

## Barrage of threes can't save NU

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

On Sunday, Nebraska Coach Barry Collier and his players were hit with those usual postgame questions from media searching for a reason. Poor defense? Poor late-game rebounding? Why was there no sweet-Sunday Nebraska upset of Kansas?

But the reason for the loss was easy to find for the Cornhuskers who sat before the cameras and notepads - No. 11 Kansas is just darn good. As NU junior Cary Cochran said with a cringe: "I hate to say it, but I think the better team won."

But KU barely won, as the Jayhawks (21-5, 10-4) were continually bull-charged by a Nebraska team that seemed to be riding a great deal of its season on this magical chance to take down Kansas. In the end, KU answered every question posed by the Huskers (13-14, 6-8 B) and won the game 78-74 before 12,104 fans at the Bob Devaney Center.

KU clung to a five-point half-

time lead in a second half that saw few missed shots by either team.

Sophomore forward Nick Collison piled up 22 team-high points. Sophomore guard Kirk Hinrich hit 7 of 9 shots, scoring 20 for the Jayhawks. Even senior forward Kenny Gregory hit two rare three-pointers to help him tally 16 points. The second Gregory three-pointer gave the Jayhawks, who shot 70 percent in the second half, a 61-51 lead with 8:05 left.

"I think our defense was more sound than not," Collier said. "Their big guys especially were hitting tough shots on the baseline over a hand. I felt like the shower victim in 'Psycho.' They just kept going down the floor, another stab, down the floor..."

Kansas' Coach Roy Williams undoubtedly felt as helpless watching Cochran and NU senior guard Cookie Belcher hit key shots to keep Nebraska within striking distance. Belcher piled up a career-high 29 points, and Cochran added 14, with three important three-pointers in the second half.

The duo combined for 11

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Barry Collier

NU coach on KU's second-half offense

three-pointers for the game with seven belonging to Belcher, who tied a school record for most three-pointers in a game.

And yet Belcher still called it a "frustrating" game.

"You work hard to get open and hit shots. And you think everything is going good, and they come back and hit a good shot," Belcher said. "That's what good teams do."

Good teams also take advantage of opponents' missed opportunities like when Nebraska senior forward Steffon Bradford missed a wide-open slam dunk that would have narrowed the second-half lead to two. Instead, Kansas rattled off eight consecutive points.

The missed dunk and the lost

momentum seemed to overshadow Bradford's 12 points and nine rebounds.

"It was one of those times when we needed him to make that shot," Belcher said of the missed dunk. "We could have got the crowd going and sky high, but (the miss) kind of kills it."

There were other downfalls. Nebraska only hit eight of 17 free throws for the game and only shot 40 percent from the field, largely due to a poor first-half shooting performance.

And still the lead was only 74-71 for Kansas when Kansas' Collison stepped to the line with 19 seconds remaining. Collison hit one and missed the second, but KU claimed the board and iced the victory.



Nate Wagner/DN

Nick Collison of Kansas rejects Kimani Ffriend's lay-up attempt.

## Track teams conquer Big 12 indoors

BY DIRK CHATELAIN

Lesley Owusu and the Nebraska track teams were not going to be denied on their home turf at the Big 12 Indoor Championships this weekend.

Led by the senior sprinter from England, NU dominated the second day of the meet - winning both the men's and women's titles.

"We're at home, and no one is going to invade us," said Owusu, who sparked again in her two individual events, recording 21 1/2 overall points for her team.

Owusu won the 200- and 400-meters on Saturday afternoon in impressive fashion. Her blazing 400 time of 52.37 was not only a Devaney Center record, it was the fastest in the country this year.

The women's team won the meet with 143.5 points. Texas was second at 105.5, and Kansas State was third with 104. The Husker men scored 124 points to beat Texas A&M with 86 and Texas with 78.5.

Fifteen Big 12 Indoor records were set, including 13 on the new track.

Nebraska was boosted by the return of All-American thrower Melissa Price. The senior, who planned to redshirt this season, won the 20-pound weight throw with a mark of 66' 8" 1/2. Her best throw was accomplished on her first attempt of the competition.

"All I wanted to do today was win," Price said. "The distance wasn't important. I'll try and build up on that as I go."

Price's mark automatically qualified her for nationals. The other NU event winner on the women's side was Krisztina Kovesi in the triple jump with a personal-best of 41' 2" 1/4.

Second-place finishers included Ann Gaffigan in the mile, Jelena Stanisavljevic in the 600-yards, Na' Tassia Vice in the high jump and Leann Boerema in the shot put.

Nebraska's men captured the meet title in large part because of their performances in the sprints.

Chris Chandler and company scored 34 points in the 60- and 200-meters alone. Chandler won the 60-meters for the second



Derek Lippincott/DN

Chris Burns crosses the finish line, claiming the Big 12 title in the 1,000-meter run. Both the men's and women's track teams won the Big 12 Indoor championships on Saturday.

year in a row and placed second in the 200. Both of his times, 6.63 and 20.91, were season-bests.

In the 60, Chandler recovered from what he considered a "horrible" start to catch Texas' Reggie Hill. He was defeated by Texas A&M's Brandon Evans in the 200. Evans set a Big 12 record with a time of 20.78.

Fellow Huskers Jimmy Pino and Bradley Perry placed fourth and sixth in both events, respectively.

Another strong event for the Huskers was the high jump where three NU jumpers placed in the top five. Junior Shaun Kologinczak ran away from the field, leading a season-best 7'3" 3/4. Freshmen Kyle Odvody and Frank Tolen were fourth and fifth.

Also claiming a gold medal was sophomore Chris Burns, who set a personal-best time of 1:49.82 in the 800-meters. Eric Eshbach cleared 17'8" 1/2 in the pole vault, placing second.

Junior Sheldon Hutchinson, who was trying to go back-to-back in the long jump and triple jump, was hampered by a groin injury suffered on Friday. Hutchinson placed second in the long jump and sixth in the triple jump.

The NU men and women won the event for the second year in a row. Nebraska's men have won the indoor title four of the past five years.

"Going into the meet, we thought it was going to be real close on both sides," Husker Coach Gary Pepin said. "It was a heck of a tough meet, and we were very fortunate."

## Distance runners help secure titles

BY DIRK CHATELAIN

Emotions were running high on Saturday at the Big 12 Indoors as the conference's best attempted to stake their claim in the record books.

But nobody was pushing harder than Chris Burns and Ann Gaffigan.

Burns and Gaffigan were two of the many Huskers that performed better than they had all year, putting NU over the top in the standings.

Burns, a sophomore from Ontario, Cal., came into the 800-meter with the sixth-best time in the conference before running down the favorites in the last 200 meters. On the last lap, with the Devaney Center crowd behind him, Burns overtook the leaders and barely edged Mike Hummel of Texas A&M.

After crossing the finish line, Burns raised his arms in the air in exhilaration and stumbled to the surface.

"I've been waiting the whole year for this," said Burns, who finished fourth a year ago. "I'm just so excited."

The time of one minute, 49.82 seconds was a Big 12 meet record.

Gaffigan's moment to shine also had to wait until the final lap.

The freshman from Springfield, Ill., who had the 12th fastest mile time coming into Saturday, looked like she would finish in the middle of the pack as the bell rang for the last 200 meters.

*"I've been waiting the whole year for this," said Burns, who finished fourth a year ago. "I'm just so excited."*

Chris Burns

NU runner

But, with the help of a boisterous home crowd, she made her move on the outside. Gaffigan moved up three places on the last lap. Though she didn't win - Colorado's Sara Gorton ran away from the field - Gaffigan gave the Huskers a huge lift from an unlikely source.

"I was just hoping to pass the girl in front of me," Gaffigan said. "But when I got to the second-to-last curve where all the Nebraska students and athletes were sitting, they were so loud, and I just got a shot of adrenaline."

After finally crossing the line, Gaffigan stood with her hands on her knees for several minutes, panting. She nearly had to be carried off of the track.

"I felt like I was going to die for a few minutes there," Gaffigan said.

Her time of 4:46.44 was a personal best.

"I never in my dreams expected to get second today," Gaffigan

Please see TRACK on 9

## Team sweeps in Lafayette

BY SAMUEL MCKEON

Nebraska got a little of its pitching magic back, and designated hitter Matt Hopper continued early-season tear as the No. 12 Cornhusker baseball team got its first sweep of the season at the Mardi Gras Ball in Lafayette, La.

Hopper's two-out sixth inning RBI single Sunday provided the deciding run in an 8-7 win over No. 25 Wichita State, which closed a weekend that included wins over host Louisiana-Lafayette 6-3 and Ohio State 10-5.

In all three games, Nebraska, now 6-3 entering next weekend's Big 12 Conference opener against Texas Tech, got timely spot pitching along with streaky bats.

On Sunday, Hopper, who has started the season with a nine-game hitting streak, increased his average to .487, going three for four with four RBI that included a three-run homer in NU's four-run third inning. The Huskers had trailed 3-1 before the inning began. WSU retook the lead 6-5 when third baseman Josh Hesse misplayed a sacrifice bunt, but a three-run Nebraska sixth put it ahead 8-6.

Pitcher Jamie Rodrigue then stepped up for NU, retiring the final seven Shocker batters as part of his seven innings of relief work. On Friday, Rodrigue had been called out by NU Pitching Coach Rob Childress as not being "sharp."

The other pitcher Childress had

reserved mild criticism for was starting ace Shane Kominie, who finally showed his 2000 form Saturday with his 6-3 win over La.-Lafayette, which qualified for the College World Series last season.

The Honolulu junior got six runs of support from his offense in the first two innings, then went seven strong sets of his own, giving up only two earned runs after starting the season with a 10.24 ERA in two outings. R.D. Spiels pitched two scoreless innings.

"I'm proud of the way we played today," said Kominie. "This is a difficult place to play, and this was a big win for us on the road."

Said NU Coach Dave Van Horn: "This is a tough place to play. Our whole goal was to put pressure on them early. We didn't hit the ball hard, but were able to go the other way and get some hits up the middle early. We were able to jump on them and get Shane some runs early."

On Friday against Ohio State, Nebraska busted open a 6-5 contest with four runs in the top of the ninth inning, while pitcher Steve Hale held off several Buckeye charges in a 10-6 win. Thomer Ott, who had been penciled in as NU's closer at the beginning of the season, started the game and gave up five runs in four innings.

Hale turned back threats in both in the fifth and eighth innings in the win.

"Steve really did what we needed, and that was throw strikes and get ahead of hitters," Van Horn said. "He has been our most effective pitcher in relief. He has started the year strong every season, and you can see him really maturing on the mound."

## Women's gym keeps rolling in home meet

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

The No. 6-ranked Nebraska women's gymnastics team has been surprising people all season long, so it comes as no surprise the Huskers brought out a little flair in their most prestigious home match of the season, the Masters Classic.

NU, again led by its strong freshman class and the resurfacing of injured sophomores A.J. Lamb and Bree Dority O'Callaghan, breezed to the team title at Pershing Auditorium on Saturday, scoring a school-record 197.375 at the meet. It was the ninth-best score in the country so far this year.

In front of 1,363 fans, No. 21-ranked Denver University finished a distant second and North Carolina State, ranked No. 23, took third. No. 12-ranked Louisiana State, scheduled to be at the event, could not make the trip because of flight problems.

The Wolfpack's Kelli Brown took the all-around title with a score of 39.350, but afterwards, no one seemed to mind that the all-around trophy wouldn't be calling Lincoln home.

"If we took no hardware home and just won the team trophy ... that's what we're after," said NU Coach Dan Kendig. "That's what is really neat about this team - the sacrifices they made for each other."

While Nebraska was focused on



David McGee/DN

Husker gymnast Tami Harris competes in the floor exercise at the Masters Classic on Saturday afternoon.

doing the team thing first, individual accolades abounded for the 9-1 Huskers. Freshman Tami Harris finished second in the all-around with a score of 38.950. Harris wasn't even entered in the competition until fellow frosh Alecia Ingram's Achilles injury flared up right before the floor exercise, NU's final event.

Harris, without any warm-up, came into the final rotation off a first-place and school-record-tying performance in the uneven bars (9.975), a third-place finish on the balance beam (9.850) and fourth place on the vault (9.850). Kendig pulled Ingram, NU's only hope for the all-around at the time, and replaced her with Harris.

Ingram was less than thrilled with the decision until a one-on-one session with Assistant Coach Rhonda Faehn.

"She was just telling me that I had been going six meets in a row, and every other top girl in the country is taking breaks every now and then,"

said Ingram, who had grabbed the vault (9.90) and balance beam (9.90) titles already but slipped on the uneven bars to score a 9.325.

"It was kind of a bummer at first, but I realized it was probably the best thing to do."

Harris ended up stumbling on her floor exercise on a routine pass and scored a disappointing 9.275.

The Huskers swept the top six spots in the balance beam and the top three on the floor exercise. O'Callaghan, competing on the floor for the first time since 1999, and Lamb, who also was competing in the exercise for the first time this season, combined with Jess Wertz to tie for first place at 9.925.

Overall, this weekend's action gave Husker fans a glimpse of what's to come when Kendig's young team gains experience and better health.

"We are only going to go up from here," Ingram said. "That's how I see it. We have a great team with so much depth."