

Volleyball team looks at only senior as leader

By Ward Triplett

For Nebraska's Gwen Egbert, seniority is indeed a distinction. Egbert, 21, is the only senior playing for the Cornhusker volleyball squad.

"Being the only senior puts some pressure on me," Egbert said. "It means that I can't just do anything I want, because they might think that they could do it too. If I'm dogging it in practice, the underclassmen will see that and think that they could get away with it."

"I have to remember that the underclassmen are looking up to me, and I have to set a good example. That would be to just always play the best I can and help them with my experience."

Egbert is unusual as far as Nebraska volleyball players go, since Coach Terry Pettit recruited her out of a junior college instead of high school. Egbert was the most valuable player on a Kellogg Community College team that won the junior college volleyball championship her sophomore year.

"Kellogg had a really good volleyball program. In fact, they had a better program than most of the four-year schools," the Kalamazoo, Mich., native said.

"Plus, I was a homebody. I didn't want to go too far,

and Kellogg was about a half-hour from my house."

Egbert chose Nebraska over Southwestern Missouri and Wyoming because of Nebraska's superior academic program. The decision, she said, was "tough."

Immediate starter

"I knew I'd get a good education at any of the three, and they all had good volleyball programs," Egbert said. "But Nebraska had the better school of the three. They were equal to me except for that."

Egbert immediately stepped into the Nebraska lineup as the starting setter, but her season was slowed by an ankle injury in September. She then missed four weeks of action.

"I thought I was playing really well until then, but that injury really hurt me," Egbert said. "I missed the middle of the season, and it was hard to get back in shape afterwards."

This season, Pettit switched Egbert to an outside hitter position, where she is in the main digging position. Sophomore Cathy Noth, who played the position last year, is now the team's setter. That, along with two new center blockers, has changed the team a lot, according to Egbert.

"Our blocking is a lot better now," Egbert said, "and our center blockers are taller and stronger than last year. Our two freshmen (Michelle Smith and Sharon Kramer) can take up a lot more court than Shadi (Pettine) and Terri (Kanouse) did last year. Personally, I think we're better off this year."

Egbert said the team is not in as good physical condition as needed yet, but game experience should take care of that.

'Assertive' player

The younger players also need the games, and the "feel of the ball" for the team to improve, she said.

While Egbert said it was too soon to evaluate her own play, Pettit had praise for his senior.

"I think she's much more assertive as a player both physically and mentally," he said. "In the Wyoming tournament, she provided good leadership when things got a little out of hand."

Egbert said her only personal goal this season is to "do the things that need to get done" and continue to push herself.

"I'm not what you would call an exceptional athlete," Egbert said. "I have to work really hard to be competitive. With our freshmen being such gifted athletes, it's hard for me to keep up."

Egbert would like to lead the Huskers to their seventh straight Big Eight championship as well.

"I have a lot of friends down in Missouri, and they're going around saying that Missouri will win the Big Eight this year. I don't think they have as good a team as we do, because every time we played them, they were really scared of us," she said.

"We have a good program here, and they're building a good one down there. I know they really want to beat us, but we really want that seventh title," Egbert said.

Tennis coach optimistic about opener

By Kevin Warneke

The UNL women's tennis team will get its first dose of competition this weekend as it plays Stephens College at 1:30 p.m. Friday and Drake at 3 p.m. Saturday. Both matches will be played on the East Campus tennis courts.

According to Coach Kathy Hawkins, the Stephens College match will be a good warm-up for Drake.

"Stephens College is going to be one of the weaker teams that we will face this year," she said. "They're trying to improve their team and are playing Division One schools."

Because she hasn't seen them play in two years, Hawkins said, she is hesitant to make any predictions of the outcome of the match. It will be a good way of getting rid of first-match jitters and getting the squad ready for Drake, she said.

"Drake will be a big match," Hawkins said. "They've beaten us closely the last two years."

But despite the previous two losses to Drake, Hawkins said she is optimistic.

"We think we're the better team" she said. "But we're going to have to work for the win, and also I'm glad we're playing at home."

The lineup against Stephens College will be without the services of Cindi Reiman and Ann Swanson, who hold the No. 1 and No. 2 singles spots.

"I think that Stephens College is not as strong and I want to give some people a chance to play," she said. "I don't think this will jeopardize the outcome."

Jamie Pisarcik will play the No. 1 spot, followed by Lisa Brooks, Elizabeth Mooney, Mimi Magiera, Genny Mortell and Lynn Svoboda in the second through sixth spots.

Against Drake the squad will be at full force with Reiman at her No. 1 spot. Ann Swanson and Jamie Pisarcik either at the two and three spots, Brooks at four, Mooney at five and Mortell in the sixth spot.

Against both teams, Reiman and Swanson will make up the No. 1 doubles team, with Brooks and Pisarcik playing No. 2 and Mooney and Mortell playing No. 3.

"I feel good about the whole team," Hawkins said. "Our team depth is strong and we have strong competition for spots on the team."

Hawkins pointed out that good depth is already needed as Susan Hayes and Lee Ann Givens, two returning players, are out with injuries.

Hawkins said she has been surprised with the play of two of her returning players and also of the performances of her freshman recruits.

"Cindi Reiman worked hard this summer and puts in extra time. I think she has career aspirations in tennis after college," Hawkins said. "Jamie Pisarcik played on an amateur circuit this summer and has come back strong."

Hawkins said she is pleased that although Mooney, Brooks and Mortell, the freshman recruits, have not taken over the No. 1 spot, they could do so in a year or two.

"They are aggressive; they're fighters," she said.

Aggies . . .

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"That's (the weak-set) something they haven't used in a couple of years and I don't know if they'll use it against us or not," Krueger said.

The New Mexico State offense features a short pass attack. Hendrix said the Aggies could be expected to throw about 40 times during Saturday's game.

Quarterback Jamie McAlister engineers the Aggie passing game. The four-year starter has completed better than 50 percent of his passes in each of the past three seasons. Hendrix described McAlister as an accurate quarterback with "a good head but not a great arm."

McAlister's favorite passing targets are flanker Al Tanner, fullback James Hebert and split end Bobby Humphery. Humphery is also the Aggies most potent ground

weapon. The senior from Lubbock, Texas, was ranked 19th nationally in kickoff returns last season.

Krueger said the Aggie offense would practice fundamentals this week.

"We're going to work on protecting our quarterback and catching the football," he said.

Saturday's game will be only the second meeting between New Mexico State and Nebraska. Krueger said the 1982 Aggies are better than the team that lost to Nebraska 57-0 in 1979.

"Last time we played Nebraska the kids really played well. I think we hit Jarvis Redwine pretty good two or three times and caused some funbles," Krueger said. "We have a better team now than we did then."

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By Al ed Andrus

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