

DailyNebraskan

Men's Basketball Rankings

(as compiled by Joshua Camenzind & David Diehl)

- 1. Kansas** - The Jayhawks are loaded up front and should benefit from rules changes limiting physical play, but steady play from the point guard position and depth at the two and depth at the two and three positions will be needed for KU to contend nationally.
- 2. Missouri** - The border war with Kansas is back with Quin Snyder's squad led by guards Clarence Gilbert and Kareem Rush and backed by young athleticism across the board.
- 3. Oklahoma** - OU lost its heart and soul with the graduation of Eduardo Najera, but Kelvin Sampson finds a way to win year in and year out.
- 4. Iowa State** - Larry Eustachy's squad discovered gold last season, and it all started with a guy named Marcus Fizer. Fizer is gone, and that will hurt, but Jamaal Tinsley will help the newcomers mesh quickly.
- 5. Oklahoma State** - Three returning players equals a major coaching job for Eddie Sutton this year. If Sutton is up to the task, he has the layers to make it happen. But they will take time.
- 6. Texas** - UT's front line was devastated by the loss of Chris Mihm and Gabe Muoneke, but, like OSU, the Longhorns are the proud owners of a new Cadillac full of young players.
- 7. Nebraska** - NU has the talent and potential to be placed from No. 4 to 10. Husker hopes are riding on Kevin Augustine and John Robinson to provide new Coach Barry Collier with the first true point guard in Lincoln since a guy named Lue.
- 8. Colorado** - Ricardo Patton's bunch has finished the past three seasons at No. 7, and they give no reason to move into the upper-echelon in 2000-2001. Patton said his team is the best of the worst, and he is right.
- 9. Texas Tech** - Tech is stacked up front with Andy Ellis and Cliff Owens but lack depth behind them. New guards equal growing pains and losses in conference play for James Dickey.
- 10. Baylor** - Dave Bliss has himself two solid players in Terry Black and DeMarcus Minor and an intriguing newcomer in Greg Davis. What he doesn't have is a go-to-guy, and that will hurt the Bears in close games.
- 11. Texas A&M** - Youth is the word in College Station with Big XII Freshman of the Year Bernard King and freshman Nick Anderson, who will contend for the same award. A&M will rely on those two players too much and won't go anywhere again.
- 12. Kansas State** - The Wildcats find themselves in a similar situation to Nebraska with new Coach Jim Woolridge. But while the Huskers have talent to work with, KSU doesn't have much of it. Expect a rough first year for the new coach.

Big XII First Team

Jamaal Tinsley, Iowa State
Kareem Rush, Missouri
Nic Collison, Kansas
Chris Owens, Texas
Kimani Friend, Nebraska

Coach of the Year

Eddie Sutton, Oklahoma State

Player of the Year

Tinsley, Iowa State

Can OU 'pass' its No. 1 test?

BY JOHN GASKINS

Pull out the old Herbie Husker outfit. Dust off the model Boomer Schooner. And say the words "wish-bone" and "fumblerooskie" all you want. The moment college football fans have been waiting far too long for will finally arrive at 11 a.m. on Owen Field in Norman, Okla., on Saturday.

Welcome back the bone-chilling rivalry of No. 1 Nebraska versus No. 2 Oklahoma. Welcome back Sooner Magic versus Husker Power.

For the first time in 13 years, the two teams are

ranked No. 1 and No. 2 and are undefeated. For the first time in seven years, both teams are ranked, period. For the first time in 12 years, the teams are the top two in their conference, and the national championship rides on this game.

"The blood's been flowing faster than it usually does," preseason All-American NU offensive lineman Dominic Raiola said. "This game is huge."

Said linebacker and Butkus Award semifinalist Carlos Polk, a Rockford, Ill., native, "I grew up in the Big 10 area, so I didn't know much about the Nebraska-Oklahoma rivalry before I got here.

But when I got here, I was quickly informed and reminded.

"To me, this is the national championship game."

The national media have swarmed Norman and Lincoln all week. Owen Field/Memorial Stadium will be filled with more than 75,000 fans and about 600 media members, 475 more than usual, according to OU Sports Information Director Mike Prusinski.

ESPN and Fox Sports Net have been running gobs of reports and sound bites from both teams all week. Sports Web sites and sports pages have been

splashed with scarlet and crimson.

"Certainly, this is a great, great thing for college football," NU Coach Frank Solich said. "There's a lot of great tradition between two great teams. You don't have to be playing or coaching in the game to get excited about it."

Solich played in many NU-OU classics in the 1960s and coached in them in the '80s. His coaching counterpart Saturday, Bob Stoops, grew up in Youngstown, Ohio, as a fan of the game and an admirer of the Switzer regime that won

Please see OU on 11



DN File Photo

NU Football Coach Frank Solich and his Husker Power will try to deflect Sooner Magic on Saturday in a return of the OU-NU rivalry.



Christine Latham and NU soccer look to take care of Iowa State on Friday, moving one step closer to home-field advantage throughout the NCAA Tournament.

Soccer playing for home field

BY JAMIE SUHR

While the Nebraska soccer team's game at Iowa State may not mean much in terms of the Big 12 Conference standings - NU has already clinched the conference crown - Coach John Walker said his team will treat it like an NCAA Tournament game.

"We need to win to be seeded high," Walker said. If Nebraska (17-1, 8-1) wants to play host to tournament games until the Final Four, it will need to beat the Cyclones and win in the Big 12 Tournament.

"The weather come November is very unpredictable," defender Jenny Benson said. "When you bring in an East Coast or West Coast team, it's definitely an advantage."

ISU (7-9-2, 3-5-1) needs to win just to qualify for the conference tournament. The Cyclones also need losses by Oklahoma and Missouri to advance. The teams with the eight best records qualify, and the Cyclones are tied for ninth with Kansas.

"They've had some good wins," Walker said. "They beat Oklahoma at home, which we didn't do. I think they're better than some of the teams ahead of them in conference."

Early in the Cyclones' season, they were forced to play without midfielder Annie Henley and defender Angie Portincaso. ISU struggled with chemistry when the two returned to the lineup.

But ISU is coming on, going 2-1-1 in its past four games with last season's conference freshman of the year Katie Antongiovanni leading with two goals.

"This is one of the biggest games of the year," Benson said. "We have to be prepared because they're a decent team, so we'll have to fight for 90 minutes."

While Benson and Walker look at the game as a springboard for postseason play, goalkeeper Karina LeBlanc isn't so concerned.

"We're going to go in Friday like any other game," LeBlanc said. "It's a game that can hurt us in NCAA seeding, so we're not going in overconfident or looking beyond them."

Let's not get physical: Hoops rules toughened

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

KANSAS CITY, Mo. - Those who love physical play in the Big 12 Conference might be a little turned off by "round-ball" this year.

Because of rule changes that will be implemented this season by the NCAA Men's Basketball Rules Committee, referees will focus on rough play in 2000-2001.

Kansas Coach Roy Williams, who heads the committee, said his Jayhawks and other teams must adapt to the changes. The KU coach said officials would only be enforcing rules that have been on the books but have not been enforced strictly in the past.

"We always had the basic guidelines," said Dale Kelley, Big 12 Coordinator of Officials. "We just have backed off, and now it is time to go back."

The only major change to the rulebook that will affect rough play is that only six - instead of eight - players will be allowed in the lane during a free throw.

While Williams is in favor of the changes, some of his colleagues aren't taking too kindly to the new style.

"It's the officials that I worry about and how they are going to call the game," Texas Coach Rick Barnes said. "I look at the tape and what they are emphasizing, and you could blow the whistle every time down the floor."

Barnes said the rule changes affect everybody, even Williams' KU team, which has the reputation of being a little soft.

"In the end, your players determine how you play the game," said Barnes.

He said his team had a play called "pinball," and now he might have to

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change the name to "air hockey."

Larry Eustachy, whose Iowa State team relied on physical play last season, said he is worried about when players who the fans pay to see foul out.

Eustachy said basketball is much like a concert, and if people come to see Barbra Streisand, she isn't going to leave at intermission and only do half a show.

"Basketball is not a ballet, and it is for the tough," he said. "We have all these new weight rooms. Should we sell them all?"

Nebraska's Barry Collier said one of his players, Steffon Bradford, would be hurt by the rules and that the changes wouldn't be as severe as officials are threatening.

"It is never probably to the extent that is best served," he said. "The top leagues in the country play that way, so I don't want to see it disappear."

Oklahoma's Kelvin Sampson joked that the rules video shown outside the Big 12 Conference Media Days included a majority of Sooner examples, pointing out what will not be tolerated this year.

Sampson's and Eustachy's teams both rely on physical play as their winning style, but now they must find other ways to go about their business. They weren't happy about that and neither were some players.

"I like to play physical," said OU's Nolan Johnson, one of several players to speak about the issue. "I don't know about the other teams in the Big 12, but that is the way I like to play."

Expectations high at KU

BY DAVID DIEHL

KANSAS CITY, Mo. - An old cliché says there are some things one can't have enough of: money, fun and good looks.

But in the case of Kansas basketball, Roy Williams' team may have too much of one thing - talent.

As the overwhelming favorite to win the Big 12 Conference, the Jayhawks have a stacked seven-deep roster highlighted by preseason All-Big 12 picks Drew Gooden and Nick Collison.

Along with post players Gooden and Collison, guards Kenny Gregory, Jeff Boschee and Kirk Hinrich and frontcourt players Luke Axtell and Eric Chenoweth compose the core of a Kansas team that was picked by 11 of 12 coaches in the conference to finish on top.

"I think Kansas has a chance to be one of the better teams in the nation," Oklahoma Coach Kelvin Sampson said.

So do other people. The Jayhawks were picked as high as No. 3 in preseason publications, and Athlon's college basketball preview selected KU as a Final Four participant.

But with all the talent that Williams' 2000 squad has, are there enough basketballs in Allen Fieldhouse to utilize it all?

The Jayhawk players said it shouldn't be a problem.

"Coach's plan and goal is

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to score in the nineties," Chenoweth said. "Take 90, and divide it by six or seven guys, and that's a lot to go around."

Ninety points distributed among seven players is about 12 points a game, a balanced scoring attack that the Jayhawks would be no stranger to. Last year KU had six players average between 8.5 and 12.8 points per game, and each one is back in Lawrence, Kan., this year.

With the talent it had last year, much of which it still possesses, Kansas was a scoring machine. It led the Big 12 in scoring, averaging just under 80 points a game and hit 90 points on seven different occasions.

Williams said his teams don't sprint up and down the floor like the Billy Tubbs' teams at Oklahoma in the '80s. They're just good at what they do, he said.

"Coaches, when talking about Kansas, say they don't run a lot," Williams said, "they run effectively."

The Jayhawks have lost five letter winners but only one that averaged more than four points per game; so, with their up-tempo pace, Gregory said scoring and distributing points and opportunities among the talent won't be hard.

"If we keep the game as

"The best position to be in is to have experienced talent. That's the situation we're in."

Roy Williams

KU men's basketball coach

fast as possible, and Coach's goal is to try to score as many points as possible," Gregory said, "so if we keep the game up-tempo and get enough good looks and shots, everybody'll be satisfied."

After leading the conference in rebounding, allowing the Jayhawks to get down the court and score, usually at will, Kansas returns that front-court talent in Chenoweth, Gooden and Collison.

Williams said it was tough to judge where this team fits in talent-wise with others. He's had so many good teams it's hard to tell, Williams said.

But the best part about this group, Williams said, is that it has had time to play ball together. The group has three seniors, one junior and three experienced sophomores who started a combined 54 games in their freshman years.

"The best position to be in is to have experienced talent," Williams said. "That's the situation we're in."