



PHOTO BY WRAY HALTERMAN

Ken Gibson and both UNLV basketball teams begin post-season play this weekend in Long Beach, Calif. The second-seeded Lady Rebels faced CS Fullerton last night while the No. 2 seed men play Utah State Friday night at 7.

Track team vies for 'surprise' victory

BY NICK HALEY
STAFF WRITER

While March Madness hasn't hit the hardwood quite yet, UNLV track coach Karen Dennis hopes to provide the NCAA with some madness of her own when the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships are held this weekend at the Hoosier Dome in Indianapolis.

The first-year coach sends a four-event team led by the nation's best 4x400-meter relay team and the best 400-meter sprinter, Crystal Irving. Despite their prominent rankings, the Sprintin' Lady Rebels are coming into the games rather obscurely according to Dennis. This, she says, is just what she wants.

"People don't expect us to run well," Dennis said. "We're trying to play down our No. 1 status because the other teams don't expect us to win. For us, I think it's to our advantage to come in as a surprise."

UNLV's 4x400-meter relay team, anchored by Irving, currently leads the nation in the event, having posted a time of 3:35.5 at the Miller Lite Invitational. The time was a new record for both the university and the meet. Irving's time of 53.28 in the 400-meter has been the best of the year thus far.

"Already this team that we have for indoors has run faster than any team at UNLV has ever run indoors or outdoors," Irving said. "At this point, we have a good chance to win nationals."

According to Irving, she and her teammates, Judy Fraser, Michele Brown and Jean Fletcher have been ahead of the competition because of the extensive cross-country training pushed upon them by assistant coach Fred Sowerby.

"As far as the cross-country (training), it's been a plus for our program," Irving said. "Fred



Judy Fraser



Crystal Irving

Track team heads for nationals

The UNLV women's indoor track and field team travels to Indianapolis this weekend to compete in the NCAA Finals.

UNLV has qualified in four events: Crystal Irving and Judy Fraser in the 400-meter,

Diane McCarthy in the 3,000-meter, Irving and Jean Fletcher in the 200-meter and Irving, Fraser, Michele Brown and Fletcher competing together in the 4x400-meter relay.

(Sowerby) implemented his mile-repeats and 800-repeats which got everybody in better condition. Fraser, our freshman on the team, ran a better time indoors than outdoors, so already she's on the right track."

The big surprise to the team has been Fraser, a freshman sprinter who, like Irving, has qualified for and will compete in the 400-meter at nationals. As the opening leg of the relay, it's up to Fraser to establish the lead for the others to keep.

"Judy runs the leadoff leg for the relay team faster than she runs her own quarter," Dennis

said. "I'm really looking forward to the day when she has enough confidence as an individual to be able to run her own quarter as well as she runs the relay."

According to Dennis, the surprise may not stop with just those two events. With four events in which to score points, a good day of running could produce the biggest of all surprises—the team title.

Dennis said: "If you have good work ethics—which this team has—the combination of good work ethics and talent is going to bring you success."

Lady Rebel tennis ends losing skid, upsets University of Illinois

Men and Women to host matches this weekend

GREGORY QUINN
STAFF WRITER

The UNLV women's tennis team finished a tough three-day road trip with a 5-4 upset victory over the University of Illinois, Sunday.

The Lady Rebels won five of six singles matches, with Rachel Clark, Shiera Stuart, Suzi Agas-

si, Janelle Barr and Jeannette Fylpaa scoring wins.

"Last year they (Illinois) were ranked between 25 and 30," said assistant coach Ola Malmqvist. "They were tied for second in the Big 10 Conference, ahead of Notre Dame and Northwestern... so that was a great win for us."

Sunday's match was the third in three days for the Rebel Racketeers, having lost to the University of Arizona, 3-6, Friday and Arizona State, 0-6, Saturday.

Even though on paper it looked

like a rout, the loss to eighth-ranked ASU was much closer than it seemed. Agassi, Stuart, Ljiljana Kordic, and Becky Markosian all extended their matches to three sets, and Clark had two set points in the second set of her match, but failed to follow through.

Despite the setbacks, Malmqvist made sure he flavored his speech with praise.

"Actually we played real well the whole (weekend)," Malmqvist said. "Arizona and ASU are Top

10, and we (played them) very close."

The Fertitta Tennis Pavilion will become Fertitta Grand Central when UNLV hosts five matches this weekend. The Lady Rebels will begin their busy three-day schedule with a Saturday match against Idaho State at noon before facing Northern Arizona Sunday at 9 a.m. Monday sees the Lady Rebels go against Texas Tech at noon.

The men play Idaho State Saturday at 1:30 p.m. and Texas

Tech Sunday at noon.

"Texas Tech is a pretty good team," men's coach Larry Easley said. "They're strong on top and weaker on the bottom, kind of like we are. We'll be even."

As for the women, Idaho St. is "not as good as (the) teams we've been playing," said Malmqvist. "But I know last year their No. 1 girl was ranked. I'd say we're favorites on paper, but Illinois was probably favored to beat us, and we beat them. We cannot take these teams lightly."

Rebels need to win BWC Tournament for respect

BY JAY SAPOVITS

Commentary

The Runnin' Rebels must win the Big West Tournament to salvage a respectable season. The Rebels (20-6, 13-5) have dropped twice as many games this season as they did in 1992 and '91 combined.

This type of mediocre performance may be acceptable when playing in the Big East Conference but not in Las Vegas. There can't be a student on this campus who likes sports and is content with this squad's performance.

Filled with bitter road losses and the snapping of a 59-game home winning streak,

Rollie Massimino's first season as a Rebel has been less than expected. This year, UNLV lost five Big West Conference games. In the previous four seasons, Runnin' Rebel teams had lost only four conference games, total.

Is the deficiency in size that debilitating?

Couldn't anybody on the bench be developed to help the team's depth?

Listening to excuses about size and depth gets old. What about the positive things this team

accomplished?

This team has the second leading scorer in the nation in J.R. Rider, who is pouring in 29.2 points per game. Evric Gray has also played with character and composure in leading this team physically. In fact, the only big blow all season was Reggie Manuel missing the Pacific loss due to his mother being ill. Manuel should be ready for the tournament following arthroscopic surgery on his knee two weeks ago.

Yes, the schedule outside the conference was tough. It should be as UNLV is a respected basketball team. But UNLV does not play Duke, go to Tallahas-

see, Tenn. then catch a plane to play in the Dean Dome. Instead, they travel to Cal State Fullerton, UC Santa Barbara, and Pacific, who all beat the Rebels at their place. None of the latter BWC schools will make the dance, nor do they deserve to.

Tomorrow is the start of judgement weekend for the Rebels. The team's full attention should be on basketball. Losing in this tournament is unacceptable, but this season, it wouldn't be that surprising.

The Lady Rebels will win the Big West Tournament. Although they lost two games against Ha-

waii last weekend, both contests were on the island. In Long Beach, the tide will turn and it will be the ladies in red surfing the trophy high upon their collective shoulders.

Don't forget that the KUNV Cheerleader of the Year Award will be announced tomorrow on Sportstalk, 91.5 FM. The show will air live from the Big West Tournament at 10 a.m.

—Jay Sapovits is sports director at KUNV and Rebel Yell sports columnist