

Freshman chooses NU over home state

By Cory Golden
Staff Reporter

Eileen Shannon is an impact player.

The freshman recruit has helped fill the void left in a Nebraska volleyball team line-up rocked by injuries in a big way.



Shannon

Five players on Coach Terry Pettit's 12-player squad have been held out at some time this season, but the Cornhuskers have continued their winning ways with a 9-0 record, including three tournament wins.

"We've been kind of going on a day-to-day basis, trying to piece things together," Pettit said. "So far it's worked out."

Pettit said one of the reasons Nebraska continues to roll is because of Shannon, whose road from Elmhurst, Ill., to the Huskers' starting lineup began long before this year.

"I saw her play two or three years ago in Chicago," Pettit said. "At that time, she was a sophomore in high school. We were recruiting someone else on her team, but I made a mental note that she was somebody we would want to check back with in a couple years."

Her high school team, Immaculate Conception, compiled a 31-5 record and was "ranked first for most of the year," Shannon said. "But we ended

up losing in regionals."

No matter. The 6-foot outside hitter with the 30-inch vertical jump already had turned her share of heads, Pettit said.

"By the time she was a senior, we -- and most of the better programs in the country -- were recruiting her," he said. "She was identified as one of the finest high school players in the country."

Not only was Shannon named the Illinois Player of the Year, she was selected as a Junior Olympic All-America selection along with fellow Husker recruit Valerie Vermeulen and was a 1988 1st-team Reebok High School All-America selection along with freshman middle blocker Stephanie Thater.

Shannon also played with the Sports Performance junior team -- the squad on which Pettit first saw her play, and was chosen Most Valuable Player at the Amateur Athletic Union volleyball championships.

Shannon was offered scholarships by Notre Dame; Texas, the 1988 national champion; and Southern California; but chose Nebraska.

"I guess I chose it, basically, because there wasn't anything I didn't like about it," Shannon said.

She also rejected an offer from the closest top-20 team to home: Illinois.

Shannon said she was thinking of the future when she turned down the Fighting Illini.

"At Illinois, lots of their big players were seniors," she said. "I felt that if I went there as a freshman, I'd be just another name. I'd be just

another face in the crowd.

"The underclassmen weren't as good as the underclassmen here. I wanted it to be a better team when I was a junior and senior than when I was a freshman."

With that in mind, Shannon made her selection. And, along with Thater, Vermeulen, and Debbie Lee Brand, she joined Nebraska.

"At the beginning, I didn't think I'd play because we had Linda Barsness, Chris Hall, and Janet Kruse," Shannon said.

But Pettit thought otherwise.

"I thought she'd get a significant amount of playing time," he said.

"We thought she was somebody who could come right in and play right away. She had all the all-around skills and experience, and that's pretty unusual for a high school player."

"We planned on her having a significant impact this year."

Pettit's plans may have been finalized by necessity, when Barsness suffered a season-ending knee injury in Nebraska's second match of the season. Barsness, a junior who was the Big Eight leader in kills last year, joined Hall on the sidelines. Hall was benched with back spasms.

Brand, Shannon and Vermeulen each took turns in the vacated outside hitter spot opposite Kruse. But it has been Shannon, when not dealing with her own lower back pain, who has played the majority of the time in the starting spot.

Pettit said Shannon and her teammates have responded to the adversity of those injuries and others --

including one to All-America selection Virginia Stahr -- very well.

"I think she (Shannon) has done an exceptional job; all of our people have," he said.

Assisted by junior setter Val Novak, Kruse and Shannon have led the unbeaten team, trading the top spot in the kill column along the way.

In Saturday's First Tier tournament win over Pittsburgh, the freshman pounded down a school-record 25 kills in three games. The night before she tied another Husker best with 77 attacks in a five-match victory against Kentucky.

Shannon also was selected to the all-tourney team a week earlier at Minnesota's Reebok Classic, in which Nebraska took first place.

All this still is not surprising, Pettit said.

"She's exactly what we thought we were getting," he said. "She's an exceptional player. She has one of the most efficient approach and attack

movements I've seen in volleyball. She's able to just kind of glide in, go up, and attack the ball in several positions. She's a good passer, a good server, and she understands the game."

Once Shannon's lower back pain lessens, her play will get better, Pettit said.

"She's really an exciting player to coach," Pettit said, "and as she gets healthier -- as her back gets stronger -- I think she's going to do even more."

Pettit said he thought Shannon could "accomplish a lot of things" at Nebraska, including "a good chance of making All-American before she graduates." But individual honors depend on the success of the program, he said.

That is fine with the Husker freshman.

"I just want to help the team," she said.

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Men's soccer team takes third place

The Nebraska men's soccer team picked up a dual victory and a third-place finish last weekend.

The Cornhuskers began their weekend by defeating Creighton 4-1 at the Cook Pavilion, then finished third in the eight-team Jayhawk Classic in Lawrence, Kan.

Nebraska opened the tournament by defeating Kansas State 3-1, then defeated Iowa 1-0. The Huskers then dropped a 3-1 decision to Kansas and suffered a 2-1 setback to Missouri Sunday.

Doug Miller, Lane Kent, Rich Ellis and Steve Knott all tallied goals for Nebraska.

Archery meet begins second phase

The second phase of a two-day intramural archery meet takes place today in 301 Mabel Lee Hall.

Persons interested in participating in either the men's, women's or co-rec divisions may register and shoot any time between 6:15 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Novice and experienced divisions will be offered.

Hitter chosen as player of the week

Nebraska sophomore outside hitter Janet Kruse was honored Tuesday as the Big Eight player of the week.

Kruse tallied 55 kills, 13 blocks and 35 digs while compiling a .346 hitting percentage to lead the Cornhuskers to the team title of last weekend's First Tier Invitational.

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