

HUSKERS CELEBRATE STELLAR 2005-06 SEASON

The 2005-06 Nebraska rifle campaign was easily the most successful run in program history. From start to finish, the Huskers exhibited excellence at every turn in both outstanding athletic performances and superior academic achievements.

Fourth-year head coach Launi Meili, who was named the 2006 Great America Rifle Conference Coach of the Year, led Nebraska to an undefeated season highlighted by a repeat as GARC champions and a second-place finish at the NCAA Championships. Additionally, junior Kristina Fehlings earned the program's second NCAA event title by claiming the national championship in air rifle with a score of 591.

As if Nebraska's athletic pursuits were not impressive enough, all seven Huskers also landed places on the Big 12 Fall Commissioner's Honor Roll, which honors those student-athletes who maintain a grade-point average of 3.0 or higher during the previous semester.

The Huskers began the 2005-06 season full of experience with a roster identical to that of the previous year. From the beginning, it was obvious Nebraska was in fighting form as it shot a team score of 4,686 in its season-opener on Oct. 22 to lock down a win over Air Force at the Nebraska Rifle Range. Senior Misty Chanek shot a career-high tying score of 591 to lead the Huskers in smallbore, while sophomore Andrea Franzén led NU's sweep of the top four spots in air rifle with a score of 590.

Nebraska secured win No. 2 over Air Force one day later on Oct. 23 with a season-high team score of 4,687. The Huskers also shot a season-high smallbore score of 2,339. Individually, several NU shooters scored career bests in air rifle including a 593 for Franzén to tie her previous best, and a 582 for junior Stacy Underwood, who bested her previous career high by five points.

The Huskers took their winning ways on the road against Ole Miss on Nov. 5 and grabbed their third consecutive victory, 4,667-4,600. Sophomore Kirsten Weiss earned top honors in the smallbore with a final score of 680, while Franzén again dominated air rifle with a score of 592.

NU secured its second consecutive GARC win against Memphis, 4,673-4,608, the following day. With the loss of sophomore Kim Chrostowski to the CAT Championships in Puerto Rico, Franzén made her season debut in the smallbore lineup and finished fifth overall with a score of 580. Chanek shot well in both disciplines and used her 585 in air rifle to share the meet title in the event with Memphis' Krissey Bahnsen.

The Huskers returned to Lincoln on Nov. 19 for a shootout with Kentucky, a match that would prove to be NU's closest of the season. Nebraska topped Kentucky by its smallest margin of victory of the season, 4,661-4,653., while Fehlings shot a career-high 591 in air rifle for a fourth-place overall finish. Franzén once again took the top spot in air rifle with a score of 592 in regulation and 99 in finals.

The Huskers closed out the fall season with their fifth victory of the year as they easily routed UMKC, 4,668-4,493. The victory marked the first time NU has not lost a match during the fall since 2001. Nebraska notched the top four spots in smallbore,

with Chanek taking top honors with a match-high score of 590. Sophomore Eva Richert scored a season high in air rifle with a 587, a score that would be her last as a Husker as Richert chose to return to her native of country of Germany before the spring season.

Nebraska returned to competition on Jan. 14, 2006, with a remarkable performance as it toppled defending national champion Army in West Point, N.Y., 4,676-4,657. The win extended NU's winning streak to 13 matches since the Huskers last lost to the Black Knights on Nov. 13, 2004. Nebraska won both the smallbore (2,323) and air rifle (2,353) as a team and placed a Husker atop each event individually. Chanek and Fehlings shared top air rifle honors (591), while Chanek took the smallbore title with a score of 587.

The Huskers closed the regular-season with easily tabbed wins over Palmyra and West Virginia at the Palmyra Invitational with a team score of 4,653. Although not one of Nebraska's more stellar team performances, the victory allowed the Huskers to remain unbeaten on the season.

Riding the wave of regular-season perfection, Nebraska went on to dominate the postseason as well. At the NCAA Qualifier on Feb. 11 in Colorado Springs, Colo., the Huskers notched a team score of 4,666, a mark that cemented the fourth-place seed heading into the NCAA Championships behind Alaska-Fairbanks, Army and Kentucky.

Remarkably, at the GARC Championships just two weeks later, Nebraska improved its team score by 10 points for a total of 4,676. The score was also 13 points higher than the mark the Huskers posted to win the GARC title in 2005.

Individually, Chanek was named the 2006 GARC Senior of the Year and went on to finish second (589) in smallbore while Chrostowski gathered NU's highest air rifle finish in third with a career-high mark of 591. Additionally, the Huskers placed shooters in the three, four, five and six spots in the combined competition with Chanek finishing third with an aggregate score of 1,173, Chrostowski finishing fourth with a score of 1,170, Franzén finishing fifth with a score of 1,169 and Fehlings finishing sixth with a 1,168.

Nebraska put the icing on a landmark season at the NCAA Championships on March 10-11, where it wrangled a program-best second-place team finish (4,666), along with laying claim to six All-America honors from four shooters. Chanek and Fehlings made appearances on both the smallbore and air rifle All-America teams, while Weiss was named to smallbore and Franzén to air rifle. This is the first time in Chanek's career that she has received double honors and the second time for Fehlings, who capped the season by gaining the national title in air rifle. Franzén earned her air rifle recognition for the second consecutive season, while Weiss was recognized for the first time in her collegiate career.

As Nebraska looks toward next season, a new lineup will quickly emerge as the Huskers aim to replace graduating senior Chanek and Franzén, who will return to her native Sweden following this semester. With this pair of losses, NU loses its top scorers in smallbore and air rifle, respectively. However, Nebraska will return five shooters with NCAA experience in its 2006 national title campaign.



Kristina Fehlings was crowned the 2006 NCAA air rifle champion.