

LINCOLN (AP)—It's the end of an era for the house that cigarettes built.

The Devaney Sports Center will host its last college basketball game Wednesday night when Nebraska upset Minnesota, ending a 37-year run as the home of the Cornhuskers.

While the Paxton Tigers didn't claim the Class D1 title in the boys state tournament Saturday, they will always remember playing the last state tournament game in Devaney.

In fact, Saturday's night's final game of the tournament will also be the last basketball game played in Devaney.

The Chase County girls played Schuyler in the Devaney Center in 1994 after clinching a Class B tournament berth under Coach Al Zuege.

The boys claimed a runner-up finish in Class C1 at the Devaney Center in 2003 under Coach Rick Titus.

After a \$20 million facelift, it will reopen in the fall as the women's volleyball venue. The basketball teams, which moved into a new practice facility in 2011, will play games in the Pinnacle Bank Arena just west of campus.

"We're going to have state-of-the-art facilities for any major college basketball team or any professional franchise," first-year coach Tim Miles said. "At the same time, it's a sentimental time because there is so much historical value to the Devaney."

Nebraska certainly isn't a bastion of basketball tradition. The Huskers haven't won a conference championship since 1950 or any of their six all-time NCAA tournament games.

But on the Devaney court, Nebraska has won 75 percent of its games overall (446-148) and 60 percent of its conference games (166-111).

"A lot of good memories," said Beau Reid, who provided a couple of the building's highlights during his career from 1988-91. "It's bittersweet. Sweet because our program is moving on and getting a new facility that will help make us relevant. Bitter because it's not like the Devaney is some dump people move out of. It's still a really nice, clean arena, and I think the volleyball girls will like playing there."

The building is named for Nebraska's Hall of Fame football coach, Bob Devaney, who led the Huskers to national championships in 1970-71 and served as athletic director until 1992.

Devaney in 1971 pushed for a new multi-sports facility to replace the Nebraska Coliseum. After much consternation, state lawmakers approved a 5-cent increase to the state cigarette tax to fund the construction.

The final cost was \$13.8 million for the 13,595-seat building that opened with the boys' state tournament in March 1976 as the Nebraska Sports Complex.

It was renamed the Bob Devaney Sports Center in November 1978 and has been the Huskers' home through the Big Eight and Big 12 years, and their first two seasons in the Big Ten, along with being a site for the Nebraska state girls and boys basketball tournament.

The most exciting years were from 1986-2000 under coach Danny Nee, whose .572 winning percentage is best in program history. He led the Huskers to four straight NCAA tournaments (1991-94) and another in 1998, and coached future pros like Tyrone Lue, Eric Piatkowski, Erick Strickland and Mikki Moore.

Nee's first visit to the Devaney was in 1980, when he was an assistant under Digger Phelps at Notre Dame. The Irish were in town and lost to Missouri in the NCAA tournament. The building hosted NCAA first- and second-round games three times in the '80s.

"I was so impressed with how it was designed, and the size was really cool," Nee said. "That

coach Devaney could get that done with the cigarette tax at such an economical price just astounded me. I didn't know that six years later I would come back to coach in that facility."

Nebraska beat 33 ranked opponents at the Devaney, but maybe the most memorable win was against an unranked Kansas team led by Danny Manning in January 1988. Reid's 18-foot shot at the buzzer beat the Jayhawks 70-68—the last game "Danny and the Miracles" lost on their way to the national championship.

The Huskers trailed Kansas by as many as 16 points, but they stayed in the game because the Jayhawks missed a bunch of late free throws.

Reid recalled this week that in the final seconds, he and his teammates were supposed to clear out and let Eric Johnson make a play. Reid started to hand the ball to Johnson when the Jayhawks came with a trap.

The ball popped loose. Reid picked it up, took a dribble and got his shot off just in time. It was the freshman's only basket of the game.

"I got my body squared in the air and the ball came off my hand really, really good," Reid said. "I was pretty pleased as it left my hand and hopeful it was going to be good."

Three years later, as a senior, Reid made a 3-pointer with 2 seconds left to beat fifth-ranked Michigan State 71-69 for one of Nebraska's handful of signature wins. Nee, now the coach at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, said Tuesday that the atmosphere was at its best when big and loud crowds showed up for conference games.

"That building had charisma," Nee said. "If you were behind and started making a comeback, the roof would come off that place."