

TRACK

# Championships give athletes a new chance

*Jumpers have opportunity to finally reach potential*

By Jamie Suhr

Staff writer

Many obstacles blocked the Nebraska men's long-jumpers from reaching their potential this season, but with a strong showing at the Big 12 Indoor Championships on Feb. 25-26 in Ames, Iowa, all will be forgotten.

"We haven't done very well, but we have the athletes that can do well at the conference meet," Coach Gary Pepin said.

He said a lot of the problems have come from a lack of practice.

Earlier in the year, Sheldon Hutchinson and Tobyn Rucker were both out of action for six weeks.

Rucker, who finished second in the long jump in the Big 12 outdoor meet, couldn't practice because he wasn't enrolled in enough credit hours.

He spent most of his time playing basketball to stay in shape.

"That was my fault," Rucker

said. "I did some stupid things."

Hutchinson didn't practice because of stress fractures in both shins. He only was allowed to ride the stationary bike.

Hutchinson, who has a long triple jump of 51-7 feet this year, is still dealing with the pain from the injuries and takes Tylenol and ibuprofen to alleviate the pain.

"It's getting better everyday," Hutchinson said. "In the beginning it hurt a lot."

Hutchinson said he was satisfied with the way the season has gone, considering his injuries.

"Sheldon is on the upswing," Pepin said.

"He'd be doing better if not for his injuries."

For Rucker, a senior, this will be his final chance to claim the Big 12 Indoor title.

All four men's long-jumpers have competed in the conference championships.

Rucker, a native of Killeen, Texas, said he was looking forward

to competing against the Longhorns.

"I'm from Texas, so I want to kick their ass," Rucker said.

Ryan Stairs, who Pepin said was "very much on the bubble," had his best performance of the season last week in the NIAC Invitational.

"He did really well last meet, but he can do better," Pepin said.

Pepin said Stairs had been plagued with foot and ankle injuries this season, hindering his distance on jumps.

After fighting through the injuries, Stairs will be competing in his second conference championship, despite his grandmother's funeral this weekend.

"She knows I love her," Stairs said. "She would have wanted me to jump."

Pepin said he was pleased with improvements made by Daniel Johnson in the long jump, though his strongest event is the triple jump where he has provisionally qualified for nationals.

# NU track teams have different strategies

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women to long jump further than 20-feet. Ingram's high this season is 20-10 Feb. 5.

As a freshman, Ingram was a member of the last NU team to win the conference championship.

"Do you know how bad I want that ring?" Ingram said.

NU's Carrie Braness, who finished second in the high jump last year, will go jump-for-jump with Texas' Erin Aldrich, who has a conference best mark of 6-1 1/2. Aldrich is the two-time defending NCAA champion.

Braness has been coming on strong for the Huskers. In the past two meets, she has posted personal-bests by jumping 6-feet. Equaling that mark was NU's Jessica Thompson, tying them for fifth in the country.

While Ingram's experience will lead the women's team, in contrast, the NU men's team will need a big performance from its newcomers. The Huskers have already taken a hit with NU shot-putter Carl Myerscough out of the meet.

Chris Chandler is the Big 12 leader in the 60-meter dash with a time of 6.61 seconds. Last year's champion, UT's Amar Johnson, won the event last year by

"Do you know how bad I want that ring?"

Dahlia Ingram

Women's track team captain

posting a time of 6.68.

But Chandler said he doesn't worry about who he will compete against.

"I don't even look at the other team's sprinters," Chandler said. "I try to go in blind."

In addition to the 60-meter dash, Chandler will compete for the 200-meter title. If the team needed points, Chandler said he would compete in the 4-by-400 meter relay.

In the pole-vault, three of the top competitors graduated from Orangefield High School in Texas. NU freshmen Eric Eshbach, NU record-holder and No. 2 pole-vaulter in the conference, and Johnathan Henley will compete against former high school teammate Jacob Davis of Texas, the Big 12 leader in the pole vault.

BOWLING

# At last, NU bowlers have a home meet

By Joshua Camenzind

Staff writer

This weekend will be a bright spot for the Nebraska women's bowling team.

After nine tournaments on the road and a top-two finish at all of them except one, the top-ranked Cornhuskers will have their first-ever Athletic Department-sponsored home tournament in the Great Plains Conference Classic.

NU, ranked No. 1 in the nation in the latest Bowling Writer's Association of America Poll, will face the Nos. 3-, 5- and 6-ranked teams in the nation at the meet.

Husker Coach Bill Straub said his team is looking forward to the competition, and it will serve as another test for the National Championships coming up.

"We are ranked No. 1 in the country for good reason," Straub said. "The competition is terrific. There is no conference in the country that has this type of talent."

Straub said, much like the rest of the season, his team will experience good senior leadership. He said freshman Kari Schwager has been a "welcome surprise."

Schwager, a native of Chicago, has bowled two 300 games in her career and has a high series of 810. She said the season has been a steady progression for her.

"I started off kind of slow but have been working hard the last couple of weeks," Schwager said.

As far as the tournament at home, which will be held at Sun Valley Lanes, 321 Apple Creek Road, Schwager said it will be a good change to compete in Lincoln.

"It will be pretty nice," Schwager said.

"You get to stay in your own rooms, and it has its advantages over the road."

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