

Tennis gets boost from Ijomah win

BY VINCE KUPPIG

Trailing 3-4 in the third set, Ndali Ijomah knew she had to keep fighting for the Nebraska women's tennis team.

Already going into the third set earlier Saturday morning, Ijomah, NU's No. 2 player, knelt down after each point looking for any bit of energy to finish the match.

Ijomah found enough to win the next three games to defeat Eastern Michigan's Simone Duhme, 2-6, 6-2 and 6-4, in a two hour thriller that highlighted NU's 5-2 win over the Hawks.

With all the other singles matches completed against and NU leading the team race 3-2, NU's lone senior said her teammates helped her find the extra energy she needed to go on.

"(My teammates) were all out here, and I could see their faces," Ijomah said. "I had to do it for them. They were like, 'Come on, you can do it.'"

"Doing it for my coaches and teammates, it was easy to find that energy."

Ijomah has been in situations like that before, Coach Scott Jacobson said, and she knows how to handle them.

"I think in her mind she realizes that she needs to step up, and in those types of situations understand that the team looks to her leadership and her composure. She definitely excelled at her highest level."

With the Cornhuskers' victory sealed by Ijomah's win, NU went on to sweep EMU's three doubles teams to win seven of nine matches.

NU's No. 1 duo of Katarina Balan and Rose Ketmayura rebounded from its first loss of the year earlier in the morning to defeat EMU's 31st-ranked duo of Lisa D'Amelio and Rebecca Hawkins, 8-4.

"(Balan and Ketmayura) played great together," Jacobson said. "When they get the momentum and they feel the energy, they can rip right through some people."

Leslie Harvey and Elissa Kinard prevailed over EMU's No. 2 doubles team, also ranked in the top 50 at 49th. For the year, NU's doubles teams are 23-1.

The lone doubles loss came to Drake, a dual NU won 4-1, with two matches suspended on Saturday morning. NU also defeated Montana 7-0 on Friday afternoon. All matches were held at Woods Tennis Center.

Despite losing at No. 1 and No. 3 singles, Jacobson said the match against EMU, who has two nationally ranked individual players, was the team's best performance of the year.

With the wins, NU improved to 8-0 on the year. Up next for the 61st-ranked Huskers is a trip down south to face No. 5 Texas and No. 30 Texas A&M, NU's first top 75 opponents of the year.

"(The wins) give us a lot of confidence going into Texas, because they're going to be really good," Ijomah said. "I think we will need to play out there as a team."

In men's tennis action, NU defeated Denver 5-0 and Northern Iowa 7-0 on Saturday in Des Moines. NU improved to 5-1 and will return to action at home against 20th-ranked Baylor on Feb. 23.

Earnhardt killed at Daytona

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla.— Dale Earnhardt, the seven-time Winston Cup champion and one of the most beloved stars in auto racing history, died Sunday from head injuries in a last-lap crash at the Daytona 500. He was 49.

Earnhardt, known as The Intimidator for his aggressive driving, had to be cut out of his car after slamming into the wall at about 180 mph on the final turn of the race while fighting for position.

"This is understandably the toughest announcement I've ever had to make. We've lost Dale Earnhardt," NASCAR president Mike Helton said. Earnhardt died instantly of head injuries, said Steve Bohannon, a doctor at Halifax Medical Center who also

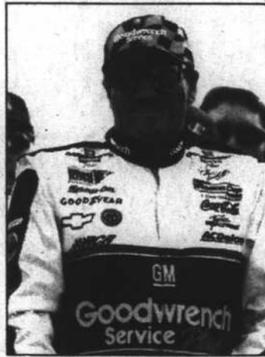
works at the track. "There was nothing that could have been done for him," he said.

The accident happened a half-mile from the finish of the NASCAR season-opener, won by Michael Waltrip.

Earnhardt, running fourth, grazed Sterling Marlin's car, crashed into the fourth-turn wall, and was smacked hard by Ken Schrader.

"NASCAR has lost its greatest driver ever, and I personally have lost a great friend," NASCAR chairman Bill France Jr. said.

Earnhardt, who won the 1998 Daytona 500, was the leader among active Winston Cup drivers with 76 career victories. He also had the most wins (34) at Daytona International Speedway.



News-makers Dale Earnhardt, winner of 76 Winston Cup races and seven Winston Cup points championships, died Sunday in a crash on the last lap of the Daytona 500. Earnhardt was 49.

NU women thwart KSU

K-STATE from page 10

Leonhardt said winning was paramount to playing well individually, however.

"It feels really good to play well and to win," she said. "We needed a win, and that always adds to it."

Nebraska got out of the gates quickly against KSU, making seven of its first 10 field goals to take a 16-11 lead early. Leonhardt paced NU with seven points in the stretch.

"They didn't have an answer to Casey," Husker sophomore Shahidrah Roberts said. "(KSU center Nicole) Olde kept getting on the high side, and we kept throwing it into her."

The Huskers recorded 20 assists including a career-high 10 from freshman point guard Shannon Howell.

NU stretched its lead to nine in the second half after it led by one at the break. Leonhardt then picked up her fourth foul

with NU leading 54-45.

"We knew we had to fight back," Roberts said. "With Casey out of the game, we had to work extra hard ... with the inside people to get them good shots."

Without Leonhardt in the game, K-State put together a 10-0 run to take a 55-54 lead. But NU withstood the rally as Roberts hit another three-pointer.

With the score tied at 61, Roberts, who finished with 17 points, came through for Nebraska once again. The 5-foot-9 guard nailed a three-pointer on a set play to give NU the lead for good.

"I had the hot hand for most of the game, so I was like, 'Hey, I am going to make it no matter what.' The problem was getting open," Roberts said.

Said Sanderford: "When we had to have a big basket, we found a way to get one, and when we had to have a big rebound we got one."

Pitching troubles hand NU loss

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Only a late inning collapse prevented the No. 10 Nebraska baseball team from a perfect weekend at the Applebee's Baseball Fiesta in Albuquerque, N.M.

As it was, the Cornhuskers booked a 7-6 loss to Utah on Saturday with a 15-7 win over host New Mexico on Friday and a 14-0 blasting of Nevada Las Vegas on Sunday, evening its season record at 3-3.

On Saturday against the Utes, NU rode a three-run first-inning homer from John Cole to an early 5-1 lead before watching it shrink to 5-4 by the sixth, when Utah's Brit Pannier hit a two-run home run off reliever R.D. Spiehs (1-1) to take the lead for good. NU trimmed a 7-5 deficit to one

in the bottom of the ninth, but with Matt Hopper on second, Dan Johnson struck out swinging to end the contest.

Nebraska Coach Dave Van Horn said the loss indicated poor starting and middle relief pitching, evidenced by Jamie Rodrigue's inability to hold a big early-inning lead and Spiehs' breakdown in the one and one-third innings he pitched in which he gave up three runs.

"I'm disappointed in our pitching staff," Van Horn said. "Utah swung the bats well, and you have to give them credit, but our starters have not given us a chance to be comfortable after we get the lead. Even in our wins, we have not finished teams off early. That is something we have to do a lot better."

Both Friday's and Sunday's

games were far easier events.

Against New Mexico, Nebraska hammered Lobo pitcher David Young for six runs in the first inning, and after UNM had cut the lead to 6-4, four more off Young and Mike Semprivo in the sixth. Shane Komine wasn't exactly sharp in his second start of the season, giving up six earned runs and eight hits, still picked up the win to even his record at 1-1.

Sunday, all the tools came together against UNLV, as four pitchers combined for NU's first shutout since May 8, 2000. Redshirt freshman Justin Pekarek went four innings and allowed one hit. NU scored six runs in both the second and fourth innings, as Jeff Blevins (4 for 5) and Hopper (3 for 5 with 4 RBI) paced Nebraska offensively.

Men's gymnastics team places first at triangular

FROM STAFF REPORTS

After four weeks of no competition, it is obvious that the men's gymnastics team has not missed a beat.

The Huskers improved their record to 2-1 after placing first at the UC-Santa Barbara triangular over the weekend.

The Huskers ran away with the team title by posting a score of 207.100, bettering second place finisher No. 20 UC-Santa Barbara by nearly seven points.

"We needed this meet," Coach Francis Allen said.

Senior Jason Hardabura walked away with the all-around title with a score of 52.350. Hardabura finished first in the pommel horse for the second time this season with a score of 8.900 and grabbed a first place finish in the vault with a season-high score of 9.200.

With a new average of 52.025, Hardabura is ranked fourth in the nation in the all-around.

Senior co-captain Grant Clinton made an impressive comeback competing for the first time this season after suffering a knee injury early in the season. Clinton won the rings title with a team season-high score of 9.200 and finished second on the high bar with an 8.900.

Junior Martin Fournier finished second in the all-around with a season high score of 51.350. Fournier scored a 9.0 on the high bar to capture the title

and an 8.650 for a second place finish on the vault.

Sophomore Ryan Sneed finished fourth in vault after hitting a personal best of 8.950, while freshman Josh Rasile finished second on the floor with a score of 9.050.

The Huskers showed an impressive improvement from their first meet nearly four weeks ago. NU recorded a season-high score in every event except vault and is likely to secure a ranking in the top 15.

The Huskers were previously not eligible for national ranking because they had only competed in one meet this season.

"They need to know they can win meets," Francis said. "It's a confidence booster."

Nebraska will next see action this weekend as they host No. 7 Iowa State at Pershing Auditorium.

Softball goes 3-2 in Vegas

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Nebraska's Leigh Ann Walker threw five and two-thirds innings of no-hit softball in NU's 5-0 shutout of Cal-Poly on Sunday. Although she did start out by walking four walks in the first two innings, she eventually struck out 13 in the win.

The victory capped off NU's weekend at the 2001 UNLV Classic, in which Nebraska went 3-2 in round robin play.

NU fell to No. 7 California (5-0) and top-ranked Arizona (14-0). The Huskers notched wins over No. 20 Oregon (7-0) and Fordham (10-0).

KODO Drummers

Over the past 30 years, the KODO drummers of Sado Island, Japan have become one of the best-known and most respected percussion troupes in the world. The group's craft is centered on the traditional taiko drum, a Japanese symbol of the rural community.

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Credit over CU goes to seniors

BUFFS from page 10

Belcher credited Ffriend with stepping up as of late.

"He's just realizing it's that time," Belcher said. "He is really taking over games now. We realize that too, so we are just trying to get it into him and I think his post play is great because he is starting to get seals lower in the paint."

Ffriend's newfound positioning helped him shoot 10-14 from the field. But Ffriend just wanted to credit his teammates after the game.

"They are starting to make an effort to get the ball inside," Ffriend said. "We are going to cause problems for opponents because our strength is down low."

NU had to work it in under the hoop on Saturday as it wasn't firing well from outside. Starting forward Brian Conklin and guard Cary Cochran, the Huskers' main three-point

threats, both fouled out in the game and were a combined 2-10 from the field for six points. Bradford helped pick up the slack down low.

"Steffon bounced back in yesterday's practice and today's game with a great winner's attitude of 'do what I can to help my team win,'" Collier said. "It's really hard for a senior to deal with a lineup change late in the season."

"Now, he's made it tough for the coach for the next starting lineup. But as far as I'm concerned, he's back in there."

Both teams recovered from a dismal first half in which neither team shot over 35 percent. It was Nebraska which capitalized after the break, shooting 64.3 percent in the second half and 57.1 percent in the extra session.

With the victory Nebraska won its first overtime game on the road since a victory at Iowa State on Feb. 22, 1997.

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