

Setup concerns NU

By Jamie Suhr
Staff writer

Gary Pepin, Nebraska track and field coach, didn't get what he expected when the team accepted a bid in the USTCA National Invitational Team Championship on Friday and Saturday in Austin, Texas.

When he first decided to go to the Invitational, Pepin said he was under the impression the meet would use a different scoring system than the one used at the NCAA Championships.

Under the new scoring system, a team could submit only its two best competitors in each event, putting a premium on a complete team.

In order to make the invitational the best team meet it can be, the USTCA agreed to invite teams based on overall power ranking.

"We thought it would be a real team meet in the manner that all events would be covered, unlike the national championships which doesn't represent a team's effort," Pepin said.

According to trackwire power

"It's a great honor to compete in a meet like this. It shows the continued tradition here at Nebraska."

Leann Boerema
freshman shot putter

rankings, the NU men are unranked while the women are No. 10.

Pepin isn't disappointed with just the scoring system. Because of the entry format, only the top two athletes in each event can participate, forcing NU to leave some quality athletes at home.

For example, four Husker triple-jumpers scored points for the men at the Big 12 Conference Indoor Championships, but just two - Sheldon Hutchinson and Daniel Johnson - will be making the trip.

To be eligible for the meet, an invited team must be able to place two athletes in each event.

"It's a great honor to compete in a meet like this," freshman shot-putter Leann Boerema said. "It shows the continued tradition here at Nebraska."

The No. 1 team in the country,

Southern California, also will be in attendance. Both the Husker men and women finished second to USC at a quadrangular at Los Angeles on April 1.

The men fell by a point, 193-192, while the women finished with 170 points to USC's 185.

Mark Kostek, javelin and multi-events coach, said this meet will be like a "super conference meet."

Traditionally, the best track teams in the nation are found in the Southeastern Conference with Louisiana State, Tennessee, South Carolina and Florida all attending the USTCA Invite.

The Big 12 and Pac 10 Conferences also will be represented heavily with Washington State and UCLA joining USC and Texas, Texas A&M and Kansas State joining NU.

Collier names new assistant

From staff reports

Nebraska Men's Basketball Coach Barry Collier rounded out his coaching staff Wednesday by hiring a familiar face.

Kevin Mouton was an assistant on Collier's Butler staff from 1993 to 1995. Now, he is a Husker assistant as well.

Collier said he was pleased to add Mouton to the new NU coaching staff

that also includes recent hires Dave Campbell and Reggie Rankin.

"Kevin is a bright young coach who I have known for 15 years," he said. "He will bring a great deal of enthusiasm to the Nebraska program, and his coaching and recruiting talents fit well with the rest of the staff."

Last season Mouton was an assistant at Saint Mary's College of California. His other coaching stints include three years at New Hampshire and Eastern Illinois.

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Sports portrayed in movies

■ Movies that are based on sports blur line between forms of entertainment.

NEW YORK (AP) - After months of searching in vain, director Gina Prince-Bythewood finally found the perfect actress to star in her debut movie.

There was just one hitch: Sanaa Lathan couldn't dribble.

"I always knew she was a great actor, but she had never picked up a ball before," Prince-Bythewood said. "I was, like, 'I can't hire someone who can't play ball!'"

So Lathan endured a five-month, six-days-a-week training session just to be able to post up like a pro in Prince-Bythewood's "Love and Basketball."

Director James Toback had the opposite problem while making "Black and White." He had to turn a couple of athletes - New York Knicks star Allan Houston and boxer Mike Tyson - into actors.

"You have to give them something that feels close to the way they would talk and the way they would think," Toback said. "You're basically just asking them to respond the way they would respond."

Jocks memorizing dialogue? Actors practicing three-point shots? It can mean only one thing: Hollywood's love affair with sports is in full bloom this spring.

And watch out: It's getting harder to tell the two worlds apart.

"When you talk about sports and Hollywood, you really have a marriage of two truly central American institutions. America is a society that likes to watch things," said Charles E. Marskie, a St. Louis University sociologist.

"We are in an era where people are flush with money. Enormous amounts

of that money are pouring into entertainment and sports," he said. "And it seems to me that sports has become almost indistinguishable in my mind from entertainment."

Hybrid stars are already upon us. In the wake of Dennis Rodman and Michael Jordan are Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant, not to mention Alonzo Mourning, the new AT&T spokesman.

Football greats Dick Butkus, Johnny Unitas, Barry Switzer and Jim Brown recently appeared in "Varsity Blues," while former linebacker Lawrence Taylor snagged roles in "The Waterboy" and "Any Given Sunday."

This summer, Keanu Reeves and Gene Hackman play a couple of NFL scabs who fill in when the regular players go on strike in "The Replacements."

Boxing is particularly hot. On the heels of "The Hurricane" and "To the Bone," there's buzz about the upcoming boxing drama "Girlfight," while Will Smith is getting ready to play Muhammad Ali.

Before that, Smith plays a golf caddy and spiritual guru for Matt Damon in a Robert Redford-directed summer flick "The Legend of Bagger Vance."

Even movie stars are getting into the game. Michael Douglas and a few of his acting buddies recently got network airtime for a golf tournament benefiting charity. And wasn't that Geena Davis trying out for the Olympic archery team?

"The infatuation with athletes among people from all walks of life is at a high point. It's the ultimate form of celebrity," Toback said. "Essentially, they are at the center of the whole culture."

Hollywood's attraction to athletes is nothing new, of course. One of the earliest films depicted a prize fight in Las Vegas between James J. "Gentleman

Jim" Corbett and Bob Fitzsimmons in 1897.

Now, with a smorgasbord of sports on the airwaves 24 hours a day, hyper-linked on the Web and splashed across magazines and newspapers, how can Hollywood compete?

"There's so much pure sports on cable that to produce a movie that's simply a replication of sports on the field doesn't seem to me to add much," Marskie said.

So as sports expands - even spilling over into fictional behind-the-scenes shows like ABC's "SportsNight" - the traditional way Hollywood tackles the genre has been altered.

"Certainly in the way sports movies are presented to the audience, the visual part of it has changed," said Jimmy Smits, who stars in the boxing fable "Price of Glory" and, in a stroke of synergy, was host at this year's ESPY Awards for ESPN. Prince-Bythewood said sports shown in movies have to look authentic to audiences reared on up-close, instant-replay, real sports footage.

That's why actor Jon Seda, a former Golden Gloves boxer, was a natural to cast for "Price of Glory," and it's why Ray Allen, a pro basketball player, anchored Spike Lee's "He Got Game."

It's also the reason Lathan had to spend hours pounding a gym floor before the cameras could ever roll on "Love and Basketball."

Even so, Prince-Bythewood was nervous on the eve of her film's opening this weekend, but not because of the critics. She was more concerned about the reaction from a key group of women to the movie and Lathan.

"My scariest screening actually was for the women's Olympic team and the WNBA's veterans camp," she said. "If there's anyone out there that will dis her basketball - if they see any little thing - it will be them."

Brink finalist for the Honda Award

From staff reports

Nebraska senior gymnast Heather Brink has an opportunity to add to her list of things that she was the first to do.

Brink has been named as one of four finalists for the 1999-2000 Honda Award, which is given every year to the top female athlete in each of 11 sports. From the 11 winners, one

is selected as the Collegiate Woman Athlete of the Year, which a Nebraska woman has never won.

Brink was the first gymnast in NU history to win an all-around national title with her 39.6 last weekend at the NCAA Championships in Boise, Idaho. Brink was also the first gymnast to ever score a perfect 10, pulling off the feat Feb. 15 on the vault.

The most decorated gymnast in

Cornhusker history, Brink earned two national titles this year - the 2000 all-around and vault crowns. She has earned 11 All-American honors, six regional titles and eight conference titles.

As the Big 12 and Region 3 gymnast of the year, Brink is up for the award with Michigan's Sarah Cain, UCLA's Heidi MoneyMaker and Florida's Chrissy Van Fleet.

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