

Gym team ready for NCAAs

By Jason Merrihew
Staff Writer

All the blood and sweat that went into this season will show today, as the fifth-ranked Nebraska women's gymnastics team will try to prove its weight in gold competing in Boise, Idaho, in the NCAA National Championship.

"We need to go out and do the same type of things that we did at regionals," NU Coach Dan Kendig said. "We still had a little bit of trouble, so if we can avoid a little bit of trouble, our score can be higher."

NU begin competition at 8:00 p.m. Central Standard Time in the night session.

"I looked on the computer and saw the teams ranked above us (Michigan, UCLA, Georgia and Utah). If we hit our routines, we have every reason to beat all those teams," Senior Nicole Wilkinson said.

In order to advance to the Super Six, which is held Friday, the Huskers must finish in the top three spots in their opening session.

Out of the 11 other teams, Nebraska has faced nine of them and

boasts a 7-5 record.

NU takes on top-ranked Michigan first. Nebraska faced Michigan in the Super Six in January, losing to the Wolverines 194.925 to 193.325.

The Huskers also have drawn the second-ranked team, UCLA. NU defeated UCLA in the Super Six by a 193.325 to 193.225 margin.

West Virginia fell victim to Nebraska when it came to Lincoln for the Masters Classic.

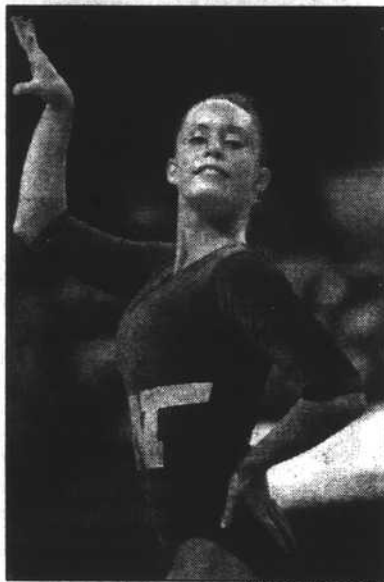
The Huskers get their turn at revenge, as eighth-ranked Iowa State will compete in the evening session as well. The Cyclones stunned NU during the Big 12 Championships by beating the Scarlet and Cream to earn the school's first conference title.

Nebraska is coming off its first Regional Championship since 1983, and the team hopes to build on its success.

"We all knew that we could win regionals, but actually doing it opened our eyes," Wilkinson said. "We can win a national championship."

Kendig feels this team has what it takes to be labeled as national champions come Saturday.

"I really don't see how this meet



Mike Warren/DN
JESSICA WERTZ and the NU gym squad begin competition tonight at 8 in Boise, Idaho, in search of their first national championship.

will be any different from any other meet this season," Kendig said. "We believe we have a legitimate shot at doing really well."

Brink mourns as career ends

By Jason Merrihew
Staff Writer

As a couple of tears ran down her face, senior All-American Heather Brink reflected on her career at the University of Nebraska.

The tears came from an athlete who's in love with the sport she competes in and who realizes her path is coming to an end.

"I'm kind of nervous," Brink said. "I'm going to have so much time on my hands, and I don't know what to do with it."

"Since the age of four, I've been in and out of the gym. Gymnastics has been my life."

Brink is currently ranked fourth in the nation overall, with a second-place ranking on the vault.

Through the course of the season, Brink has amassed 29 individual titles, including the all-around title she claimed during the Region 3 Championship held in Tucson, Ariz.

"She is a leader by example," teammate and fellow senior Nicole Wilkinson said. "She is one of the best team players on the team."

Brink's senior season resumé consists of 12 vault titles, five floor exercise titles, four uneven bar titles and eight all-around titles.

Out of the top 11 high scores in the all-around in Nebraska's school history, Brink owns seven of them. Brink also owns the school record in the vault (10), uneven bars (9.975) and floor exercise (9.95).

"If she can focus on just one event at a time as she does in the gym, she shouldn't have any problems," NU Coach Dan Kendig said.

Brink also has been recognized by the gymnastics community as one of the top performers in the sport. She is the first Husker to be named Big 12 Gymnast of the Year, and she is one of six finalists for the AAI All-American award, which is awarded to the top senior in the nation.

"I accomplished so many things throughout my career in gymnastics," Brink said. "I'll remember this year the most because of the team's camaraderie — the team aspect of the sport."

If she had not stepped foot on the Lincoln campus four years ago, the

tears never may have flowed. Brink hated gymnastics and was burned out.

"After her club career, she hated gymnastics and didn't really want to do it anymore," Wilkinson said.

Brink is good, very good, at her sport, and she has been for quite some time. At the young age of 12 years old, the Lincoln native moved to Oklahoma, away from her family, to train with some of the best coaches and gymnasts in the nation.

"She is a leader by example. She is one of the best team players on the team."

Nicole Wilkinson
NU gymnast

"In the Olympic level it is so much of the individual. You want to make the team," Brink said.

While in Oklahoma, Brink trained under Olympic Coach Steve Nunno for 5½ hours a day for four years.

"At that point in time I was so burnt out, I was so tired of going to the gym and working out 40-plus hours a week," Brink said. "I missed my home, I missed my family and I missed my friends."

She came to Dan Kendig's program with the me-first mindset the club system ingrained into her head.

"It was so hard for me when I first came in here as a freshman to adjust to the team," Brink said. "I can remember going into meets wanting to win the all-around, and that was all it was about."

Four years later Brink has a newfound love for her sport; consequently, there's a newfound success.

"It is such a different feeling now, to go in there and want the team to excel because each one of the girls come in here and work just as hard as I do," Brink said. "Without this team, I'm nothing."

Ironically, Brink is having a career year individually. She has tied or broken almost every individual record in school history, including not one, not two, but three perfect scores on her bread and butter, the vault.

After the season concludes, Brink will continue to train for a possible shot at representing the United States in the summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia.

Because of the politics of the Olympic team, the cards are stacked against Brink.

"Being in college for four years puts her in a disadvantage," Wilkinson said. "If she puts her mind to it, she can do it."

N Sport Clubs

This Weekend at Home

Women's Rugby - Dual match this Saturday at Whittier Field (22nd & W Streets) 10:00 am vs. University of Kansas and 3:00 against Lincoln City Women's team.

On the Road

Men's Rugby - taking on the University of South Dakota, Saturday in Vermillion.
Women's Soccer - traveling to Crete on Sunday to challenge Doane at 1:00 pm.
Baseball - competing against University of Colorado in Boulder this weekend.

•RAFFLE TICKETS AVAILABLE•
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Results

Water Polo -traveled to St. Paul, MN this past weekend. The club ended the University of Minnesota tournament with a 2-2 record. NU defeated Bellvue and Iowa, losing to Western Illinois and Nordic.
Over the weekend **NU Rugby** clubs competed in the Missouri River tournament held in South Sioux City, NE. The **Men** won both of their games defeating SDSU and Lincoln City. The **Women** split games beating Drake and losing to USD.

For more information regarding any of the UNL Sport Clubs events - Please contact the Office of Campus Recreation 472-3467

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