

## Vering ends career on down note

Once again Brad Vering met up with oft-faced Iowa State rival Zach Thompson at the NCAA championships—except this go around was rather depressing to watch, as was most of Vering's tournament.



David Diehl

This latest bout between 2000's top two 197-pounders had no captivating story lines behind it save that the same match that determined last year's NCAA champion was determining which senior would be an All-American and which would go home with nothing in his last NCAA meet.

Vering won 2-1 again, not needing the two extra sessions this time, but there was no thrill anywhere to be found. Thompson nearly scored a winning takedown at the end but couldn't and exited the tournament he stormed a year ago.

Seemingly assessing the big picture after the final buzzer rang, Vering looked at Thompson and gave a short, wry smile shaking his head. It was as if to say, "Man, this really sucks. For both of us."

The match, as well as the last two days of the championships, were undoubtedly hard for Vering as he stumbled to a seventh-place finish. It doesn't matter that he became just one of 10 Cornhuskers to ever be a three-time All-American. He wanted to be the first to ever win two national titles.

That's why it was so hard to just watch the last two days of Vering's tournament without feeling sorry. It was like seeing a dog being put to sleep. It was painful. And that was just watching it; going through it is something nobody but Brad Vering can even come close imagining.

"This is the worst I've wrestled in two-and-a-half years," he said. "I'm so disappointed."

Vering said he felt sluggish the whole tournament and dragged through his matches. It was evident as you didn't see the bulldog that had won 19 straight matches to begin the season, 24 including last year's run to the title.

"This tournament's just a wreck," he said, "emotionally, physically and mentally."

That still does little to explain why he felt like he had been carrying a piano on his back into his matches. Maybe the man was running on fumes after going pedal to the metal for the last three years, day in and day out. Even Mack Trucks run out of gas.

If so, it surely happened on Friday when Vering fell in the quarterfinals to the eventual runner-up, who he had whipped twice before. He came back that night to lose in the last seven seconds to an unseeded wrestler, who Vering would normally have staring at the lights, writhing in pain in the first period.

"Friday was the worst day of my wrestling career," Vering said.

As hard as the finish was to watch, Vering's total career is something he should be proud of.

He is the state's only home-grown national champion. A three-time All-American. A model man, in the classroom and in life. He put everything he had into every second he was in a wrestling room, a weight room or on the mat—that alone, is reason enough to stand proud.

His accomplishments speak for themselves.

"It's been great representing Nebraska; not just the university but the state, too," said Vering, who plans to continue his wrestling career beginning next month at the U.S. Open in Las Vegas. "It's a huge deal."

"I didn't finish my career the way I wanted to, winning another title. But being an NCAA champion and a three-time All-American, hopefully that lights up somebody's life."

Wrestling fans, especially the youngsters, from Chimney Rock, across the Sandhills, over the Platte and to the banks of the Missouri, no doubt, are already shining brightly—have been and will be for years.

## Snyder falls just short of gold at NCAA's

■ The Huskers finish eighth despite a disappointing performance by Brad Vering.

BY DAVID DIEHL

IOWA CITY, Iowa — The unfriendly surprises Nebraska got at the NCAA wrestling championships easily overshadowed the team's triumphs at Carver-Hawkeye arena during the weekend.

Bryan Snyder's second-place finish at 157 pounds and Ati Conner's All-American achievements did little to offset No. 2 Brad Vering's disappointing seventh-place finish and No. 4 Jason Powell's 0-2 performance, which ended on the first day of competition.

Potential wins by the pair would have helped NU in the team standings. The Huskers did finish in eighth place for the second straight year with 52.5 points, 13 behind seventh-place Michigan. Minnesota, despite not having one wrestler in a championship match, dethroned six-time defending champion Iowa, seizing the championship plaque from the Hawkeyes' iron grip by riding the power of an unprecedented 10 All-Americans.

Nebraska finished the season with four All-Americans—Vering, Snyder, Conner and 133-pounder Todd Beckerman, who finished fourth.

"It's reality," Nebraska Coach Mark Manning said of NU's status with four All-Americans. "We'd like to have six, we'd like to have 10. We'd like to have more, but we'll take it."

The most shocking finish of any of Nebraska's All-Americans was undoubtedly Vering's seventh place.

Admittedly sluggish for all six of his matches, Vering was outwrestled, 8-4, by Illinois' Pat Quirk in the quarterfinals, scoring zero takedowns to Quirk's four. He then dropped his consolation match 4-3 to unseeded David Shunamon of Edinboro when he was taken down with seven seconds remaining.

Vering did come back to cap his 124-26 career at Nebraska by dismantling Michigan State's Nik Fekete 14-8 in his last match, finishing the year at 27-5.

"This is the worst I've wrestled in two-and-a-half years," confessed Vering, who is a three-time All-American and just one of

seven Huskers to win national titles. "I'm so disappointed."

Vering said he weighed just 190 pounds going into the third day of competition and couldn't finger why he became so drained. The fatigue was obvious as Vering started slowly in almost every match and never built the commanding early leads he was used to.

"Going into matches I even felt good," Vering said. "I just didn't get my shots in like I wanted to."

Vering's 2000 national championship may be matched by Snyder next year. He'll be a favorite for the 2002 title, seeing that the senior-to-be won't have to deal with Iowa senior T.J. Williams, who dealt him a 3-2 tiebreaker loss in Saturday's final, ending Snyder's season at 28-2.

Snyder, NU's winningest wrestler with a 103-10 career record, was obviously the aggressor against Williams, a 1999 national champ who was 98-1 in his three years at Iowa.

The Easton, Pa., native twice took Williams down on the edge of the mat, once in each of the first two periods, but the referee ruled both actions out of bounds.

The match went into double-overtime knotted at two with Williams choosing the starting position because he scored the match's first offensive point, a reversal to open the second period scoring.

Seven seconds into the tiebreaker, Williams escaped Snyder's grasp, taking the three-time Big 12 champion's national title with him.

Afterwards Snyder said he just remembered the entire match as a blur. It all happened so quickly, he said, but he could be sure he left it all on the mat.

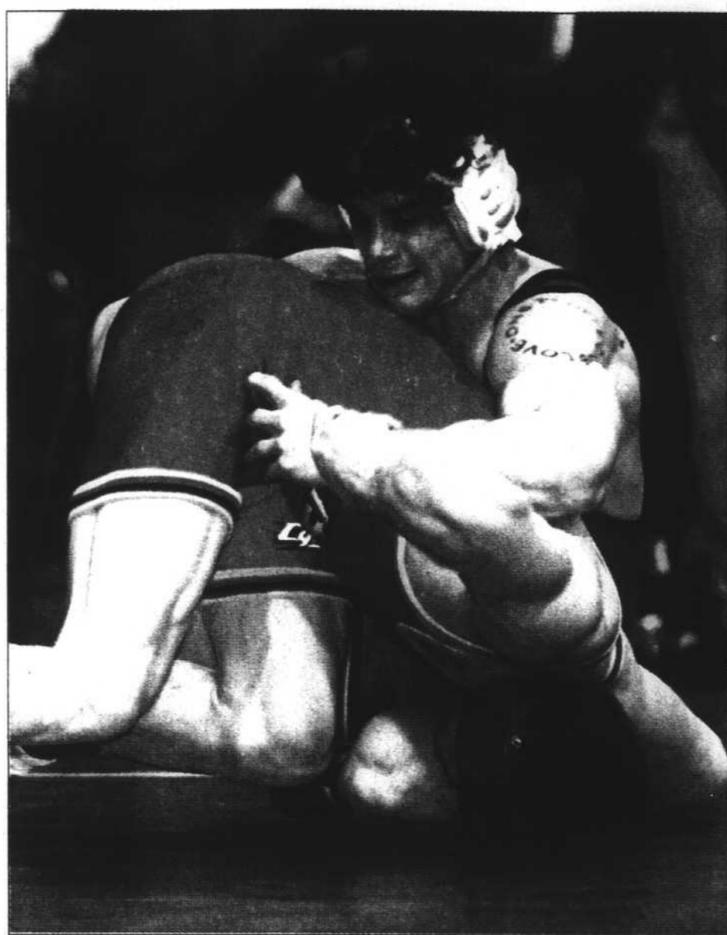
"Obviously I'm disappointed a bit," Snyder said. "But I'm proud to say I gave it everything I had."

Manning said he was proud of how Snyder wrestled.

"As far as effort, Bryan gave it his all," Manning said. "Hey, he didn't hold back at all. He went out to win, made a lot of attempts. I didn't think Williams made that many attempts. Bryan gave it his all; he went for it."

Manning said he also was pleased with Conner, who finished eighth, four places above his No. 12 seed.

The senior forged his path to All-



DN File Photo

NU wrestler Bryan Snyder lost a double-overtime heartbreaker in the 157-pound NCAA Championship finals. Snyder has one more chance to win gold as he returns for his senior season next year.

America status after enduring a 13-11 regular season in which he lost seven of nine matches near the end. After placing third at the Big 12 meet, Conner continued his turnaround by defeating Oklahoma's Michael Barger 4-3 to clinch All-America status.

"This is the most important thing in my life right now," an exultant Conner said, still overjoyed with his accomplishment even after dropping his eighth-place match, 7-4.

"I thought with how my season was going it was so far away. Anything can happen, I just had to keep the right frame of mind. I always knew I had the ability."

## Baseball winning streak snapped at 13, but Cornhuskers still rolling

FROM STAFF REPORTS

A baseball spring break trip to Cajun country may have snapped Nebraska's 13-game winning streak, but it still left the Cornhuskers in strong position to remain among the top-five teams nationally come today.

NU finished the week-long vacation to Louisiana on Saturday with a 12-1 win over Centenary College of Louisiana, who had snapped the streak Friday with a 9-8 win in 10 innings. But it was the only loss in five games, as the 4-1 overall mark improved the Huskers' record to 16-4 for the season.

Four of the wins were easy—two over aforementioned Centenary (12-1 and 17-4) one over Louisiana Tech (13-2) and one over Northwestern (La.) State (13-1), the program current NU Coach Dave Van Horn used to lead. One game against Tech was rained out.

One week before, Nebraska opened its home schedule with a 9-6 win over Kansas State, the 500th career victory for Van Horn. NU overcame an early deficit by scoring three runs



Scott McClurg/DN

The Nebraska baseball team heads to congratulate Dan Johnson following his home run against Kansas State in NU's home opener. The Huskers have been celebrating a lot lately, as they've won 14 of their last 15 games.

in the fifth and four in the seventh inning.

Against Louisiana Tech, first baseman Dan Johnson continued his hot streak, going three for four with another home run, moving him into a tie for 10th in Nebraska history. Jamie Rodrigue picked up his second win of the season, pitching what Van Horn called "his best outing of the season."

Then, NU All-American Shane Komine turned in his best outing one day later against Northwestern State,

striking out a season-high 12 batters, which moved the Honolulu junior within one strikeout of the school record of 289.

"Everything fell into place tonight," said Komine afterward. "I was able to throw a lot of strikes, and that helped to set up my curve ball with two strikes. The last couple of starts, I have not been effective with two strikes, but I got into a groove and our defense was outstanding."

Friday, NU rolled in game one of its Centenary

twin bill, then fought to send game two into extra innings. When center fielder Jeff Liese misplayed a single, CU won the game with a runner scoring from first.

One day later, freshman Mike Sillman shut down any question of a repeat with a dominating, eight-inning performance against Centenary. Sillman allowed only one run and six hits.

NU returns to action this week with a game at Wichita State, which Nebraska beat 8-7 earlier this season.

## Spring football to provide answers

Who's Paul Kastl?

As Nebraska opens spring football practice today, the story, as always, is about who isn't participating and who must step to replace the graduated or injured.

Gone are seven offensive starters, including three offensive linemen that made the Eric Crouch attack go. Center Dominic Raiola was maybe the best linemen in college.

Also wave goodbye to standout middle linebacker Carlos Polk and standout rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch.

And then there are the walking (or hobbling) wounded.

The most noticeable absence is quarterback Crouch, recovering from another shoulder surgery. This isn't that big of a deal, provided he heals enough to lob some deep balls to a wide-open Tracey Wistrom in the fall.

By the way, don't expect much more than that from the NU passing game. It's fairly clear that

### Spring football breakdown

In the next two weeks, the Daily Nebraskan will take an in-depth look at the Cornhuskers during spring football, breaking down NU position by position.

Week one is the Husker offense

Tues. - quarterback  
Wed. - fullback/I-back  
Thurs. - wide receiver/tight end  
Fri. - offensive line

Judd Davies, who was penciled in at fullback now may never see the field again.

Rutherford will be back in the fall, but the largely untested line could use him this spring.

Davies' situation, meanwhile, seems bleak. The fullback would've been a big part of NU's rushing attack next season, both running and blocking.

The pinched nerve in the sophomore-to-be's back has other ideas. I doubt Davies plays this fall, and I hope the injury isn't career ending—the former Millard North standout has a chance to be one of Nebraska's best fullbacks ever.

Which brings us to Paul Kastl. Before Davies' injury became public knowledge, I didn't know the name. Now, the junior from Lincoln Pius X is a leading candidate to start at fullback. Another possibility is converted I-back Robin Miller, provided he can block.

It's guys like Kastl that must begin to bloom this spring if the Huskers want to harvest a cornucopia of Ws in the fall. It's a pun so bad I actually cringed while typing it (Cornucopia?), but it is true, at least.

A gaggle of offensive linemen, including Chris



Matthew Hansen

## Wertz nails NU's third-ever perfect 10

■ \*□○\*■▲ gym ends Arizona State's five-year home win-

BY JASON MERRIHEW

The Arizona State gymnastics team may have lost to Nebraska during a ceremony prior to the quadrangular hosted by ASU.

Then again, the Sun Devils' fate may have been sealed when Nebraska's Jess Wertz nailed the school's third-ever perfect 10.

The eighth-ranked Sun Devils, honoring their seniors for never losing at home, celebrated prematurely, as the seventh-ranked Huskers, coming off a school record 197.575 against Iowa State earlier in the week, used the ASU rejoicing to fuel a 197.100 to

195.575 victory at the quadrangular.

"Additional motivation came during opening ceremonies when they (ASU) recognized the senior class for a undefeated career record at home," NU Coach Dan Kendig said.

It must have motivated Wertz, who hit a perfect 10 while performing a new routine on the vault.

Wertz joins former All-American and Honda award winner Heather Brink in the Big Red record book.

"We needed her just to hit," Kendig said. "It was something very exciting and rewarding."

Kentucky finished third in the quadrangular with a team score of 194.350, while 12th-ranked Iowa rounded out the field with a 193.425.

The Husker victory, the first visiting win at ASU since Feb. 2, 1996,

marks the seventh time this season Nebraska has eclipsed the 197 mark.

The Huskers filled the top spot in all four events.

Sophomore Julie Houk took the uneven bars title with a 9.950 score. Sophomore A.J. Lamb posted a victory on the floor exercise with a 9.875, while senior Amy Ringo took home the balance beam title with a 9.9.

The quadrangular concluded Nebraska's regular season on a high note.

"The whole season is a big spring board for the next five weeks," Kendig said. "We need to stay focused and keep our goals in front of us."

The Huskers will begin the post-season next weekend when they travel to Norman, Okla., for the Big 12 Championship.