

Volleyball team tries to complete mission

By Darran Fowler
Senior Reporter

Written on the wall in the Nebraska volleyball coaches' office is a message which has been there since the season began.

It reads: "We are on a mission!" Under that it says, "Final Four."

Fourteen weeks and 28 matches later, the Cornhuskers are three steps away in their attempt to complete their mission.

"Way at the beginning of the season we put ourselves open and said, 'This is it. This is the season we're going to the Final Four,'" Husker senior Virginia Stahr said. "Now it's party time, but not that it's going to be easy."

"We've worked all year for this. This is a fun time of season. It's crunch time and it's time to go out

and just enjoy it."

At 2 p.m. Saturday, Nebraska, the Midwest region's top seed with a 25-3 record, takes a first step toward the Final Four when it plays No. 8-seeded Illinois State in a first-round regional match at the NU Coliseum.

Saturday's winner advances to the four-team regional round where it will play for a berth in the Final Four in Honolulu.

If Nebraska wins Saturday, the Coliseum will be the Midwest regional site Dec. 8-9.

Nebraska outside hitter Janet Kruse said she expects the Huskers' region to be competitive.

"All the teams in our bracket have been in the top-20 at least once and that's more than what's been in the past," Kruse said.

And it begins with the Redbirds, Nebraska coach Terry Pettit said.

"Illinois State's a very good team," Pettit said. "Our record against them is 2-5. There aren't too many teams in the country that we've only won two of seven matches we've played against."

"They've been a good team probably for 15 years. It's a school with a rich volleyball tradition."

In addition to Nebraska and Illinois State, the other teams competing in the region include Colorado at Minnesota, Penn State at Illinois and Iowa at Ohio State.

Pettit said the Midwest is loaded with good teams. "I think any team in our region can win the tournament," he said. "That wasn't so true three or four years ago."

"It'll be real interesting to see who ends up in the regional. We just need to do our part and make sure the regionals are here a week from this

Saturday."

From a coaching standpoint, Pettit said he likes Nebraska's pairing. The winner of the Nebraska-Illinois State matchup will play the Colorado-Minnesota winner in the semifinals.

"I think it's a good draw in that if we're fortunate to beat Illinois State we'll play the winner of two teams we've already played," Pettit said. "That may not make any difference to our players but to the coaching staff it's easier to prepare for. We know exactly what needs to be done."

Stahr also knows what needs to be done because she's been there before.

Stahr was a freshman in 1986, the year Nebraska finished as the national runner-up to Pacific. She also led her Utica-Centennial High School team to an undefeated Class C State Championship her senior year.

"I kind of parallel that to this," Stahr said about winning a state title. "I mean that was a perfect ending to a perfect season. Not that if we wouldn't make it it would be an unsuccessful season, but that's what you set your goals on."

"If you don't reach your goal it's still satisfying knowing that you worked your hardest to get there. But if you get there that's the best you could ever ask for."

Notes:

● About 1,000 tickets remain for the match at a cost of \$5 for adults and \$3 for students. University of Nebraska-Lincoln students who present their student ID cards will not be admitted free.

● If Nebraska wins, tickets for regionals would be sold following the match. Only a two-day pass could be purchased for \$10.

Nee hopes home-court advantage helps team

By Cory Golden
Staff Reporter

Nebraska basketball coach Danny Nee hopes a tournament on his team's home floor will help the Cornhuskers' blues.

The Huskers, who dropped a 91-71 decision Monday to Miami of Ohio at Oxford, Ohio, and suffered an 80-69 setback to Michigan State Wednesday in Lansing, Mich., are counting on the home-court advantage tonight for the Ameritas Classic.

Nebraska will open the tournament by facing Harvard at 6:30 p.m. Pepperdine will square off against Air Force at 8:30 p.m. The third-place game will be at 6 p.m. Saturday, followed by the championship game at 8 p.m.

After the rigors of Nebraska's first road trip, Nee said being back in

Lincoln will help his team.

"I think it'll definitely help us to be at home," he said. "The road's a difficult place to play with all the travel and fatigue."

Nebraska will be welcoming three teams who can sympathize with their road troubles.

Harvard is 1-1 with a win over New Hampshire and a road loss to Duke. Pepperdine lost to California-Santa Barbara on the road, while Air Force lost to California in the first round of the pre-season National Invitation Tournament before returning home to beat Valparaiso.

Nee said Nebraska's road losses have not dampened the Huskers' outlook. Nebraska's lone win this season occurred in the first game of the year, when the Huskers whipped Missouri-Kansas City.

"Our players are still hungry," Nee said. "Everybody still wants to

do well, there's a very positive attitude. So we're OK so far."

Nee said Nebraska's young lineup is experiencing a lot of new things because opponents have challenged them with a variety of styles.

"We're still in the laboratory stage," he said. "We're learning through experiences. We won our opener, then went on the road for the first time. We played a hot-shooting, outside team in Miami with tough pressure defense, then had to play MSU, who plays great in transition and runs a zone defense."

Now the Huskers will face a quick running team from the Ivy League tonight.

"They're an exciting team. They play run and gun, up-tempo basketball," Nee said about Harvard. "They press on defense and have a

really good player in Ralph James."

James, a 6-foot-4 junior guard who averages 14.2 points per game, is the Crimson's leading returning scorer from last year's 11-15 team.

Nee said if Nebraska defeats Harvard, it will face more opposition with a different face than its other opponents.

"Air Force is very disciplined, very organized," Nee said. "And they have a genuine superstar in Raymond Dudley."

Dudley, a 6-foot-1 senior guard, led the Falcons to a 14-14 record last season by averaging 26.8 points per game.

The Pepperdine Waves, from Malibu, Calif., who finished 20-13 while qualifying for the postseason NIT last year, round out a unique, diversified field, Nee said.

"Pepperdine is a talented, seasoned team from the West Coast," Nee said. "Each team has a distinct school it comes from and has a diverse style of coaching and play."

"It should be very interesting."

Nee said he has been pleased with Nebraska's previous performances in the tournament, which is sponsored by Ameritas Financial Services. Nebraska won the tournament last year, and finished as runner-up in 1987.

"It's a real quality tournament," Nee said. "The teams all get the red carpet treatment. It's done first class."

The Huskers hope that after the final game, the red carpet will be rolled out for them, Nee said.

"We feel we're getting better," he said. "Now we're going after the winning side of the ledger."

Beck: NU needs to improve all areas for tournament

By Jeff Apel
Senior Editor

The Nebraska women's basketball team will try to complement itself when it competes in the Dial Classic.

Angela Beck, Nebraska women's basketball coach, said the Cornhuskers need to develop a better all-around game in order to be successful. Nebraska will open the tournament today in Minneapolis at 6 p.m. against Central Michigan, and Minnesota will face Northeastern at 8 p.m.

Saturday's third-place game begins at 6 p.m., with the championship slated for 8 p.m.

Beck said Nebraska realized during its 74-55 loss to Iowa Wednesday

that it needs to produce more ball movement. She said increased ball movement will lead to a more balanced scoring attack.

Beck said Nebraska can improve its ball movement by complementing its game. She said the Huskers can accomplish that by having their perimeter game work more closely with their inside attack.

"We need to get a lot more movement," Beck said. "That's what killed us."

Beck said movement will be a key in the Dial Classic, as the Huskers will face a tough Central Michigan squad in the first round. The Chippewas have a 2-1 record this season, with wins against Wisconsin-Green Bay and Illinois-Chicago.

Central Michigan's lone loss this season was a 71-60 setback against Michigan State.

Beck said she does not know much about Central Michigan. She said Nebraska hurt itself by spending too much time focusing on Iowa, so it will approach its game against the Chippewas worrying about itself.

"I can't tell you much about Central Michigan," Beck said. "My assistants asked me if I wanted to watch films of them and Minnesota, and I said 'no.'"

Nebraska coach Deb McClurg's basketball coach Deb McClurg, who did watch films of Central Michigan, said she was impressed by the Chippewas.

"They're very respectable,"

McClurg said. "They've got a strong post game, and we expect to see a lot of full-court, man-to-man pressure from them."

Beck said Nebraska is equally concerned about Minnesota. The Golden Gophers are the defending champions of the Dial Classic.

"Minnesota is always a difficult place to play," Beck said. "It's a tough place to get a 'W.'"

Beck said Nebraska picked an ideal time to make its first road trip of the season. She said she welcomes a road trip because the Huskers spend so much time on promotion when they play at home.

"I'm excited to get back out of Dodge," Beck said. "I'm ready to get on the road because I like to concen-

trate on my team.

"When we're at home, we end up doing 50 million things. I end up asking myself, 'When will I ever have any time for coaching?'"

Beck said Nebraska also is looking forward to the step down in competition it will take this weekend. After facing fourth-ranked Georgia and 10th-ranked Iowa in succession, the Huskers will not see any ranked opponents in the Dial Classic.

Beck said Nebraska's games against Iowa and Georgia gave her an excellent idea of her team's potential. The Huskers lost the games by a combined 34 points.

"I don't think we're a top-20 team," Beck said, "but I think we are a top-30 team."

Ten Cornhusker wrestlers to compete in Las Vegas Invitational this weekend

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

This weekend's trip to Las Vegas won't be fun and games for Nebraska's wrestling team. The Las Vegas Invitational will be the biggest meet of the season before the NCAA meet in March, Cornhusker coach Tim Neumann said.

"This is as competitive of an event as there is outside of the national tournament," Neumann said. "We're definitely going to find out where we stack up compared to the rest of the country."

Nebraska assistant coach Gil Sanchez said 42 teams will attend the meet, which will take place at the Showboat Hotel and Casino Sports Pavilion today and Saturday.

Fourteen of the Amateur Wrestling top-25 teams will be at the meet, Sanchez said.

"It's important that we do well here," he said. "If you do well at the Las Vegas Invitational, you're almost guaranteed a seed at the NCAA's."

The past three Las Vegas Invitational team champions -- Oklahoma

State (1988), Arizona State (1987) and Iowa State (1986) -- have gone on to win the national championship.

Nebraska, ranked No. 5 in the nation, is taking its 10 weight-class starters to Las Vegas. Sanchez and the rest of the Huskers will compete in the Northern Iowa Open this weekend in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

This will be Nebraska's third consecutive Las Vegas Invitational. The Huskers finished ninth and eighth the last two years.

Neumann says he hopes for more this season.

"I'd like to see us place in the top five and have at least one champion," he said. "There are several teams that will have geared the first part of their season for this meet. We're still a week or two away from our peak level."

Jason Kelber, Nebraska's 126-pound starter, has won his weight class at the Wyoming and St. Louis Opens -- the first two meets of this season. But, Neumann said, getting another title this weekend won't be easy.

"Jason will be the second seed to

Oklahoma State's Kendall Cross and should they make it that far, it would be a repeat of last year's final (which Cross won 9-7)," Neumann said. "But truthfully, it's going to be tough with the top seven or eight competing in that class."

"Jason's wrestling great right now, but he'll have to beat the fourth- and seventh-ranked wrestlers just to get into the final."

Kelber is ranked No. 3 in the country at his weight class.

Nebraska's remaining starters who will compete this weekend are John Buxton at 118 pounds; Dave Droegemeuller at 134; Layne Billings at 142, ranked eighth; Paul Herrera at 150, ranked seventh; Dan Harrison at 158; Scott Chenoweth at 167, ranked sixth; Corey Nelson at 177, ranked 12th; Chris Nelson at 190, ranked seventh; and Joe Malecek at heavyweight, ranked eighth.

After the Las Vegas meet, Nebraska's next competition is Dec. 8 against Northern Illinois and Lock Haven at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

in brief SPORTS

Four gymnasts to go to national meet

Four former and current Nebraska gymnasts will compete in the U.S. Winter Nationals today and Saturday in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Nebraska men's gymnastics coach Francis Allen said he is confident the Huskers will finish among the top 10 competitors. The Nebraska athletes who will travel to the U.S. Olympic training site are Bob Stelter, Mark Warburton and Trent Dimas, and former Husker Tom Schlesinger.

Allen said Nebraska is looking forward to the meet, which will include 42 of the top gymnasts in the country. He said the Huskers have a definite goal entering the meet.

"The objective is to be in the top 10," Allen said, "so you have a shot at being a member of national teams."

Allen said senior All-America selection Patrick Kirksey and former Husker Kevin Davis will not compete at Winter Nationals because they were members of the U.S. team that competed at the World Gymnastics championships in Stuttgart, West Germany.

"Patrick and Kevin just need to rest because they are already among the nation's top seven," Allen said. "Right now, they are concentrating on working on specialized skills and perfecting their routines."

Pettit named region's coach of year

Nebraska volleyball coach Terry Pettit was named the Midwest region coach of the year by the American Volleyball Coaches Association.

Pettit, whose Cornhuskers will face Illinois State Saturday at the

NU Coliseum, is now eligible to be named the Division I national coach of the year. That announcement will be made Dec. 15, and the winner will be honored at a banquet to be held in conjunction with the Final Four.