

# Huskers dig early hole, get buried by Northern Illinois

By Cory Golden  
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's basketball team broke out its shovels during its 65-56 loss to Northern Illinois Tuesday night at DeKalb, Ill.

Nebraska coach Danny Nee said the Cornhuskers were hurt throughout the contest at Chick Evans Field House because they dug themselves into a hole. Nebraska hit only seven of its 18 shots from the free throw line, while Northern Illinois converted 18 of its 21 attempts, including 12 of its last 13.

That performance, while coupled with a 41.5 percent shooting performance from the floor, sent Nebraska to its 13th-straight road defeat. The loss dropped the Huskers' record to 3-3, while Northern Illinois improved to 3-2.

Nee said he knew why Nebraska lost the game.

"I felt we kept digging holes for ourselves," he said during his post-game radio show. "Our free-throw shooting was poor, our execution was never sharp and our rebounding was bad. And Northern Illinois played

with more emotion, more enthusiasm. You have to give them credit -- they outhusled us.

"We had those snowshoes on again."

Nee said Nebraska also hurt itself by committing a costly turnover midway through the second half. With the Huskers leading by a 52-50 margin, center Rich King's turnaround jumper was negated by a three-second violation.

Nee said that turnover did in Nebraska. Northern Illinois outscored the Huskers 15-4 in the game's final four minutes.

"That thing really broke our back," Nee said. "We just broke down after that. I don't think it was the right call, but we just never came back."

Nebraska was led by King and guard Clifford Scales, who tallied 12 points each. Donald Whiteside and Donnell Thomas led Northern Illinois with 18 points each.

Nebraska's next game is Saturday, when the Huskers face Texas Tech. The game begins at 7:35 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.



Shaun Sartin/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's Val Novak (left) and Carla Baker attempt a block against Oklahoma.

# Gophers coach says upcoming game against NU to be 'biggest challenge'

By Darran Fowler  
Senior Reporter

If the Minnesota volleyball team's season was over today, Golden Gophers coach Stephanie Schleuder would be satisfied.

But it's not over as Minnesota, playing in its first NCAA tournament, is Nebraska's opponent in Friday's semifinals of the Mideast regional at the NU Coliseum.

The Nebraska-Minnesota matchup will begin at 7:30 p.m. It will follow the Illinois-Ohio State match, which begins at 5:30 p.m.

Semifinal winners advance to Saturday's finals at 7:30 p.m.

"It's exciting for us," Schleuder said about qualifying for the NCAA tournament. "Everything else now is kind of gravy for us, but at the same time we really want to win and we're coming and giving it everything we've got."

Minnesota, the region's No. 5 seed with a 29-8 record, advanced to the semifinals with a first-round defeat of Colorado in three games.

"I'm really pleased with the way

we played against Colorado," Schleuder said.

But to beat fourth-ranked Nebraska will take an even greater effort, she said.

"It will be our biggest challenge of the season I think," she said.

Friday's semifinals will be a night of rematches. Illinois is winless against Ohio State in two meetings this season, while Nebraska was victorious over Minnesota in a four-game match played in Minneapolis Sept. 15.

"Unfortunately our strengths are similar," Schleuder said. "Against Colorado, we took advantage of their lack of size at the net which is something we won't be able to do against (Nebraska)."

When Nebraska defeated the Golden Gophers it was without senior middle blocker and All-America selection Virginia Stahr, who was nursing a sore shoulder at the time.

"She's probably still not totally healthy but Virginia at half speed is still better than most people in the country," Schleuder said. "Their outside hitters are really good. We had a hard time stopping Eileen

(Shannon) and Cris (Hall) when we played before."

Minnesota defeated Illinois -- one of three teams to beat Nebraska -- twice this season.

Schleuder said the Golden Gophers were successful over Illinois because of an effective serve that neutralized the Fighting Illini's power game. That game is supplied by middle blockers Nancy Brookhart and Laura Bush.

"I thought one of the significant reasons for our victories over Illinois was that we were able to take Brookhart and Bush out of the match with our serve," she said.

Sharon Oesterling leads Minnesota with 110 service aces, followed by Chris Schaefer with 66. As a team the Golden Gophers have 398 aces.

"She's (Oesterling) a very consistent server," Schleuder said. "She has more aces than service errors."

Minnesota has compiled a .244 hitting percentage in averaging 14.99 kills per game.

"I think we're a pretty solid team," Schleuder said. "We don't have any stars but we've been fairly balanced most of the season."

# Coach: Mental edge to be nonexistent

By Darran Fowler  
Senior Reporter

Neither Ohio State nor Illinois will have a psychological advantage Friday when the two teams meet for the third time this year in a semifinal Mideast Regional volleyball match at the NU Coliseum.

Illinois coach Mike Hebert said a mental edge will be nonexistent, even though Ohio State held the upper hand in the two previous meetings by recording a pair of five-game wins.

"I don't think that will play a role at all," Hebert said. "At this time of the season it usually comes down to defense and passing... who executes the best."

Because both teams compete in the Big Ten Conference and are familiar with one another, Hebert said his team will take the same approach as before.

"It really won't be any different other than we hope we have the chance to win," he said.

Ohio State will have a chance to beat Illinois at 5:30 p.m. A 7:30 p.m. match which pits Nebraska, the region's top seed, and No. 5 seed Minnesota will follow. Semifinal winners advance to Saturday's finals, which begin at 7:30 p.m.

The winner of Saturday's compe-

dition will advance to the Final Four in Honolulu.

Illinois, the region's No. 3 seed, has reached the Final Four the last two seasons while Ohio State, the No. 2 seed, is getting its first taste of NCAA postseason play this year.

Both teams come into the match off three-game wins in first-round regional play. Illinois beat Penn State, while Ohio State eliminated Iowa.

Hebert said fans don't have to worry about the Buckeyes' postseason inexperience. He said that when the two teams met in their second match, Ohio State marched onto the Illini's home floor and defeated them with the Big Ten championship at stake.

"Ohio State beat us in Kenny Gym in front of a sold-out crowd. If they can do that I don't think anyone has to worry about their experience," he said. "I don't think they'll be bothered by the pressure."

Illinois, one of the three teams to beat fourth-ranked Nebraska this season, is 26-7 with five of its losses against conference teams. The other two losses were to second-ranked UCLA.

The Illini's five-game victory over Nebraska was in the Coliseum.

"Our players like to play there," he said. "It reminds us of Kenny Gym in that it's an older building and the fans are real close to the court."

In addition to being beaten by Ohio State, which is 27-6, the Illini were defeated by Minnesota twice, and split a pair of matches with Iowa.

Illinois closed out the regular season losing three of its last four matches, including setbacks at Iowa and at Minnesota on the same day. Three days later, the Illini traveled to Stockton, Calif., where they suffered their second defeat to UCLA, but came back the following day to beat defending national champion Texas, which beat Nebraska this season, in three games.

Hebert said he doesn't put much emphasis on losing.

"We played poorly," he said, "but those things are going to happen."

Illinois is led offensively by junior middle blocker Laura Bush, who has 417 kills in posting a .368 hitting percentage. She averages 3.53 kills per game. Along with junior setter Barb Winsett, she leads the team in service aces with 46. Winsett averages 13.28 set assists a game.

As a team, the Illini are hitting .308 in averaging 16.44 kills a game.

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