which Van Horn said has a potent offense. Then,

on Sunday, the Huskers will play top-25 Arkansas (3-1) and their ace pitcher Charlie Isaacson, who was 9-0 last season as a freshman.

"It's nice to get someone's three or four (pitcher), but it also helps to see their best because it'll help when conference play rolls around," Van Horn said.

Van Horn said he expects the team to play better this weekend because it wasn't prepared last weekend. The temperatures were in the upper 80s, which caused the Huskers to wear down late last weekend in Dallas.

"We looked sluggish during the long, hot weekend," he said. "So we focused more on conditioning this week, and we should be mentally bet-

ter prepared."

The complacency at the end of the games troubled Van Horn the most.

"Against Northwestern State, we got out-hustled," he said. "We can live with losing a few games, but we can't live with being out-hustled."

Van Horn was not panicking about Fries' injury either. The senior should be pitching within a month.

He said freshman left-hander Jaime Rodrigue, who pitched well in relief, will take Fries' spot, which opens more opportunities for other young pitchers to get experience.

"It may be a blessing in disguise," he said. "When Scott comes back, he should be fresh, and our young guys will be more seasoned."

Neumann could get 200th win

■ NU wrestlers need to beat No. 3 Iowa State to gain honor for coach.

By David Diehl

Staff writer

The two birds are sitting nicely on their perch for Coach Tim Neumann, and his wrestlers hold the collective stone.

Ninth-ranked Nebraska travels to No. 3 Iowa State tonight to close out its regular season. If NU knocks off the Cyclones, like it has four of the past five years, it'll be career-win No. 200 for Neumann.

Knocking off both birds would be nice, Neumann said, but they're not both on the same level.

"It'd be great to get 200 wins," Neumann said. "It would be better to beat Iowa State."

Neumann is already the most successful coach in Nebraska wrestling history, with his .708 winning percentage and his 199 career coaching victories. No other coach has more than 98 wins.

But to notch the victory the Cornhuskers are going to have to perform at their peak level.

"We're going to have to wrestle like I thought we were capable of wrestling at the beginning of the year to win the dual tomorrow night," Neumann said. "We haven't wrestled like that all year yet and that's just being straight."

At stake with the outcome of the dual is the Huskers' seed at the Big 12 Championships, to be held on March 5 in Lincoln. The outcome of a few key weight classes tonight will determine where some individuals sit for the conference tourney.

"We need to win at 125, 141, 149 and 174," Neumann said, "to guarantee us the second or third seed. Otherwise we'll be on the wrong side of the bracket, so it's real important that we win those matches."

Charles McCorty, ranked sixth at 184 pounds for NU, will square off with his toughest opponent to date this year, top-ranked Cael Sanderson, one of the best wrestlers in the country at any weight.

McCorty is as focused as he's ever been, Neumann said. McCorty said that he has to stay that way to win and that he is confident he can, because on any given day anyone can win.

"With the talent I have," McCorty said, "and at this level I believe everybody is equal. Right now he's just putting together a few more things than everybody else."