

Irving no longer a secret, primed to win nationals

UNLV track star leads team, country heading in to the nationals.

BY NICK HALEY
STAFF WRITER

When the indoor track season began in December, assistant coach Fred Sowerby spoke of "sneaking" UNLV senior sprinter Crystal Irving into a national title. Though Irving enjoyed success in last year's finals, finishing ninth overall on the year and earning All-American honors, few had taken notice of her progress coming into the 1992-93 season.



Crystal Irving.

Until now. Going into last weekend's conference meets around the country, Irving led the NCAA with the year's fastest 400-meter time (53.88) and teamed up with Judy Fraser, Jean Fletcher and Michele Brown for the fastest 400-meter relay time (3:35.50). She is currently a provisional qualifier for the nationals in both events as well as the 200-meter where she ranks in the Top 10. "It's kind of hard to keep Crystal a secret, simply because she's

just how much Irving has developed. Having lost to national contenders Shonell Porter of Nebraska and Tonya Dooley of Fresno State last year, she has evened the score earlier this season, beating Dooley in Reno and Porter on her home track in Lincoln.

Irving said, "So far, people who have beaten me last year I've beaten now."

"Usually when you get to nationals, if you haven't traced these people ahead of time, you get nervous and tend to make stupid mistakes. But if you've raced them and you know you can beat them or run as good as them it makes it a lot easier to concentrate on what you have to do."

For now, what Irving has to do is keep improving. Each time she has taken the course thus far, she has bettered her time but in endurance sports, peaking too early can hurt an athlete at the end of a season.

Irving is confident she will be at her best for the nationals and believes "a 51 or a low 52 should win it."

"I haven't peaked yet because I'm not burned out or tired," she said. "I feel I can run at least a low 52 indoors because of my

conditioning which Coach Fred (Sowerby) helped me with."

Coach Sowerby, in fact, has improved the entire sprinting squad by enlisting them into the cross-country program, according to Irving. The off-road training, she said, gave the whole team a head start on the track season.

"It's been a plus for our program" she said. "Everyone's ahead of schedule."

As for herself, cross-country has taught her better technique. Irving said last year her lack of proficiency in navigating the tight turns of an indoor track cost her seconds on her time.

"I'm having better luck with the curves now," she said. "I had the conditioning but I needed to learn how to run the curves."

Coach Dennis believes going into the nationals that Irving will be the clear favorite at the 400-meter and has an excellent chance at the 200-meter as well.

"Crystal's sitting on the top of it right now," Dennis said. "But there's still a lot of running to go. It's not over yet."

Having brought together conditioning, confidence, experience and good form, Irving has accomplished every goal set out for her by her coaches. But she still has one of her own left.

Dennis said, "Crystal's goals are to win the nationals. That's about the only thing she hasn't done in her long and distinguished career. It's something she's primed and conditioned to do."

Weather a blessing for Lady Rebels Tennis

BY GREGORY QUINN
STAFF WRITER

Weather conditions for the last two weeks have been anything but favorable for tennis.

Unless you're a Lady Rebel.

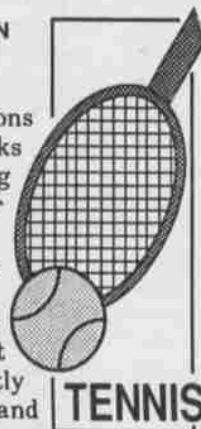
The women's tennis team upset Texas A&M recently under rainy skies and gale-force winds. Last weekend they beat

Washington State 6-3 on a cold, damp night upping their season record to 4-3. The win pleased Coach Ola Malmqvist.

Washington State is "a pretty good team," said Malmqvist. "They lost to Arizona and Arizona State, but they played them fairly tough."

Initially, wet courts forced the Rebels and Cougars indoors, where WSU won the No. 1 and 2 singles. Later, the teams moved outdoors for the remainder of the match, and UNLV won at the bottom four singles positions and the last two doubles spots.

"Part of the reason we lost (the first two matches) is because Washington State is al-



TENNIS

ways practicing indoors and we don't," said Malmqvist. "Everything moves faster indoors because there's no wind."

UNLV's depth made a difference in the match. "Our team is very even," Malmqvist said. "We're not really strong at the top, but at the same time we're pretty strong

down the line." UNLV will travel to Arizona State University this weekend for Friday, Saturday and Sunday matches against Arizona, Arizona State and University of Illinois, respectively.

Arizona and Arizona State are "usually in the Top 10 in the nation," said Malmqvist. "It's a very tough road trip."

Facing UNLV will be Arizona State's Alexi Krieg, the West region's highest ranked player. "Our No. 1 and 2 girls are always going to have tough matches because every team has a great No. 1 and sometimes No. 2 player," said Malmqvist.

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