

‘Husker ‘little brothers’ not little at Rose Bowl

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — The “little brother” label on four Nebraska starters can probably be dropped now. Tight end Tracey Wistrom, defensive end Chris Kelsay, defensive back Dion Booker and linebacker Mark Vedral have gone from watching their older brothers win national titles with the Cornhuskers to taking Nebraska to its latest championship bid.

“The genes must be pretty good,” Kelsay said.

Apparently so. They are a big reason Nebraska (11-1) is playing Miami (11-0) in the Rose Bowl on today for the Bowl Championship Series national title. The game will be shown on ABC at 6 p.m. mountain time.

“All of them have been able to work themselves into starting positions and that’s not always the case,” coach Frank Solich said. “Just because the older brother was a great football player doesn’t mean that the younger brother is going to be.”

In these four cases, the pedigree theory seems to be holding true.

Vedral and Booker are tied for second on the team in tackles with 62 each. Kelsay, the only junior among the bunch, is sixth with 52 and second in sacks with five.

Solich said the success of Nebraska’s band of younger brothers isn’t altogether surprising, considering what their older siblings accomplished as Nebraska won national titles in 1994, ’95 and ’97.

Grant Wistrom was a two-time All-America defensive end who won the Lombardi Award in 1997 as the nation’s top lineman. He now plays for the St. Louis Rams.

Michael Booker was a cornerback who was the defensive MVP in Nebraska’s 62-24 rout of Florida in the Fiesta Bowl to clinch the Huskers’ ’95 title. He plays for the Tennessee Titans.

Chad Kelsay was a defensive end for the Huskers from 1995-98. Mike Vedral was a tight end at Nebraska from in the early 1990s and Jon Vedral played wingback from 1994-96.

Nebraska has had successful brother combinations in the past. Fullbacks Jeff and Joel Makovicka and defensive linemen Christian and Jason Peter were part of the ’90s title run. Running backs Curtis and Roger Craig played

for the Huskers in the ’70s.

Wistrom said the first person to remind him he wasn’t going get any favors as a Husker legacy was Grant. As a freshman on the scout team, Tracey said he often lined up across from his brother and just about as often was picking himself up in the backfield after getting run over.

“I took my beatings every day. Trust me, he didn’t take it easy on me,” Wistrom said.

“It was difficult at times. Everybody was trying to compare me to Grant the whole time,” he said. “I think slowly but surely I’ve stepped out of that shadow a little bit and kind of made a name for myself.”

Playing a different position and being a two-time All-Big 12 selection helped the comparisons go away. Wistrom has been a starter for three years and Booker has started most of the last two.

“Now that I’ve settled into my own I don’t feel like I need to go out there and do the same things my brother did,” Booker said.

“I think every brother on the team has that same mentality — just do the best you can. You can’t live up to someone else.”

Wistrom, Booker and Vedral were redshirted in 1997 when the Huskers shared the national title with Michigan. All three were in the stands as Nebraska made a last-minute campaign by beating Tennessee 42-17 in the Orange Bowl and overtaking the Wolverines in the final USAToday/ESPN coaches’ poll.

They each have title rings from that season, but don’t feel comfortable claiming that crown as their own.

“When you’re a redshirt you don’t get that whole sense of being part of the team — being on the field and getting to experience an actual kickoff,” Vedral said. “I’m really looking forward to the opportunity.”

And if they do walk away with a ring after the Rose Bowl, Tracey Wistrom said he won’t hesitate to flaunt it in front of Grant, even though the elder Wistrom has three college title rings and a Super Bowl championship.

“He’s a little bit jealous,” Tracey said. “He never got to play in the Rose Bowl. Everybody calls this the granddaddy of all the bowl games.”

Wrestlers to face tough tournament

By Rachel Miscal
The Goodland Daily News

The Goodland Cowboys are leaving at 7 a.m. on Friday for Liberal, where they will face 23 teams from Oklahoma, Colorado, Texas, New Mexico and Kansas in one of the toughest wrestling tournaments this season.

The tournament, which will start at 1 p.m. on Friday and run through Saturday, will be a challenge for the varsity Cowboys, Coach Randy Bahe said.

“It’s going to be a tough one,” he said, “but I feel like we are prepared.”

The coach said the team will be missing Nick Gray, a 135-pound wrestler, who is injured, but freshman Blake Saint will be a good replacement.

“He obviously doesn’t have the mat time,” Bahe said, “but Blake is mentally tough and will go out and do what he can.”

The coach said he the team placed in the top three or four at the tournament last year and

should place high again this year. The junior varsity wrestlers will travel to WaKeeney this weekend to face 15 teams in a tournament.

Bahe, who took over as head coach this season after many years as an assistant, said he’s been pleased with the team’s performance so far. He said they haven’t lost a single dual match, despite facing tough opponents.

“Considering we’ve wrestled Hoxie and Oberlin,” he said, “I’m very pleased with that.”

The team is right on track, the coach said.

“We’re doing a little better than what I had honestly expected,” he said.

Bahe said the Liberal tournament is the first of several tough meets this month.

The Cowboys will travel to Basehor, west of Kansas City, next Friday for the Basehor-Linwood tournament, which will take place on Friday and Saturday.

Bahe said it is the first year Goodland will attend the tournament, which will allow the Cowboys to

face teams they usually don’t meet until state competition. Parents and wrestling fans are excited about the trip, he said, and a wrestling enthusiast group is helping pay for it.

On Jan. 18 and 19, the coach said, Goodland will compete at an invitational tournament in Hays, and then will be in Oakley the next weekend for the Northwest Kansas League Tournament.

The league meet should be competitive, he said, because the schools have similar wrestling programs this year.

“It will be as balanced as I’ve seen it for quite some time,” he said.

The Cowboys will end the month with another tough meet against their rivals in Colby.

Bahe said there are certainly more responsibilities in the top spot, but he’s enjoying his job as head coach.

“So far, I’ve received positive comments,” he said.

Cowgirls to host Lady Eagles in important game

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Daily News

The Goodland Cowgirls return to basketball action Friday at 5:30 p.m. at Max Jones Fieldhouse as they play the Colby Lady Eagles in an important game for both teams.

Coach Connie Livengood said at the beginning of the season that the games against the Lady Eagles are a main key to the season for the Cowgirls. The two teams faced each other three times last year, with the Cowgirls winning the first two games by narrow margins. The Lady Eagles blew the Cowgirls away in the third game, but the Cowgirls defeated the Lady Eagles, 54-45, to win the sub-state tournament and

advance to the state tournament in Class 4A.

“We have the talent,” Coach Livengood said. “We are a lot bigger than they are, and we should be able to score well.”

“All our girls are healthy and we expect to be very good on defense. We are real excited to be ready to play.”

The second meeting this year may be at the Orange and Black tournament in Colby Jan. 17-19 and the third in Colby on Feb. 12.

Four free throws sealed a 48-43 win Friday, Dec. 14, for the Cowgirls against the Quinter Lady Bulldogs, pushing their record to 4-1.

The only loss the Cowgirls have had

was against the Ottawa Lady Cyclones in the Topside Tipoff losing 56-46 in the finals to finish second.

Top performers for the Cowgirls this season have been Jayci Stone, Erica Mann, Lacey Brenner, Anny McCoy, Jessica Vignery, Jessica Osborn, StevieLee Raymer and Hayley Jarmin.

The Lady Eagles have a 4-2 record, having defeated Thomas Moore Prep-Marian of Hays, Norton, Oakley and Wray, Colo. They lost to Russell in the season opener and to Hays High School. The Colby girls will try to extend a 3-game winning streak when they face the Cowgirls. The Lady Eagles have averaged 59 points per game, while allowing just over 42.

Three Colby Lady Eagles are averaging scores in double figures. Ivy Ramsey is averaging 14.8; Summer Stephens 13; and Amanda Seemann 10.2. Brianna Swafford is averaging 5.5. Bethanie Linden 5.3, Emily Sloan 4.3, Breann Hart 3.3, Samantha Wolf 1.5, Desiree Sharp 2 and Marcia Kaus 1 per game.

Other Cowgirl homes games of the season will include Lakin, Tuesday; Atwood, Friday, Jan. 11; Hugoton, Jan. 26; Hays High, Feb. 2; Oakley, Feb. 8; Wray, Feb. 16; and the final regular game of the season against Norton, Feb. 19.

The state Class 4A tournament will be in Salina March 6-9.

Cowboys to meet traditional rivals Friday night

By Doug Stephens
The Goodland Daily News

The Cowboy boys varsity basketball team will face a tough match with their traditional rivals, the Colby Eagles, on Friday.

The game promises to be exciting. Black and Gold Coach John McLean calls the Eagles a tough team.

“They’re a lot like us. They’re a young team, and they have a lot of in-

experienced players,” he said, “but they won’t be easy to beat.”

He says Colby, which has a record of 2-4, is better than their record makes them out to be.

“They’ve faced an incredibly tough schedule so far this year,” he said.

The Cowboys, whose record hasn’t been great this year either, at 1-4, have an even chance of beating the Black and Orange, said the coach.

“I’m optimistic. If we play up to our capability,” he said, “we have a pretty good chance of winning this game.”

He said they’ve worked on zone defense and half court man defense in preparation for Colby.

“We had some really good Christmas practices,” said the coach.

McLean said his team’s No. 1 strength is its balance. The team doesn’t have one or two star players,

but several players who have stepped up on offense.

He praises his players for their improved ball handling over the course of the season, saying that turnovers have dropped. He also likes the way the team has improved its defense.

“We’re as prepared as can be for this game,” said McLean.

The rivals will meet at 7 p.m. Friday at Max Jones Fieldhouse.

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