

Volleyball win too easy to be a classic

The victory by the Nebraska volleyball team over Penn State on Saturday wasn't a classic.

A classic volleyball match has to go five games, one or two games ending 16-14 or 17-15, with each team winning at least eight points every game. Everything was in place for a legendary match through 3 1/2 games, then Penn State collapsed.

The match wasn't a classic because the home team won a berth in the Final Four too easily.

Darn. I can't imagine the Cornhusker fans were too disappointed. They at least got to see a classic performance by the Nebraska volleyball team.

The Huskers, those big, bad sluggers, won with defense, of all things. Time after time, Nebraska's players kept a Penn State spike in play, giving the Husker time bombs more ticks, more attacks.

Nebraska took the first and second games, lost the third and routed the Lady Lions in the fourth, Nikki Stricker serving the last nine points.

Stricker was serving during 25 points, 45 percent of Nebraska's total, with Janet Kruse, Stephanie Thater and Eileen Shannon the attackers.

But Stricker's success throughout the match

would have meant little except for one of coach Terry Pettit's backup lineups, a rotation that shows the depth and versatility of this Nebraska team and shows why the Huskers have as good a chance as any to win the NCAA championship Saturday night.

In this rotation, Linda Barsness, a senior outside hitter, comes in for Nikki Stricker, a



Paul
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freshman middle blocker. Cris Hall moves inside to take Stricker's spot.

Pettit didn't use that formation at all Friday, but Barsness did come in for a crucial rally in the third game against Wisconsin.

Pettit said Friday he had told Barsness that if she didn't play the rest of the season, the Huskers would have won each match 3-0 and would have been national champions.

"Anytime there's stress, she comes in," Pettit said.

There was stress in the first game against Penn State. Nebraska fell behind 12-4, and even after a six-point rally (four with Stricker

serving) Nebraska trailed 12-10.

In came Barsness.

Nebraska was a completely different team with that lineup. Not all that much better, but different.

Hall in the middle made some blocks that Stricker and most other players never dream of, hanging in the air for hours and hours to slow down attacks.

"Here's how important defense is," Pettit said. "Cris Hall hit .105 and yet she was a major factor in the match: blocking, defense, tips, whatever."

On the other hand, Penn State setter Michelle Jaworski occasionally lost Hall, and Nebraska was left defenseless on plays Stricker would have defended.

Without Hall's long arms up in the air, Becky Bolli was left naked to the world in the back row, staring up at Leanne Elwell's cannon.

Bolli, though, used all those plays as an opportunity to show off, diving for digs.

"What did Becky Bolli do tonight? How many saving plays on defense did she make?" Pettit asked rhetorically, the players in the room shaking their heads in unison. "There was no doubt in my mind Becky Bolli was going to play great tonight. You don't work that hard for four years and not play great in this situation."

Val Novak, Nebraska's career leader in service aces, serves in that rotation, and the Huskers strung together four points in Barsness' first four serves on the court.

In the second game, Barsness came in for a 3-2 swing. Penn State adjusted to this set as the match went on, but Nebraska already was in control.

In all, when Barsness was on the court Nebraska won 16 points or side-outs and lost 11.

"We played situational volleyball," Pettit said. "We couldn't have come in and had Linda Barsness play left front and Cris Hall move to middle blocker if we had not prepared for that all year long."

"You can't just say, in this situation we're going to do that. And you can't have Linda Barsness come in a play great unless she's played great all year long."

Pettit said the Huskers cannot just go out and swing at the ball, but must play defense and do the other things to win. Saturday night, the Huskers played their best defense of the year, just what was needed to get into the Final Four.

Maybe the NCAA final will be Nebraska over, UCLA 15-12, 14-16, 11-15, 15-9, 17-15. That would be a classic.

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NU coach pleased by team showing

By Nick Hytrek
Staff Reporter

Nebraska's wrestling team put a scare into the top-ranked, defending NCAA champion Oklahoma State Cowboys Saturday, coming up short in a 20-15 dual loss.

The Cowboys looked to have the match under control after the first six weight classes, leading 17-3. But three straight wins by the No. 5 Cornhuskers, including a pin by All-American Corey Olson at 177 pounds, narrowed the gap to 17-15.

Heavyweight Sonny Manley came close to giving the Huskers the upset, but he lost to Kirk Mammen 3-2 and Oklahoma State increased its series headlock on Nebraska to 27-1.

Despite the loss, Husker coach Tim Neumann's mood was upbeat.

"I think we've got the team back where we wanted," he said. "I feel great about the season now."

Nebraska competed without two-time All-American Jason Kelber at 126 pounds, who missed the dual because of illness.

Neumann said that at 2 p.m., he received a phone call from the University Health Center that Kelber had checked in.

He said Kelber was fine Friday and had made weight easily, the first time he had done that this season.

"We came 126 pounds away from winning the dual, but I don't want to dwell on that," Neumann said.

Nebraska jumped to a 3-0 lead when John Buxton scored a 9-5 decision over Nick Purler at 118 pounds. It was Purler's first loss of the season. Oklahoma State then scored 17 straight points by winning the next five matches, including a major decision by defending national champion and top-ranked Pat Smith over Jamie Penning at 158.

Though Penning lost to Smith, Neumann said that match was a turning point in the dual.

"Penning not getting beaten by a technical fall turned things around," he said. "He just kept fighting."

Nebraska's Scott Chenoweth, competing with a sore shoulder, won a 6-3 decision over Ray Brinzer at 167. Then came Olson, who provided a huge spark that ignited the Bob Devaney Sports Center crowd. Olson's pinning of Kyle Rackley in 2:56 gave him 24 pins in his 49 career wins.

"I told Corey that if he pinned him, we've got a chance to win the thing," Neumann said. "He looked at me and said 'Don't worry.'"

At 190, Nebraska's Chris Nelson and Randy Couture met again. Nel-



Jeff Willett/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska's John Buxton takes down Oklahoma State's Nick Purler on Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Buxton won the match 9-5.

son was 5-1 against Couture last season but had lost both matches to him this year.

This time it was Nelson. His 5-3 win cut Oklahoma State's lead to 17-15 and made the heavyweights the decisive match.

Manley took a 1-0 lead into the third period, but an escape and take-down by Mammen made it 3-1. Manley scored on an escape with 24 seconds left in the match to pull within one, but couldn't get the takedown in the closing seconds.

"I saw Buxton, Chenoweth, Olson and Nelson show emotion today," Neumann said. "They hadn't done that so far this year."

He said Nebraska did a good job of capitalizing on Oklahoma State er-

rors. "What I saw in the last four matches, I saw Oklahoma State protecting something and Nebraska going after it for the first time all year," he said, pointing out Nelson's win over Couture.

Though the Huskers fell short of their goal of winning, they did accomplish another one. Neumann said a goal set by the team was to narrow the gap between the two rivals.

"We definitely did (that)," he said. "When you beat three people that have beaten you earlier in the month, that's progress."

FINAL RESULTS:

Oklahoma State 20, Nebraska 15
118 - John Buxton, NU, dec. Nick

Purler, 9-5
126 - Tony Purler, OSU, major dec. Jeremie Eckley, 15-5
134 - Alan Fried, OSU, dec. Dave Droegemueller, 9-3
142 - Jodie Wilson, OSU, dec. Randy Street, 7-3
150 - Eric Wilson, OSU, dec. Todd Enger, 9-7
158 - Pat Smith, OSU, major dec. Jamie Penning, 20-9
167 - Scott Chenoweth, NU, dec. Ray Brinzer, 6-3
177 - Corey Olson, NU, pinned Kyle Rackley, 2:56
190 - Chris Nelson, NU, dec. Randy Couture, 5-3
Hwt - Kirk Mammen, OSU, dec. Sonny Manley, 3-2

Regional match to be televised

From Staff Reports

In case you missed Saturday's Nebraska-Penn State Midwest Regional Championship match that the Cornhuskers won to advance to the Final Four, it will be televised on NETV Tuesday at 8 p.m.

In addition, ESPN also will tape this Thursday's Nebraska-Pacific semifinal match for later broadcast, and the national championship match will be televised by CBS in January.

Tickets for the NCAA Volleyball Final Four are on sale at 9 a.m. today at the Athletic Ticket Office at the south stadium. The tickets will remain on sale until noon Tuesday. Cost of a two-day pass, if purchased prior to the tournament, is \$20.

The American Volleyball Coaches Association All-America team, player of the year, and coach of the year, will be announced Wednesday in Maryland.

NU runs away with victory over Toledo

By Todd Cooper
Staff Reporter

Nebraska and Toledo's game plans for Saturday's men's basketball called for the same thing — to run.

The only difference was that the Cornhuskers did it better. They did it much better.

The Huskers ran away with a 105-68 win in front of 10,102 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"We out-ran them, out-shot them, out-passed them. We out-did them," Husker junior forward Carl Hayes said.

The Huskers did it early, too. Nebraska went up 17-6 on a three-point bomb by Clifford Scales with 15:34 left in the first half. After Toledo center Fernando Righetto countered with his own trey, Nebraska redshirt freshman Eric Piatkowski — who scored a career high 21 points Saturday — accounted for seven of the Huskers' next 11 points to extend the margin to 26-11. The Huskers led 54-31 at halftime after shooting 58 percent from the field.

The game came two days after the