

Sports

Tennis player courts Big Eight titles



Nebraska's Jill Pisarcik returns a serve during practice Monday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Pisarcik followed in her older sister's footsteps and became a Cornhusker.

By Tim Hartmann
Senior Reporter

Nebraska is a long way from Upper St. Clair, Pa., where Nebraska tennis player Jill Pisarcik went to high school, but with the influence of her sister, Pisarcik became a Cornhusker.

Jamie Pisarcik played tennis for Nebraska from 1980 to 1984, and when Jill graduated from high school in 1983, Jamie helped her decide to come to Nebraska.

"My sister played here, and most of the schools I was looking at were far from home," Pisarcik said. "I figured that if I was going to be far away, it would be nice to have somebody nearby."

So Pisarcik came to Nebraska in 1984 and even played doubles with her sister for part of the season.

In 1984 Pisarcik finished second in the Big Eight Conference in No. 2 doubles. In 1985 she again finished second, this time at No. 3 doubles, and last season she placed third at No. 2 singles.

This year Pisarcik, a senior recreational management major, said she hopes to do well in both singles and doubles at the Big Eight Championships April 23 and 24 in Oklahoma City, Okla. Pisarcik's record is 10-12 at No. 2 singles and 12-5 at No. 1 doubles.

"I hope to get to the finals of both singles and doubles," Pisarcik said. "Last year, in the No. 2 position, I got third. Hopefully, I can one more round (this year) and get to play OSU (Oklahoma State) in the finals and see how I can do. I think with the way I've been playing if I get a decent draw that's

pretty realistic."

In doubles, Pisarcik teams with Cari Groce, and the pair hopes to defeat Oklahoma State's Tessa Price and Jane Wood, the top doubles team in the country. Last weekend Groce and Pisarcik lost to Price and Wood 6-3, 3-6, 7-5.

Pisarcik said she has been pleased with how she has played this season.

"I've been playing pretty well the last couple weeks, and the matches I lost have been close matches," she said. "Really, since we went up to BYU (Brigham Young) in February I've felt pretty comfortable on the court."

Although she is pleased with her performance, Pisarcik said she sees room for improvement.

"In doubles I would like to be a little quicker at the net," she said. "If I can pick up my serve these next couple weeks I'll be pretty happy."

Pisarcik said she also would like to improve her mental toughness.

"That's my worst problem," she said. "I get up on players and just kind of lose concentration, so during the Big Eight Tournament, concentration is going to make a big difference."

The women's team is 5-14 in the spring season, and Pisarcik said that is due to lack of depth and adversity.

"We lack a little bit in depth — we've only got seven girls on the team — but everyone works pretty hard and we've tried to pull together for the Big Eight season," she said. "We've had some ups and downs earlier in the year and our coach has resigned for next year and that makes it kind of hard. Individually some of us could do fairly well, and that will pull us together."

Tennis player hopes for repeat success with new partner in doubles competition

By Tim Hartmann
Senior Reporter

Cari Groce, a senior on the Nebraska women's tennis team, was forced to make a transition this season.

Last year Groce played doubles with Liz Mooney, and their doubles team was Nebraska's first NCAA Championship qualifier. They were quarter-finalists at the NCAA meet, earning them All-America status.

However, Mooney graduated last season, forcing Groce to adjust to a new partner.

"It was hard, especially after Liz and I finished so well," Groce said. "It was just hard coming back and having to start all over with a different partner."

Groce said Jill Pisarcik, her new partner, and Mooney played different styles of tennis.

"Liz had a big serve, which helped me out because I could always be moving at the net and putting balls away," she said.

So far this season Groce and Pisarcik have a 12-5 record. They narrowly lost to Oklahoma State's Tessa Price and Jane Wood, the top team in the region and in the nation.

"We lost to them this weekend and we had four match points on them," said Groce, a physical education major. "If we would have beat them we would have qualified for the NCAA's. Hopefully we can beat them next weekend at the Big Eight Tournament and still qualify, but that was just kind of disappointing."

The close loss to Price and Wood gave Groce confidence in her doubles team, she said.

"It showed we obviously are fairly good, a lot better than what we thought at the beginning," Groce said. "We were beating teams, but we didn't beat any big teams. Then we almost beat Oklahoma State and the next day we beat OU (Oklahoma), so we have a chance."

In singles competition Groce has compiled a 10-13 record while playing from the No. 1 to No. 4 position. She said she would like to improve the consistency of her singles game.

"There have been a few matches where I played well," Groce said, "but I haven't really stayed at a certain level. I've just been up and down."

Although Groce's main goal is to do well in doubles, she said she also would like to end her career with a strong showing in singles play.

"I'd like to make it to the finals of the Big Eight Tournament, but it just depends on how my game is," she said. "It's kind of like it has its own mind — it does what it wants. It never does what I want it to do."

Groce came to Nebraska from Stillwater, Okla., High School. She chose the Cornhuskers over home-state schools Oklahoma and Oklahoma State and fellow Big Eight Conference school Kansas. At the time her father was the tennis coach at Oklahoma State, but she said she wanted to get out of Oklahoma.

"I just decided to get out of state and get away," Groce said. "At that time Nebraska was third in the Big Eight, so it was between here and KU, and I decided to come here."

Since coming to Nebraska, Groce has compiled a career record of 60-49 in singles and 50-32 in doubles. In 1984 and 1985 she placed second in the Big Eight Tournament in No. 5 singles, and in 1984 and 1986 she finished second in doubles play.

In 1985 Groce also finished fifth in the National Fast Serve Contest with a serve of 101 mph.

Groce said that this season's team lacks depth, but they try to make up for their weaknesses with hard work.

"We're not that strong," she said.

"Towards the beginning we weren't too much together, but now we've gotten it together. We don't have that many strengths, but we work hard at what we've got to try and get by."



Cari Groce, a 1986 All-American as a junior, waits for the ball during practice Monday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Groce hopes to continue her All-American status for the Cornhuskers this season.