

Ati Conner works out on a stationary bike Wednesday during wrestling practice. Conner said he, like most wrestlers, doesn't have to cut weight because it doesn't fluctuate.

New guidelines put weight loss in check

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coaching wrestlers since 1985 and came to NU this season. "That's ludicrous. ... It's a myth that people not that familiar with wrestling have had because of past experiences of 10 or 15 years ago. They think that (wrestlers) are cutting massive amounts of weight."

Today's competitors are allowed to compete at one minimum weight, figured at the start of the season, and can go no lower than that mark. This prevents athletes from starting at one weight and drastically shedding pounds to gain an advantage in lower weight classes.

The main practice today is to hover around the competition weight, say 184 pounds, and stay there, Manning said. The wrestler's weight will then fluctuate no more than 4 or 5 pounds higher than that.

Greer Monterastelli, an assistant trainer for Nebraska wrestling, said losing that 4 or 5 extra pounds two days before a match is no big deal. Examining the sport of football, Monterastelli said, two-a-day practices in the summer can cause a football player to lose 7 or 8 pounds in a day.

"Some people would think that 4 pounds is a drastic weight loss," Monterastelli said. "Whereas if you're involved in a structured, high-intensity workout like we go through, it's really not."

But 4 pounds isn't always the case, at least it wasn't on a few occasions in 1997, arguably the year that delivered the biggest punch in providing wrestling with its black eye.

In a matter of six weeks, three wrestlers - Billy Jack Saylor of Campbell (N.C.) University, Joe LaRosa of the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse and Jeff Reese of the University of Michigan - all died in weight-cutting related instances.

The deaths are the only such fatalities to occur in college wrestling since it became an NCAA sanctioned sport in 1928.

Saylor, 19, died in the morning hours of Nov. 7, 1997, while attempting to lose 15 pounds in 12 hours for his first collegiate meet. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a Charlotte News and Observer report there was little doubt that "dehydration resulting in hyperthermia - an exceedingly high body temperature - was a factor in the death of Saylor."

LaRosa, 22, died Nov. 21 while working out for four hours in the early morning, according to a Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel report. With coaches present, LaRosa was riding a stationary bike in a shower room, wearing a rubberized suit and a sweat suit covering it, the report said. Hyperthermia and heat stroke played roles in LaRosa's death, officials said.

Reese, 21, who died Dec. 7, was trying to lose 17 pounds in "a couple of days," when he collapsed as a result of excessive training, the Chicago Tribune said. The death

Inside play sparks win

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throw capped a Husker 15-0 run, giving NU a 59-55 advantage with 7:49 remaining.

"I think we had reached a turning point. We can either go to a positive direction or we can mail in the rest of the season," Nebraska junior guard Kevin Augustine said.

Augustine said NU didn't doubt it could come back from a 11-point Tiger lead, especially with NU's big men controlling the paint.

"I think basketball games are won and lost on the offensive and defensive glass, so when our big men play like that, we aren't going to lose many games," Augustine said.

Friend was inspired to great things, more than anything, out of fear of defeat.

"I'm tired of losing point blank," Friend said. "Missouri kept hitting shots, but we didn't give up. That's why we're a team that nobody wants to play because we're not going to give up and we're going to show a lot of character."

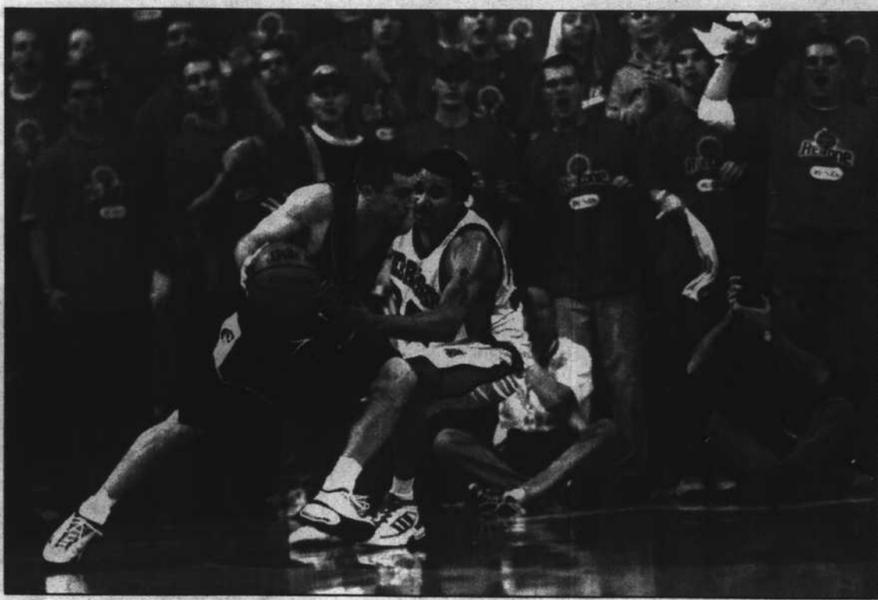
Nebraska was able to lock up the comeback win behind some key shots down the stretch by Belcher, who netted 15 points.

Belcher scored on three consecutive baskets for Nebraska down the closing stretch, giving Nebraska a 74-67 lead on a basket with 3:39 left.

"I hit that first [shot], and wanted to keep going," Belcher said of his late-game shooting streak. "I think Coach was sensing I was on and they tried to get me the ball."

NU milked the game away from the free-throw line, giving the Tigers its third straight loss. NU was also able to avenge a 68-66 loss it suffered at Missouri less than three weeks ago and rebounded from a tough last second loss to Iowa State on Saturday.

"I rewound the last seconds of the Iowa State game over 15 times," said Ffriend, who was beaten to the hoop for the winning shot on Saturday. "I used it as motivation to come out and give a good show tonight."



Cookie Belcher defends Missouri guard Brian Grawer on Wednesday night during Nebraska's 85-79 win. Belcher had 15 points on the night.

Cornhuskers 'stronger, tougher' Gilbert says

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the one to blame.

"He took great shots and scored - he made other people better," Snyder said. "So to me, he played exactly the way we need to play."

Gilbert finished with a game-high 25 points on seven of 13 shooting from downtown. He was a perfect four for four from the foul line and added three assists and two steals in his 34 minutes.

But Gilbert collected a big goose egg in the rebound column, which he blamed for the loss.

"Steffon Bradford is a good friend of mine, and I tried to tell the guys that he told me he was going to be tough on the boards," said Gilbert, who hails from Fort Lauderdale, Fla. - not too distant from Bradford's home of Clewiston, Fla.

Even if Gilbert collected a few boards, it wouldn't have mattered in the box score. NU won the rebounding battle 44-24, but Gilbert tried his best to overcome that figure in the shooting column.

Snyder has given him the green light, and Gilbert took full

advantage of it, pulling up numerous times on the fast break and clanking one off the glass near the end of the first half.

Mizzou's all-time leader in 3-point attempts at 485 for his career just shrugged it off like normal and went back to work.

Outside of Kareem Rush, who had 21 for the Tigers, Gilbert was the only constant for Mizzou.

Even he couldn't muster a break during NU's 15-0 run that lasted for nearly five minutes of the second half.

"They were just stronger, tougher and when we tried to

bounce back, it was almost too late," he said.

Gilbert would make it interesting, though, by hitting two long 3-pointers and hitting four free throws in the final four minutes of the game to give the Tigers hope.

In the end, it just wasn't meant to be as Gilbert went cold, missing his last two shots, and Mizzou lost its third straight game - all on the road.

"There is a feeling of hurt and pain," he said. "You have to get back up and fight. We have got knocked down three times in a row now."

Schedule tough early on

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recent tournament teams Pepperdine, Notre Dame and UCLA in the U.S. Bank/Arby's Classic.

And, of course, down the road there are plenty of tilts with rivals in the Big 12 - which sent six teams to the dance in 2000, tying the Pac-10 for the nation's most. NU opens league play at rival Kansas State.

Considering NU's domina-

tion last fall, Pilakowski knows full well the Huskers will go into every game with targets on their backs.

"It's going to be hard," Pilakowski said. "Kansas State will be our toughest road game, so it will be good to get that out of the way."

"We know we're going to be pressured, and everybody is going to want the best of us. We just have to go out and play and not even worry about that."

was due to rhabdomyolysis - cellular breakdown during high exercise that, combined with dehydration, resulted in kidney failure and heart malfunction, said the report.

The deaths served as a wake-up call to the NCAA, which immediately implemented new rules mandating how much weight wrestlers could lose, how they could do, and how long they have to do it.

Mike Moyer, who was the chairman of the NCAA Wrestling Committee at the time of the deaths, said that while tragic, the deaths were certainly freakish coincidences in their timing. But indeed a hard look at the rules was needed, he said.

"The weight management issue had been a black eye for the sport for a long time," said Moyer, who is currently the executive director of the National Wrestling Coaches Association. "We knew though that we wouldn't be able to change the culture just by rules. It would need rules and education."

The major policy changes Moyer's committee adopted a month after the last death were as follows:

■ A 7 pound weight allowance was made to the weight classes, so a 118-pounder could now weigh 125. This minimized weight reduction.

■ A one hour weigh-in period was mandated for dual meets, thus cutting down severely on recovery time for competitors who cut weight.

■ All saunas, vapor-impermeable suits and artificial dehydrators such as diuretics and laxatives were banned.

■ A weight certification system was implemented that determined the lowest body weight at which a wrestler could compete, and in the opening weeks of the year, athletes could not cut more than 1.5 percent of their body weight to reach this minimum weight.

These policies, like all others in NCAA sports, are primarily self policing except for the weight certification system, Moyer said.

"By eliminating saunas, body suits, using the one hour weigh-in and having this comprehensive body composition and such all in place, we've taken a giant leap to leaving this black eye behind," Moyer said.

These are the rules Manning refers to that have stopped the days of massive weight cutting. But he said he is still disgusted with the undesired image that wrestling still receives despite such regulations that don't allow for dropping weight.

"Our sport did it to ourselves," Manning admits. "We hurt ourselves years ago with some of our weight practices, but the positive side now is that it doesn't exist."

Softball team at No. 12

FROM STAFF REPORTS

It might not take long for the Nebraska softball team to become top-10 material when it starts its season in a couple weeks.

The Huskers, who finished ranked 14th nationally by the National Fastpitch Coaches Association, are ranked 12th in the 2001 preseason poll. Their stock could rise quickly if they can nab some victories in a brutal opening stretch.

NU will start the season Feb. 9-11 at the Fiesta Bowl Tournament in Tempe, Ariz., with games against No. 18 South Carolina, No. 20 Oregon, No. 3 Arizona and No. 4 Washington.

"Obviously, it is exciting to be recognized as one of the top teams in the nation after the way we finished last season," NU Coach Rhonda Revelle said. "We have a very challenging schedule, and it is going to give us an early preview of many of the top-ranked teams."

"Hopefully, those will be closely contested games."

NU played a rough schedule last year, hovering around the

.500 mark in winning percentage for the first third of the season before plowing to a 52-21 final record and coming within two games of a College World Series berth.

Last year's runner-up UCLA grabbed the top spot with 13 first-place votes, while defending national champion Oklahoma is No. 2 with 10 first-place votes. No. 24 Texas was the only other Big 12 team ranked.

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