

Balan takes second in consolations

BY VINCE KUPPIG

After losing in the first round, Nebraska tennis player Katarina Balan came back to finish in second place in the consolations of the ITA Central Regional Championships this weekend in Omaha.

"Katarina played incredible tennis the entire weekend," Coach Scott Jacobson said.

Balan, a junior, went 3-2 overall at the tournament. She lost in three sets in Thursday's first round to the eventual main draw runner-up.

Balan came back with three straight wins before falling in the championship of the consolations to Denver University's Martina Pospisilova, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

"You have to forget about (the loss) and start all over," Balan said. "I didn't think about the loss. I started playing like it was a new tournament."

Balan's three-set loss to Pospisilova in the consolation finals spoke a great deal to how much Balan has improved at Nebraska, Jacobson said.

The only other time Balan went up against Pospisilova was when she was a freshman and was shut down, losing 6-2, 6-0.

"That's a testament to how far Katarina has come," Jacobson said. "She has made incredible strides over the last three years."

Also performing well for the Huskers was freshman Leslie Harvey. She went 4-2 overall to reach the quarterfinals of the

"It was a good growing experience for our freshman. It was an eye opener for them to see how gifted our region is. It was great for them to see where we are."

Scott Jacobson
NU tennis coach

consolations, including two wins in Wednesday's pre-qualifying session just to advance to the main draw.

"Leslie Harvey played really well, making it to the main draw," Jacobson said. "She made some great strides."

The only Husker to win in the main draw of the tournament was senior Ndali Ijomah. In Friday's second round, she

lost to 14th-seeded Monica Sekulov of Kansas, 6-4, 6-3.

Being the last tournament of the fall season, Jacobson said this will help in terms of experience.

"It was a good growing experience for our freshmen," Jacobson said. "It was an eye opener for them to see how gifted our region is. It was great for them to see where we are."

Nebraska holds off CU upset bid

VOLLEYBALL from 14

outside hitter Sonja Nielsen, who led the Buffaloes with 15 kills for the match.

"We fought hard and knew we had a chance to play with these girls because we had nothing to lose because everyone expected us to lose," Nielsen said.

Aiu said his team's crisp passing disappeared at the end of game one, helping Nebraska go on a 6-1 run to knot the game up at 10.

After both teams traded points to tie the game at 12, NU sophomore outside hitter Laura Pilakowski produced two of her match-high 22 kills to give Nebraska the advantage and an eventual 15-12 win.

Pilakowski said NU helped the Buffs out in game one with a weak serve.

"At the beginning, we weren't as aggressive as we usually are," Pilakowski said. "Then in the second and third game, we started sticking our serves."

The second game was ugly for Colorado as Nebraska rattled off a 6-0 run, breaking open the second set to an 11-2 Husker advantage.

The Buffs' hitting percentage dipped to .089 in the second game, far below CU's .208 percentage for the match.

Meanwhile, Nebraska totaled

a .314 hitting percentage for the match, led by Pilakowski's kill total and 14 and 13 kills by Amber Holmquist and Jenny Kropp, respectively.

Nebraska appeared ready to repeat its game-two whipping in the third set after a 9-0 run gave the Huskers an 11-5 advantage.

However, CU rallied to tie the third set at 11 apiece, and again rallied from a 14-11 deficit to make it 14-13.

In the end, an Oxley and Holmquist block finished the Buffs and pushed Nebraska's record to 23-0 overall and 15-0 in the Big 12 conference. CU fell to 11-10 and 7-7.

"We were a little inconsistent and needed to finish some rallies and opportunities we had," Cook said. "I thought we let some of those opportunities go by, which let Colorado stay in games one and three."

Cook said Saturday's tough match could help Nebraska as it heads down the stretch of the conference season and into tournament play.

"Colorado played great tonight," Cook said. "They competed hard, and that was good for us."

"Colorado's used to playing games like this every night. We're not. This is great preparation for us."

Soccer team takes tournament crown

SOCCER from 14

further out," Walker said.

Texas A&M's lone goal by Juli Goin came 18 minutes into the second half, cutting the Huskers' lead to 2-1.

"When they scored, I thought 'here they go again,' but we answered the goal a few minutes later and took the crowd out of it," Walker said.

The 2,247 fans in attendance at the Blossom Soccer Stadium in San Antonio, mostly Texas A&M faithful, were quieted by Christine Latham's goal at 67:10.

Latham was named the tournament's offensive Most Valuable Player after scoring

three goals and tallying three assists.

While Latham took home top offensive honors, she said it wasn't a one-woman show.

"Everyone is contributing and stepping up," said Latham, the Big 12's Player of the Year. "It's good to have a team like that. With most teams, you have one or two good offensive players. But you can give the ball to anyone on our team from the defense to the offense."

It was much of the same against Baylor on Friday afternoon as the Huskers rolled 4-0. Kelly Rheem put NU up for good just 13:36 into the game when she took Latham's pass and chipped the ball over BU goalkeeper

Dawn Greathouse's head.

Greathouse, an All-Big 12 first team selection, saved seven shots and allowed just one goal. Greathouse was moved to forward twice because of the Bears' injury woes, and only played 66 minutes in the net.

"Their coach told me she was their fastest player," Walker said. "She was very dangerous against Missouri but turned an ankle once she moved out."

NU took advantage of Greathouse's absence by scoring three goals on backup goalie Emily Koch.

Husker goalie Karina LeBlanc made five saves to pitch NU's 15th shutout of the season.

OU sole unbeaten after Tech, TCU fall

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Virginia Tech, out. TCU, out. Oklahoma, still perfect after all these crazy weeks, stands alone as the nation's only major team without a loss.

With a month to go before the final Bowl Championship Series standings decide who plays for the national title in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 3, the top-ranked Sooners are bracing for the tough road ahead.

Next stop, College Station, Texas.

"College Station is a wild place from what I've heard," Oklahoma quarterback Josh Heupel said in looking ahead to next week's game at No. 23 Texas A&M.

"But we've been in big-time atmospheres before, and we'll be extremely confident and prepared."

Heupel, now among the leading Heisman Trophy contenders, threw for 313 yards and three touchdowns and ran for another - in the first half - as the Sooners (8-0, 5-0 Big 12) coasted to a 56-7 win at Baylor.

After the Aggies (7-2, 5-1), OU is home to Texas Tech (6-4, 2-4) and at Oklahoma State (2-6, 0-5) before a likely rematch with No. 4 Nebraska (8-1, 5-1) in the Big 12 title game. Win out, and the Sooners will play for their first national title since 1985.

"We have the number one in front of our name now," Oklahoma defensive back Roy Williams said. "We have to live up to the expectations no matter who we're playing."

On Saturday, Virginia Tech

and TCU lost for the first time this season, knocking both teams out of the national title chase.

At the Orange Bowl, Ken Dorsey threw for 283 yards and three TD passes, and No. 2 Miami dominated No. 8 Virginia Tech 41-21.

Tech's star quarterback Michael Vick, wearing a brace to protect his sprained right ankle, could barely walk in his 18 minutes of first-half play, totaling 14 yards on 19 plays with a fumble and an interception.

"This was a big game. It determined our season," Vick said. "It hurt me inside, deep inside."

The Hokies, who lost to Florida State in last year's title game at the Sugar Bowl, fell to 8-1, 6-1 in the Big East.

Meanwhile, the Hurricanes (7-1, 4-0) move closer to playing for their first national title since 1991.

"We're on our way," said Santana Moss, who caught TD passes of 42 and 80 yards. "We've just got to keep on winning."

Miami, which moved up a spot in the AP poll, while Virginia Tech dropped six places, has three games remaining.

The Hurricanes are home to Pittsburgh (5-3, 2-2), at Syracuse (4-4, 2-2) and home to Boston College (6-3, 3-3).

TCU saw its long shot title hopes disappear on the West Coast when San Jose State stunned the Horned Frogs 27-24, thanks to two TD passes by Marcus Arroyo. And a much-maligned defense kept LaDainian Tomlinson, the

nation's leading rusher, from making big plays.

"It's a tough loss, especially when you've fought so long to attain a position like we had," TCU Coach Dennis Franchione said. "We'll see what we're made of now."

TCU (7-1, 4-1 WAC) had its winning streak snapped at 12 games. Tomlinson had 155 yards and two TDs.

The last time the regular season ended without a perfect team was 1990, a year of co-national champions.

Colorado (11-1-1) was the national champ in the AP media poll, while Georgia Tech (11-0-1) was No. 1 in the UPI coaches poll (now the USA Today/ESPN coaches poll).

Even with the BCS standings in place, there remains a chance for co-champions this season. While the winner of the Orange Bowl is automatically No. 1 in the coaches poll, the AP media poll is taken after the final game with no restrictions on who the 71-member panel can vote No. 1.

Here's how it can happen. Should the Sooners lose, the BCS title game would end up matching two teams with one loss each - say Florida State vs. Nebraska. The Seminoles could beat the Huskers in the Orange Bowl, but Miami, which beat Florida State earlier this season, could win the rest of its games and be voted No. 1 in the AP poll.

In the BCS standings to be released today, expect Oklahoma to remain in first place, with either Florida State or Miami moving into second and Nebraska taking the fourth spot.

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