

'Our year...'

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Then there's Cathy Noth, who will join Buysse and outside hitter Julie Hermann on the senior rank this season. Noth has torn through the Big Eight, and everybody else for that matter, for three seasons, collecting one of the teams best kill percentages despite playing from a setter position last season.

Noth became Pettit's second All-American last season (1981 graduate Terri Kanouse was the first) when the Collegiate Volleyball Coaches Association named the Bettendorf, Iowa, native to their first team. Kim Oden of Stanford, Jan Saunders of Pacific and Eileen Dumpster of Pacific were the only other underclassmen named to the team.

Noth and Dahlgren both made the national junior team and were still touring Europe when practice opened last Monday. Buysse also was scheduled to come in late, so Pettit's first days this fall were spent more on fundamentals for his seven players.

"I think the attitude is good. The players seem eager," Pettit said about the first few practices.

Barring injury, the Huskers will revive a 6-2 offense anchored by the setting tandem of Buysse and Noth.

"I feel our strengths are located in our two senior setters, who provide us as good a tandem as there is in the country," Pettit said.

Pettit is also looking to the middle blocker position for more strength. Kramer and Dahlgren started there a year ago, but junior Michelle Smith can beat out one for a starting spot, he said.

"Most teams are happy if they have one good middle blocker, and we have three here," he said.

Adamczak and Hermann are

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experienced outside hitters, though Hermann played behind Dean last year. The preseason practice will have to determine another hitter to either start or for frontline reserve help.

Sophomore Enid Schonewise of Beatrice, the tallest Husker at 6-1, picked up some court time during the spring season and probably is the leading candidate, for the job, Pettit said. One of the newcomers also could push for the job. All-Stater Kathi DeBohr, 5-10, of Firth and Jenny Goff, 5-9, of Durango, Colo., are expected to be in the outside hitter battle.

Laura Hurley, Tina Siskens and Michelle Stratbucker are the other freshmen who began camp with two transfers, Tisha Delaney of Jefferson Junior College and Darla Melcher of Beatrice.

Melcher, a defensive specialist, is the sister of Lori Melcher, an All-Big Eight setter for the Huskers in 1979 and 1980. Delaney, a setter, may be redshirted depending on how early practices go.

Pettit said the late arrival of his top three players shouldn't hurt the team at all.

"I think it's obviously a good opportunity for them (Noth and Dahlgren), and a good opportunity for our team as well. They're going to report in top shape. They also understand what roles they play on this team, and I don't think they will have any difficulty adjusting."

The junior national team is set up to give college players a

chance to meet international competition, Pettit said.

The team is also a potential feeder to the United States national team, and gives volleyball officials a chance to see players who they might want to try out for that team, he said.

If statistics from other sports hold true, the Olympic television coverage the team got could mean volleyball could undergo a surge this season in attendance and participation, but that remains to be seen.

"Following the 1976 Olympics when Mark Spitz won those seven medals, enrollment in age group swimming doubled," Pettit said. "What might come out of the Olympics is that a lot of good athletes are going to see volleyball as a real opportunity."

It also might have shaken the old image of just-get-the-ball-over-the-net volleyball. That may have kept crowds away from Husker meets. Pettit has tried to improve attendance at UNL's matches through season ticket sales, which cost \$15 for adults and \$7 for students for 13 home matches plus invitationals. More than 1,000 were sold last year, but the actual numbers rarely reached that point at any meets except those on football Saturdays, when anyone presenting a football ticket was admitted free.

"The Olympics may have introduced to a lot of people what kind of game we play here," Pettit said. "The type of playing that was seen there was every bit as fast and powerful as what we play here."

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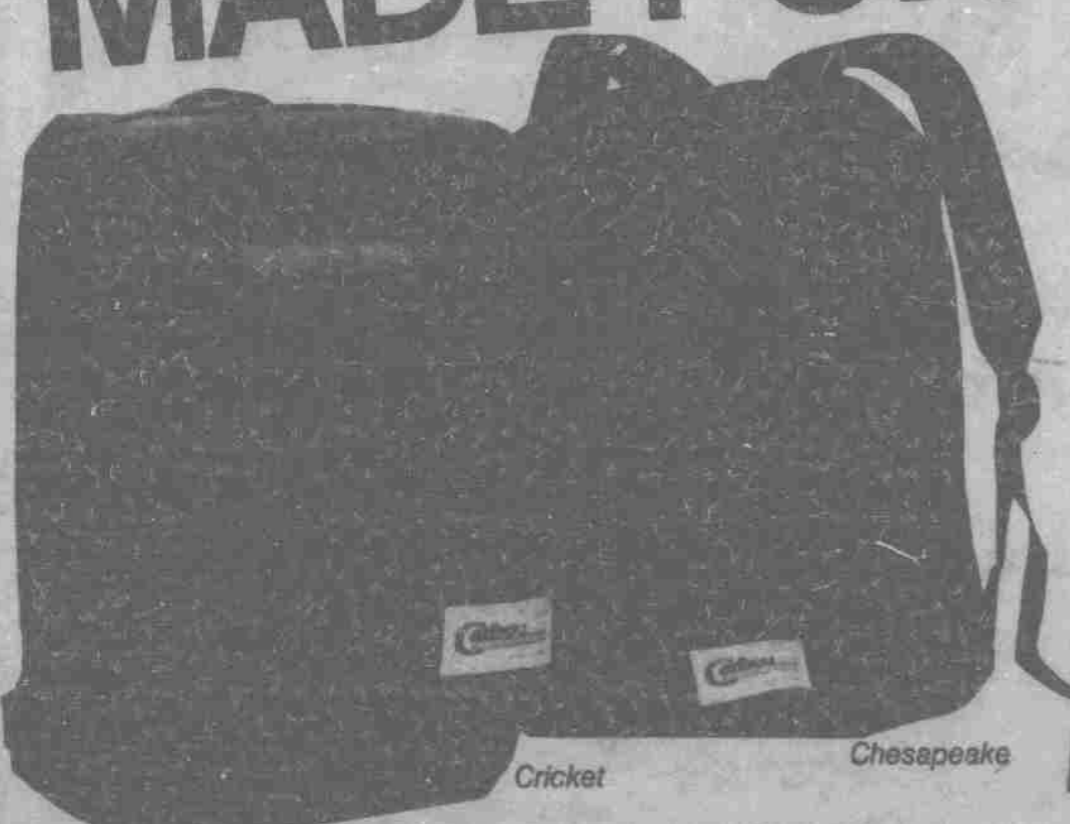
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