

Missing the days of Pistol Pete

Where have you gone, Pete Maravich? Basketball purists love you more than you will know.



Brian Christopherson

Or at least as much as the Duke-North Carolina rivalry.

Maravich averaged a whopping 44.2 points per game at LSU and did it without a three-point line. He used his flashy moves, sound fundamentals and an automatic jump shot.

When he shot, he was money. Disease gave Pete an early death, and it seems the death of the jump shot followed.

Flip between a classic sports game of a few decades back and a present-day game, and you will see the difference.

Today's game is full of muscle, full of big men who can throw-down dunks and scowl in the camera, but not full of guys who can consistently hit a jump shot, let alone a free-throw.

Look no further than the Nebraska basketball team to see how difficult a 15 foot free-throw can be.

Oh, it's never free when NU steps to the line. The Huskers have made 58 percent of their attempts this season. It's a war.

Big man Kimani Ffriend dribbles the ball, sweat streaming down his face, takes a deep breath, prays, dribbles again, shoots and...

Yeah, he went 4-of-11 against Colorado in Saturday's win and missed four freebies down the stretch to help CU send the game to overtime.

He's a big man. Give him a break, you say. Sure, but what about Kevin Augustine, a point guard, who got one of six free-throws to fall against the Buffs.

Luckily for Nebraska, many teams are just as horrid at the free-throw line.

Colorado's Jose Winston makes 48 percent of his free-throws. Very Shaq-like, only he's a point guard as well.

The bad free-throw shooting carries over to the jump shots. If you can't hit a shot with no one in your face, how are you going to hit it while being defended?

Often, players today don't. Nebraska shoots a solid 49 percent from the field, but the high percentage is mainly garnered on dunks and lay-ups, not jump shots.

This is basketball today, spectacular at times with jaw-dropping moves by great athletes and then utterly ugly with clanked shots and bricked free-throws.

The jump shot is not just gone in college ball, it's long gone everywhere.

Philadelphia 76ers guard Allen Iverson might be on his way to MVP of the NBA this season averaging 30.5 points per game but still only shooting 42 percent from the field.

NBA games that used to be decided by scores of 120-116 are now down to 80-76.

But kids growing up across this country don't care. They watch SportsCenter, see Iverson's crossover and emulate it the next day on the playground.

High school ballers see Vince Carter cram home a windmill dunk in the All-Star game, and they try to do the exact same thing in their game Friday night.

Recreational center hoopsters see Sacramento's Jason Williams pass the ball off his elbow, and they find it pretty cool.

Why practice your jump shot when you can try to be like Allen, Vince and Jason? Why practice your jump shot when college basketball games seem to be decided by giant men in the paint?

Why practice your free throws or jump shots? Fundamentals aren't cool today, anyway. It's much hipper to stare down the poor sap you just dunked over and then make offensive gestures to the crowd.

Now, say you're in junior high, and you're a young baller asking yourself these questions right now.

If you're this little kid, there seems no reason for you to shoot 100 jumpers, but instead you should try to jump up and touch that rim.

After all, ESPN loves the dunk, and who remembers Pete Maravich anyway?

Former Huskers highlight invitational

BY DIRK CHATELAIN

When Dalhia Ingram stood at the end of the runway preparing for a jump on Saturday, she made sure everybody was watching.

Ingram, who was one of several former Huskers to compete in Saturday's Prairie Wolf Invitational as an unattached competitor, grabs people's attention.

The meet, featuring mostly smaller colleges from around the state, was a tuneup for Nebraska in preparation for the Big 12 conference meet next weekend in Lincoln.

Ingram's pre-jump routine starts with loud clapping that increases in frequency as she takes off. As the tension builds, some crowd members join in to encourage her. Either way, Ingram's presence is known.

"Most people think track is boring," said Ingram, who won both the triple jump (41-8 3/4 feet) and long jump (19-1 1/2 feet) at the meet. "I think that me clapping gets the crowd excited. They're watching me so I have to put on a performance."

Another former notable Husker star that competed on Saturday was thrower Melissa Price. Price won the 20-pound weight throw with a toss of 62-11 1/2 feet.

Both Ingram and Price were multiple-time All Americans at NU from 1997-2000.

Though Ingram has moved on, her track career is far from over. She is part of the Midwest Olympic developmental team. Ingram has competed in events in Arkansas and Kearney in preparation for the USA Indoors. She said the pre-jump routine is all part of the show.

"If I'm not clapping, nobody's paying

"I think that me clapping gets the crowd excited. They're watching me so I have to put on a performance."

Dahlia Ingram
ex-Husker jumper

attention because of all the running that's going on," said Ingram, who began her crowd-pleasing efforts during her sophomore season at NU.

"Now I start clapping, and people are like 'Where's all the clapping coming from?' and they watch me," Ingram said. "It makes me a better jumper."

In other meet news:

Nebraska was once again led by senior sprinter Lesley Owusu. The All-American won both the 200- and 400-meters, recording an automatic qualifying time in the 400 (53.00). Her 200 time of 23.86 is a provisional time.

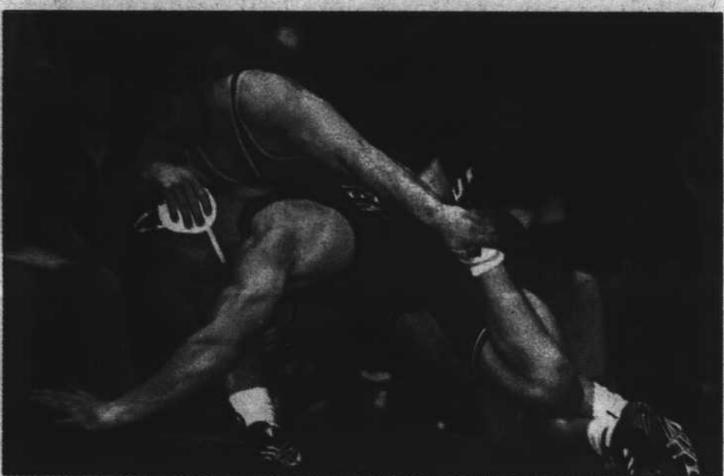
NU got provisional-qualifying performances from shot putter Leann Boeremat and Shelley-Ann Brown in the 200. Eric Eshbach won the pole vault with a provisional mark leap of 17-3 3/4 feet.

Senior thrower Erin Wibbels placed second in the 20-pound weight throw with a provisional throw of 58-11 1/4 feet. Wibbels said her technique was where it needed to be for the rest of the season.

"What's going to be the difference between a 58-foot throw and a 62-foot throw is a matter of holding my shoulders in," Wibbels said. "It's knocking on the door. Next week is conference, and it's going to come."



Nate Wagner/DN
Dahlia Ingram completes a triple jump attempt. Ingram, a UNL graduate, former All American and now a member of the Olympic Development team, competed independently in Saturday's Prairie Wolves Invitational at the Devaney Center.



Mark Knauer, Iowa State heavy weight, forces Pat Miron, Nebraska heavyweight, to the mat on Friday during the ninth-ranked Husker's 22-13 loss to fourth ranked Iowa State. Miron lost the match 8-3.

Three nab top seeds for NU

BY DAVID DIEHL

With the regular season now behind it, ninth-ranked Nebraska (11-6) can look forward to the Big 12 championships as it closed its season dropping six of its last eight duals.

Wrestling before a boisterous 3,574 at the Devaney Center track, Bryan Snyder, Todd Beckerman and most likely Brad Vering each claimed No. 1 seeds for the conference championships with their wins in NU's 23-13 set back to No. 4 Iowa State on Friday.

The only other Nebraska wrestler to pick up a win in the dual was Ty Malia at 125-pounds. He was wrestling in place of fourth-ranked Jason Powell who was resting up for the conference meet while Malia dismantled a 1-18 opponent.

After the matches, Nebraska Coach Mark Manning said the negatives of the loss outweighed the positives.

Vering's win, Manning said, was a positive, as the defending national champion at 197-pounds came back from last weekend's upset to OU's Waymon May to thoroughly dominate ISU's first and second-ranked Zach Thompson.

"He really wrestled well in all three positions," Manning said. "That's what we wanted our team to do today, but not all of our guys are doing that."

Winning 4-0 against Thompson, who Vering defeated in double overtime for the NCAA title last season, the Howells native controlled the last two periods. Vering rode Thompson for the entire second period and earned a takedown in the third to complete the shutout. As he rode out the win, Vering smiled to the crowd

and saluted them with a thumbs up.

Vering, a senior, said the large crowd, on hand in between sessions of the Nebraska High School State Wrestling Tournament, was a big lift. Coming out before the matches began, Vering said he was aghast at seeing the entire bleacher section full and fans around the mat.

"This was the last time I'll wrestle in Nebraska," Vering said. "It's been great here. I've been treated well, and I wanted to go out with a bang."

Vering's spot as a No. 1 seed isn't set in stone as Snyder's and Beckerman's are because of his losses to conference foes May and Oklahoma State's Mark Munoz, who he is 1-1 against this season. Both Snyder and Beckerman are undefeated in conference matches.

Beckerman deftly handled ISU's Matt Azevedo, ranked seventh, in an 8-2 decision. Snyder fought back from a 2-0 deficit in his match with sixth-ranked Cole Sanderson to notch a takedown with 26 seconds left to seal a 6-4 win.

Besides the three big wins, Manning said he was very pleased with the effort of 141-pounder Dusty Spaulding, an unranked freshman, who took sixth-ranked Zach Roberson into double-overtime but couldn't notch an escape for the win.

With the regular season complete, Manning said, focus will shift to working with individuals in preparation for the Big 12 and NCAA meets that take place in March.

"We've got 29 days until the NCAA tournament," Manning said. "We have to get better. If we get a little better every day, then we'll be ready."

Leonhardt keys road win at Kansas St.

BY LINCOLN ARNEAL

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Senior Casey Leonhardt took the women's basketball on her back and carried the Cornhuskers literally and figuratively against Kansas State.

Leonhardt carried the Huskers as she scored a career-high 29 points to go along with her 17 rebounds and four blocks. She also shouldered sophomore Paige Sutton as she jumped on the 6-foot-5

center in celebration of their first win in five games as NU (11-15, 3-10) downed Kansas State (11-13, 1-12) 77-69 in front of 6,217 fans in Bramlage Coliseum.

"(Leonhardt) really came to play," Coach Paul Sanderford said. "I thought the four people on the perimeter really did a nice job keeping the spacing, keeping the ball moving and taking away the help (side defense)."

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Swimmers place third

Two qualify for NCAA's at the conference meet

BY TOBY BURGER

Two members of NU's swimming team know that there is a tomorrow, or at least nationals.

Sophomore Elvira Fischer and freshman Rebecca Wolfe posted NCAA qualifying times at this weekend's women's Big 12 championships in Austin, Texas, as Nebraska finished third in the team race.

Fischer, who also placed second in the 100-yard breaststroke, won the 200-yard breaststroke in 2 minutes, 12.19 seconds, her third conference title of her career. Both times qualified Fischer for NCAA competition in each event.

Wolfe claimed her first Big 12 title in the 200-yard butterfly with a NCAA qualifying time of 1:57.94. Wolfe also placed third in the 400-yard individual medley and fifth in the 500-yard freestyle.

Interim Coach Paul Nelsen said for both to qualify was nice, but more invitations might be coming, namely Keri Hehn in the 200-yard breaststroke and Carmen Cosgrove in the 100-yard butterfly, he said.

Interim assistant Jon Haggerty said there were also others. Jackie Lobdell in the 500-yard freestyle and Beth Karaica in the 50-yard freestyle were strong candidates for NCAA's, he said.

Automatic qualifiers have met NCAA standard times in order to qualify. Swimmers with "consideration times," fast times that are just shy of the automatic cutoff, are invited to nationals by the NCAA.

Even with three automatic NCAA

qualifying times, it wasn't enough as Nebraska finished third behind Texas A&M. Texas claimed its third consecutive championship.

Nebraska did hold a slight lead over A&M entering the closing diving and relay events. A&M, however, moved past NU into second place.

But not all was lost in the third-place finish. Lobdell made an impressive showing in her first championship. After swimming to a third-place finish in the 1,650-yard freestyle, she turned around and gained another third place finish, this time in the 200-yard backstroke. She also placed second in the 500-yard freestyle and third in the 800-yard freestyle.

Lobdell said the weekend was a rewarding experience both individually and as a team.

"This was a very good weekend for me," Lobdell said. "I got all (personal) best times, and I have improved personally a lot. I think the whole team did really well."

NU's relay teams also had its share of success. The 200 and 400-yard medley relay teams both finished second. Nebraska also garnered third place finishes from the 200- and 800-yard freestyle relay squads.

Nelsen was overly pleased with the way his team swam saying they did everything possible to win and competed almost without mistake.

"I feel we did pretty well," Nelsen said. "Really, we did everything we had to do in the pool. It was one of those meets where we hit everything."

Seniors boost NU past Buffs

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

BOULDER, Colo. —Although Nebraska's senior day doesn't come until Feb. 28 against Texas A&M, its five seniors sort of threw a pre-party against Colorado.

NU's five seniors combined for 70 of its 87 points in an 87-82 overtime victory in front of 8,430 at the Coors Event Center. With the victory, the Huskers (13-12, 6-6) won back-to-back games for the first time since their late December trip to Miami and the San Juan Shootout.

"That's a winning streak," was a chant heard by anyone within earshot of the NU locker room afterwards.

Kimani Ffriend led the Nebraska senior charge with a career-high 24 points, 11 rebounds and four blocked shots and Cookie Belcher had 17 points, eight rebounds and six assists. Steffon Bradford, coming off the bench for the second straight game, had 18 points and nine rebounds. Rodney Fields had nine points and three assists.

But the hero of day for the Huskers, Craig Wortmann, totaled only two points in five minutes of play. But the senior walk-on's bucket provided NU's most important points.

With NU down 82-81 in OT, Belcher found Wortmann cutting down the middle of the lane and the senior walk-on promptly laid it in over two Buff defenders with 34.5 seconds remaining.

"We are going to cause problems for opponents because our strength is down low."

Kimani Ffriend
NU center

"He usually doesn't shoot with his left hand but if he didn't, it would have been up in the crowd," said Belcher, who missed a potential game-winning 3-pointer at the end of regulation, but made four free throws ate the end of overtime put the game away after his assist to Wortmann.

Wortmann said chances like the one he got don't come along very often.

"I couldn't hesitate," he said. "I was trying to get open and this was my biggest shot of the season."

Nebraska Coach Barry Collier said Wortmann was put into the game to provide a spark for Ffriend, who was lacking the aggressiveness and confidence he desired after the center committed one of his eight turnovers. But Ffriend, who was held scoreless in CU's 60-57 defeat of NU on Feb. 3, didn't lack those two elements before and after being taken out of the game.

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