

# Team seeks revenge against Denver this weekend

By Jake Kaplan  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Twice the Penn State women's gymnastics team had high hopes to go to nationals. Twice it was dealt crushing blows.

In both the 2007 and 2008 NCAA regional championships, Penn State came up short against Denver — by .05 points in 2007 and .075 in 2008.

The five seniors on this season's squad were freshmen and sophomores the two years Denver narrowly beat them, and they haven't forgotten about it.

"Those two meets that they beat us were like the biggest meets of our lives, and we worked so hard and we knew we deserved it," senior co-captain Rosie Smith said.

The team will have its chance at revenge on Saturday. The No. 18 Nittany Lions travel to Denver to take on the No. 6 Pioneers. Penn State is coming off its opening meet, where it didn't perform up to preseason expectations, placing second with a score of 193.900. The revenge factor may add more motivation for the team to prove itself.

"I think it gives us motivation to definitely work really hard in the

gym and knowing that there's just a little more on the line for this one," senior Casey Rohrbaugh said. "Pride on the line, I guess you could say."

The gymnasts who were not on the team during the past two bouts with Denver have been told by the upperclassmen the meaning of this tri-meet, where the Lions will also face Air Force.

"We told them how terrible it was to be so close to nationals and not make it," Smith said. "So we told them that, and we're all really motivated and we're gonna go into this meet with confidence and hopefully do really well."

Penn State coach Steve



ON THE BLOG

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Shephard said though he knows the team talks about the past, he would rather emphasize that the focus needs to be on performing and hitting its routines just like in practice.

However, not everyone feels the matchup is a rivalry.

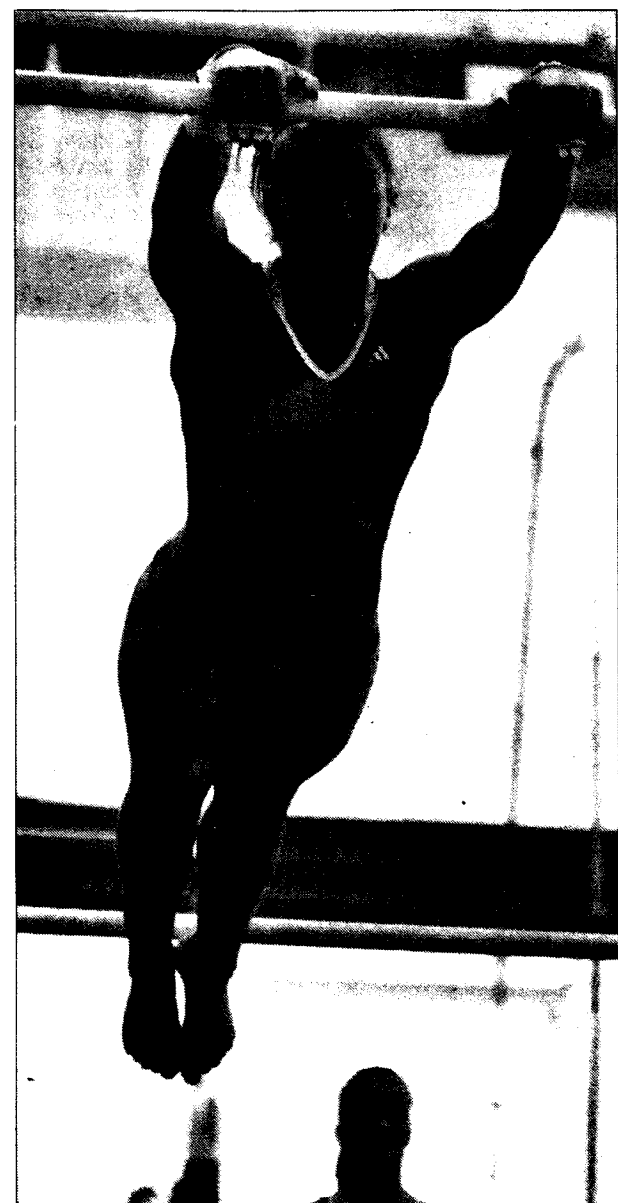
Denver coach Melissa Kutcher-Rinehart said she does not view it as a rivalry matchup because, to her, winning and losing does not

make a difference. The only thing that really matters when it comes down to qualifying for postseason play is the team's score, she said.

"Truly you are competing against yourself," Kutcher-Rinehart said. "You're really not competing against another team. So all we focus on and what they probably focus on is maximizing our own ability and our own team."

When it comes to this weekend's meet, Shephard said the team's experiences in 2007 and 2008 have ultimately helped the program and will help this weekend.

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Ryan Ulish/Collegian

Sophomore Whitney Bencsko practices her routine on the uneven bars Oct. 29 at the White Building. The No. 18 Nittany Lions travel to Denver to face the No. 6 host Pioneers and Air Force on Saturday.

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