# Sophomore sets her sights on top spot

By Chris Hoplensperger Senior Reporter

Nebraska sophomore volleyball player Stephanie Thater has some big shoes to fill.

Thater played a supporting role as middle blocker behind 1989 senior starters Carla Baker and Virginia Stahr, who led the team to a runner-up finish at the NCAA Tournament.

Now that Baker, a three-year starter, and Stahr, a two-time All American and four-year starter, have graduated Thater is a top contender for a starting

"I feel pretty positive about it," Thater said. "I got to play more than the usual freshman with the benefit of having two seniors there. I trained under them last year, under both Carla and Virginia, and I wouldn't have had

it any other way. having Carla here is going to help." Thater said.

Baker is working with the team

this season as a graduate assistant.

The 6-foot-2-inch Thater played in 26 of the team's 33 matches finishing the year with 20 digs, 49 blocks and 55 kills on her way to a .311

hitting percentage. But what she lacks in actual playing experience she has made up for with practice, according to Nebraska coach Terry Pettit.

"I think she will have a good year,"
Pettit said. "She had the opportunity to play across from Carla and Virginia all last year in practice and physically she is stronger, quicker and bigger than any middle blocker we've ever had.

"I think while she didn't have as much playing time as (sophomore) Eileen (Shannon) and some of the starters, the playing time she did have was in critical situations, especially at the beginning of the season when Virginia could only play about half the time," he said.

Pettit cited the Huskers' regular season match at Minnesota, in which they came from behind to win in five games. Thater, playing for an injured Stahr, posted career bests in kills, attacks, block assists and digs in that

"Stephanie played in some very big matches," Pettit said. "We were down to Minnesota 2-0, and won the match with her blocking in the last three games.

Thater realizes the benefits of tutoring under Baker and Stahr, and said she hopes to put it to use this year

See THATER on 36

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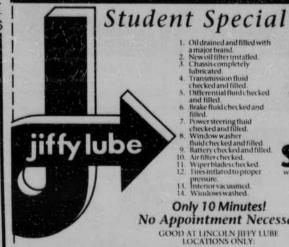
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Terry Pettit

during Nebraska volleyball practice.

Sophomore middle blocker Stephanie Thater hits one home

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.792. NU Record: 410-103,

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