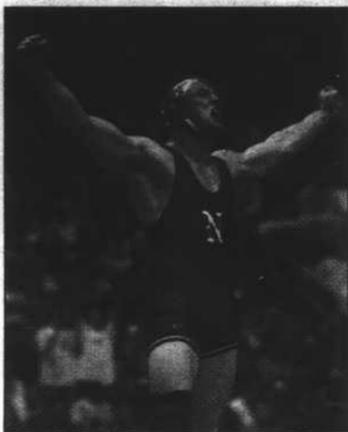


## Vering captures national title



Bill Greenblatt/NEWSMAKERS  
**BRAD VERING celebrates his national title victory Saturday night at the NCAA Championships. Vering became the seventh Husker to win an individual national crown.**

■ **Beckerman, Gomez and Snyder all earn All-American honors during wrestling championships.**

By David Diehl

Staff writer

ST. LOUIS, Mo.— The match was sluggish, boring and tedious for both Iowa State and Nebraska wrestling fans.

Until the second overtime.

If any of the 16,795 in attendance at the Kiel Center so much as blinked, they missed the moment that captured Nebraska's first individual national wrestling championship in five years.

Just one second into the tie-breaking sudden death overtime, in what seemed barely enough time for the referee to blow the starting whistle,

Nebraska 197-pounder Brad Vering escaped the clutches of Iowa State's fourth-seeded Zach Thompson, and thrust his fists skyward in victory.

Eleventh-ranked Nebraska finished in eighth place with 45.5 team points, its highest finish since a 1996 sixth-place performance. The Huskers also came out of St. Louis with four All-Americans, also the most since 1996.

But NU would have finished out of the top 10 without Vering's championship, the first since heavyweight Tolly Thompson was crowned in 1995.

"It's a lifelong dream," an exhausted and exhilarated Vering said afterward. "I've been wanting to do this forever — winning it for Nebraska, being a Nebraska kid. I know they haven't had a hometown national champion, or at least one in a while. It just feels so good right now."

In order to win, Vering had 30 seconds to escape his opponent's control; if not the Cyclones' Thompson would

*"I felt good taking top or bottom. Whatever I had to do, it was fine."*

**Brad Vering**  
NU wrestler

be crowned champ.

But the title might not have been won with 29 seconds left in the overtime period. It may have been captured just before that with the coin toss.

Vering won the toss after a scoreless first overtime and chose to start in the down position. It's generally accepted among wrestlers that it is easier to earn an escape rather than ride out an opponent for 30 seconds.

"I felt good taking top or bottom," the Howells native said. "Whatever I had to do, it was fine. It was just the first time I'd won the coin toss in overtime."

Vering finished the season with a

38-3 mark, including three wins vs. Thompson, who lost the last two by one point. Vering said Thompson's style usually will create a tough match.

"He's real tough to score on," Vering said. "He's short, he's strong. I had a couple of chances to score, and he wrestled out of it."

"A matchup like that is always going to come down to the end, and I got lucky with the toss and got it."

After seven minutes of wrestling, neither competitor had scored a take-down — the same thing happened in their March 5 match at the Big 12 tour-

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Photos by Mike Warren/DN  
**ABOVE: JESSICA THOMPSON clears her mark in the high jump at the NCAA indoor track and field national championship.**

**RIGHT: JELENA STANISAVLJEVIC sprints down the banked track at the Tyson Center. Stanisavljevic was competing in the 4x400 meter relay that finished sixth at the meet.**

## NU coach has mixed feelings over NCAAs

By Jamie Suhr

Staff writer

Despite staking claim to 10 All-American honors at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships on March 10-11 in Fayetteville, Ark., Nebraska Track and Field Coach Gary Pepin was not entirely pleased with his team's results.

Pepin said the team didn't reach its goal of finishing in the top 10 at nationals. Overall, the women's team finished 12<sup>th</sup> with 14.5 points, and the men placed No. 24 with a final tally of six points.

UCLA led the way on the women's side by scoring 51 points and the men's field was dominated by the host Arkansas, which outdistanced second place Stanford 69.5-52.

"We didn't do as well as we could have, but a lot of good things happened," Pepin said.

Just two Cornhuskers scored points on the men's side. Triple-jumper Sheldon Hutchinson placed sixth with a leap of 53-feet, 6 1/4 inches, after battling through a year of painful shin splints and stress fractures in both legs.

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## Nee fired as NU coach; Byrne begins search

■ **Dismissal follows 11-19 season and low attendance at the Devaney Center.**

By Josh Funk

Editor

When asked about next year's team in a post-game interview last week, Nebraska Basketball Coach Danny Nee said prophetically: "It's over."

Monday, NU Athletic Director Bill Byrne fired Nee and announced a nationwide search for his replacement.

Nee was fired four days after a first-round Big 12 tournament loss to Baylor, marking the end of a disappointing 11-19 season and Nee's third losing year at Nebraska.

Byrne did not discuss specifics, but said there were many factors in his decision.

"I'd say it was an accumulation of things," Byrne said, though he did acknowledge that wins and losses and poor game attendance numbers were factors. Nebraska's attendance figures are the lowest since the opening of the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"Many things go into determining whether we want someone to continue to head a program, especially a high-profile one like basketball."

Byrne said the university will pay \$400,000 to buy out the remaining three years of Nee's contract. The firing will be effective March 31.

Nee decided not to attend the press conference announcing his dismissal and did not immediately return Daily Nebraskan phone calls for comment Monday afternoon.

Attempts to reach the players, who are on spring break this week, were also unsuccessful Monday. Byrne said he planned to meet with all the players next week. Byrne was also unable to contact Eddie Baker, a 6-foot-6 forward who is currently Nebraska's lone recruit for next season.

In reflecting on his 14-year tenure at Nebraska last week, Nee talked about overall accomplishment.

"The thing was to make your notch," Nee said on Tuesday. "To prove to yourself that you can coach at this level. You start keeping things in

*"I would like us to be in the NCAA tournament on a regular basis, and I would like us to do well there."*

**Bill Byrne**  
NU Athletic Director

better perspective.

"It's never going to be a game, a play or a referee. You start seeing the bigger picture."

Byrne said he and Nee had several discussions about Nee's job throughout the season, and they had "effectively come to a decision long ago."

In a year in which Nee set the mark for wins at Nebraska with 254, he was still haunted by his 1-7 career NCAA tournament record, with five of those losses at NU.

Byrne said competing well nationally is a large part of his vision for the future of the team.

"At Nebraska, we like to win national championships," Byrne said. "I would like us to be in the NCAA tournament on a regular basis, and I would like us to do well there."

Byrne would not name any candidates for the job, but he did say he maintains a short list of coaching prospects for every sport at the university.

Rumors have it that Tulsa Coach Bill Self is at the top of the list, along with other small-school coaches from around the nation. One large-school candidate, Herb Sendek of North Carolina State, has also been mentioned.

Byrne said he is looking for someone who will fit into Nebraska's program and be able to accomplish its goals. But Byrne said he would not contact any coaches until after their seasons are over, which affects several of his prospects.

All of the current NU assistant coaches' contracts expire June 30. Byrne said he would encourage the new coach to interview them, but nothing was guaranteed.

Before coming to Nebraska, Nee spent six seasons coaching the Ohio Bobcats, and prior to that, he was an assistant coach at Notre Dame under Digger Phelps.