

Coach Pettit picks UCLA as national favorite

By Darran Fowler
Senior Reporter

Nebraska volleyball coach Terry Pettit hesitated to pick a favorite to win this year's national championship.

But after giving it some thought, he chose UCLA.

And the Bruins are the Huskers' Final Four semifinal opponent Friday at 12:30 a.m. (CST) at the Neal Blaisdell Center in Honolulu. The match will be broadcast on KRNU (90.3 FM) beginning at 12:20 a.m.

The winner of the Nebraska-UCLA match advances to a national championship match against either Long Beach State or Texas-Arling-

ton. That match will be played Saturday at 1:30 a.m. (CST).

Pettit said he is impressed by UCLA.

"UCLA's been hot the last six to eight years, particularly the last two," Pettit said. "Their players match up with us really well, they're a good ball-handling team and they've played some tough teams."

Regardless of who is picked the favorite, the team that wins will be the one that executes best in a couple of areas, Pettit said.

"It'll come down to serving and passing, the same as it did in our match against Illinois," he said.

UCLA enters the championships ranked second nationally with a 30-2

record. Nebraska, ranked fourth, is 28-3.

The Bruins have reached the Final Four championship match three times, winning the title in 1984. Nebraska is making its second trip to the championships, losing to Pacific in the 1986 finals at Stockton, Calif.

The two teams' only meeting was in 1986 when the Huskers swept the Bruins.

UCLA advanced by beating Wyoming in the West regional, while Nebraska knocked out Illinois in the Midwest regional.

Texas-Arlington eliminated defending national champion Texas in the South regional, while Long Beach State prevented top-ranked

Hawaii from playing on its home floor by beating the Rainbow Wahines in the Northwest regional finals.

Husker senior Virginia Stahr said she was pleased when she first heard Hawaii had been upset.

"Actually, I was kind of glad to hear it," Stahr said. "Had we made it to the finals, I think we could have played well but it would have been tough to play them at home."

Playing in tropical Hawaii will not be a distraction, and will be no different than other road trips, she said.

"I'd rather play somewhere closer," she said. "I'm staying afterward with my parents, so my distractions will come after Saturday night."

"I don't think there will be any problems. When we go on a road trip all we see is the gym, the hotel and the road in between. This won't be any different. We're not going to vacation by any means."

Pettit said Hawaii is a good place to stage the Final Four.

"We have played tournaments in Hawaii in the past and they're very gracious," he said. "They're very supportive. It'll be a great event and our players won't be distracted."

No matter where it's played, Nebraska setter Val Novak said she likes her team's chances.

"I think we have the ability to take it all," she said. "We just have to be up for it emotionally."

Columnist says Bolli led volleyball team to Final Four

On Monday afternoon the Nebraska volleyball team had its last practice in the NU Coliseum.

On Tuesday it waved good-bye to the sub-zero weather, thanked the

Coliseum for its memories and headed for the sunsets of Hawaii and the Final Four. Ah, Hawaii . . . beaches, hula-hula skirts and a new home for a volcano named Becky Bolli.

That's right. The team should thank Bolli for its trip to Honolulu, because if it was not for her explosiveness, it might not be in the 50th state.

Bolli came into the first game Saturday night against Illinois with the Huskers down 14-12. The fans thought the first game was all but lost until Bolli broke Illinois' back.

She had a service ace, and then got two quick points, which changed the entire momentum of the evening. After that, the game and match was all but academic.

But don't tell Bolli that her exploding jump serve, which looks like a Dwight Gooden curve ball, saved the game. She will not hear it.

"Everybody on the team has a job to do and it must be done if we want to win," Bolli said. "Without each

member doing her job, there is no way we could have gotten this far."

When Bolli is not playing, she is standing on the sidelines, cheering her teammates on, many times just as loud as the crowd. When timeouts are called she always is the first one to meet her teammates on the floor.

One teammate was quoted as saying that "Becky is the most important player, on and off the court."

When Bolli heard that, she disagreed.

"There is not one person who is more important than another," she said. "It takes a team effort."

Saturday night, as Bolli stood on the sidelines cheering, she felt pressured and a bit nervous about doing her job. But when Coach Terry Pettit called for her services, she was as

steady as the rock of Gibraltar.

Coming into the game, Bolli said, she felt confident about winning, even though Illinois had beaten the Huskers earlier in the season.

"It wasn't like years past," she said. "I woke up Saturday morning and just knew we would beat them."

Bolli said her confidence was not newfound.

"That attitude did not come overnight. The team wrote out goals in early February," Bolli said, "and the one goal on everybody's list was to reach and win the National Championship."

The team practice Monday was, "relaxed but yet intense," Bolli said, as she helped take down the nets for the last time in the Coliseum.

"It was like every other practice,

but in a way it was sad. I will never get another chance to play in this building again."

Due to Phase III of the new recreation buildings, the Coliseum now will go under renovation, and the volleyball team must find a new home.

It is sad that volleyball fans will never get another chance to watch their team in the present-day Coliseum. They'll see the Huskers in a renovated Coliseum two years from now, but it will not be the same place where the last 12 Big Eight regular-season championships have been captured.

Let's just hope that when the nets go up next year, a National Championship banner goes up with them.

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Milhaven

Neumann says NU could blow away Cyclones

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Coach Tim Neumann said he believes his Nebraska wrestling team has the potential to "blow Iowa State out of the water" Saturday in Ames, Iowa, but 8,000 Cyclone fans will be anxious to try to sink the Cornhuskers.

Nebraska, which is ranked fourth by the Amateur Wrestling News, will have its hands full when it faces seventh-ranked Iowa State.

But not as full as in past years, Neumann said.

"Every one of their guys is a high-quality wrestler," Neumann said. "Our guys have all been there before, either wrestling or watching last year. They understand the level we have to go out with to beat Iowa State."

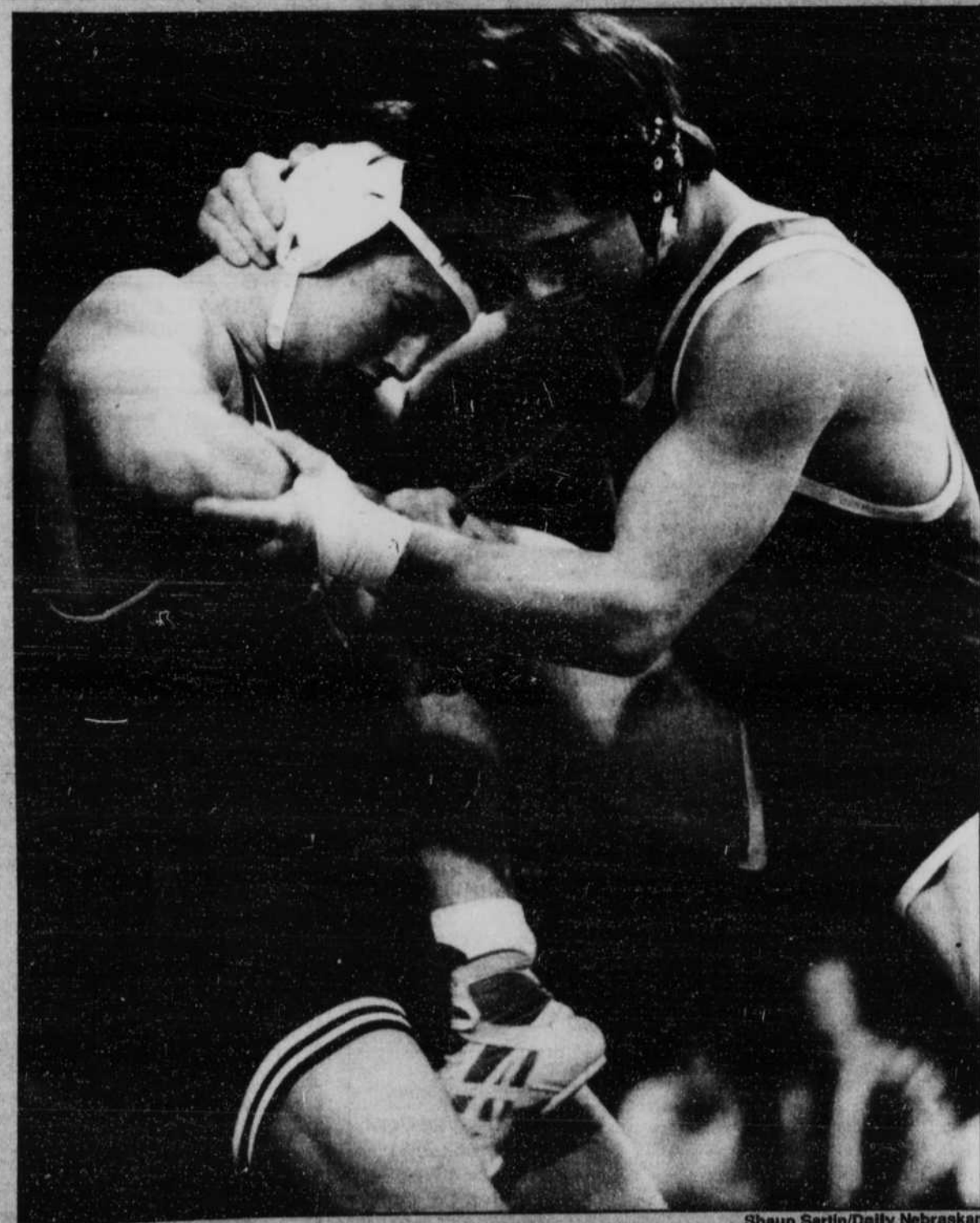
Neumann said he expects at least 8,000 fans at Hilton Coliseum for the dual. But he said the crowd will have little effect because the Huskers know what to expect.

Neumann said his team's dual victory against Iowa State last season also will be a help. The Huskers beat Iowa State for the first time in 38 years by posting a 19-14 victory.

"It took the monkey off our back," Neumann said. "It's like we're not climbing an insurmountable hill anymore. Our guys are looking at Iowa State as an equal now."

Nebraska is 2-0 in dual meets this season, beating Northern Illinois and Lock Haven last weekend at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Nebraska doesn't have another home meet until Jan. 20, against Notre Dame.

The dual begins at 7:30 p.m.



Nebraska's Dan Harrison suffers a blow to the groin while wrestling Northern Illinois' Jim Kossakowski.

Turnovers bring Huskers a loss

By Paul Domeier
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska women's basketball team got into the spirit of Christmas with Tuesday's game against Wisconsin, according to Coach Angela Beck.

"We just gave it away," she said.

Nebraska dropped a 77-67 decision to the Badgers, and Beck said the Cornhuskers gave the game away because they kept giving the ball away. Nebraska had 40 turnovers and allowed the Badgers 22 more field goal attempts.

Beck said Wisconsin keyed on starting point guard Kim Yancey, who couldn't handle the pressure she has in the past. Yancey and Kristi Dahn, the other starting guard, had 19 turnovers.

"(Dahn) was able to handle the pressure, but she started to take the game into her own hands," Beck said. "On the positive side, at least somebody did. On the negative side, we need a lot of continuity."

Beck said she was pleased with some aspects of the game, including the team's 17 of 18 free throw shooting. She added that she was glad her team has had balanced scoring after relying on Maurice Ivy and Amy Stephens in her first three seasons.

For the third straight game the Huskers had four or more players score in double figures. Dahn led with 18 points, while Sarah Muller had 16, Ann Halsne 12 and Karen Jennings 11.

Beck said the team will focus on rebounding, fewer turnovers and offensive efficiency while preparing for its next contest, a Friday night road game against Wichita State.

The Huskers are 3-2 at home and 1-2 on the road, but Beck said she isn't looking at those records now.

"I'm not putting pressure for road wins in December," she said. "We haven't been out of any road games."

Improvement is more important than wins right now, she said.

"We're building a program," she said. "What we need to be is competitive in the Big Eight."

Shaun Sartin/Daily Nebraskan