Buck's Broncos get home court; Huskers exiled to Kalamazoo

By Ward W. Triplett III

All things considered, it appears that the Nebraska volleyball team didn't get a fair deal when the NCAA decided not to give the Huskers a home match for the first round of the NCAA playoffs Saturday.

"Last year, they set this up on somewhat of a zonal format where the top teams in each (geographical) region got a bye to the regionals," Western Michigan Coach Rod Buck said. Buck's Broncos will meet Nebraska Saturday in Kalamazoo, Mich.

"This year, they have it set up so a West Coast team is in every regional," he said. "It's a last-minute decision, and I don't think it's going to do any good for the quality of volleyball."

The Huskers finished the season 29-3, and included San Diego State, Arizona State, Oregon State and California, all NCAA qualifiers, among their victims. The only losses were five-set losses to Kentucky, Purdue and Arizona, all three of which were top-10 teams all season.

But Nebraska, ranked No. 7 this week, was sent to play 30-0 Western Michigan, while elsewhere in the Mideast region, Penn State, which finished 35-9, will be host to a first-round game against 40-11 Providence, and Purdue, 25-5, will play 29-15 Illinois State. Purdue failed to win its conference, losing to Northwestern.

Both Buck and Nebraska coach Terry Pettit expected to find an easier opponent in the first round than each other, and both expected to be playing at home.

"But we can't spend energy worrying about it," Pettit said. "We've got to play a very good team at their place."

Buck said he thinks it is unfair to both teams to have to play each other in the first round.

"Both teams deserve to have a decent shot at getting to the regional," Buck said. "But obviously, one of us isn't going to make it that far. It's all due to this screwed-up system they used this year."

The system divided the country into four regionals, the winner of each going to the final four in Lexington. However, the regionals are not geographical. While UCLA shows up in Nebraska's regional, Hawaii, the No. 1 team, is in the South with Tennessee, Florida State, Lamar, Texas, North Carolina and Kentucky. Northwestern is in the North with Pacific, California, Oregon State, Cal-Santa Barbara, San Jose State and Cal Poly-San Louis Obispo. The West is made up of Southern Cal, Arizona, Colorado State, San Diego State, Brigham Young, Arizona State and Stanford. The top four teams, according to the latest NCAA ratings, each got byes. The remaining six teams in the regional were arranged by placing the team with the best record at home against the team with the worst record and so forth. But, that didn't happen in the Mideast, where the two teams with the best records, Nebraska and Western Michigan, will face each other first.

But the major deciding point, at least unofficially, was how much money a team could bring in by being host to a first-round game or a regional, Nebraska assistant women's athletic director Barb Hibner said.

"We fought to get it (the first-round game) here," Hibner said. "But the bottom line was apparently money."

Hibner and June B. Davis, assistant athletic director and director of women's athletics, said they submitted a description of UNL's season ticket sales and attendance to the NCAA before the Big Eight Championships.

"All I can say is it's appalling," Davis said. "You just figure that when you do the job all season, you should get some benefit for that."

Last year, Nebraska played Penn State in a first-round game in Lincoln and won in three sets. This year, despite the fact that Penn State has a poorer record, it will be host to a first-round game against Providence. Hibner said that probably can be traced to Lion Coach Russ Roses' membership on the championship committee.

"There are other people unhappy with the site selections," Davis said, adding that she is planning to file a complaint with the NCAA.

Libba Birmingham, athletic director of Mississippi State University and the chairman of the volleyball championships, could not be reached for comment.

Despite the home-court snub, Pettit doesn't expect playing at Western Michigan to affect his team.

"This is a mentally touch team," he said. "We're capable of playing really well on the road."

Men's Intramural Volleyball Ratings

1.	Total Sound	5-0
2.	Scum of the Earth	6-0
3.	Acacia A	5-0
4.	Awesome Cybers	4-1
5.	Selleck 4000	5-1
6.	Lambda Chi Alpha A	4-0
7.	Acacia B	4-0
8.	Alpha Tau Omega B	5-0
9.	Cather Three A	3-1
10.	Phi Kappa Psi A	3-1

"Husker Red's" Notes: The sixth, seventh and eighth-ranked teams in the last Top Ten Poll suffered defeats, they were: Phi Kappa Psi A, Harper Seven A and Sigma Phi Epsilon B. Moving into the Top 10 for the first time are Lambda Chi Alpha A and Cather Three A.

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