

## Pettit: NU has chance to earn national title

By John Adkisson  
Staff Reporter

For the Nebraska volleyball team, going to the Final Four is nothing new. But winning the national championship would be.

The Cornhuskers, 32-2 and ranked second nationally, make their third Final Four appearance in the last five years when they take on fifth-ranked Pacific tonight at 7:30 in College Park, Md. The match will be broadcast live by KFOR (1240 AM).

Last season, Nebraska advanced to the championship match before being dismantled by Long Beach State in straight games. The Huskers also were swept in the finals by Pacific in 1986.

Despite those poor performances in past championship matches, Husker coach Terry Pettit expects better results if Nebraska returns to the finals this year.

"If we can put ourselves in position for the final match, then we'll compete very hard in that match and play well," Pettit said.

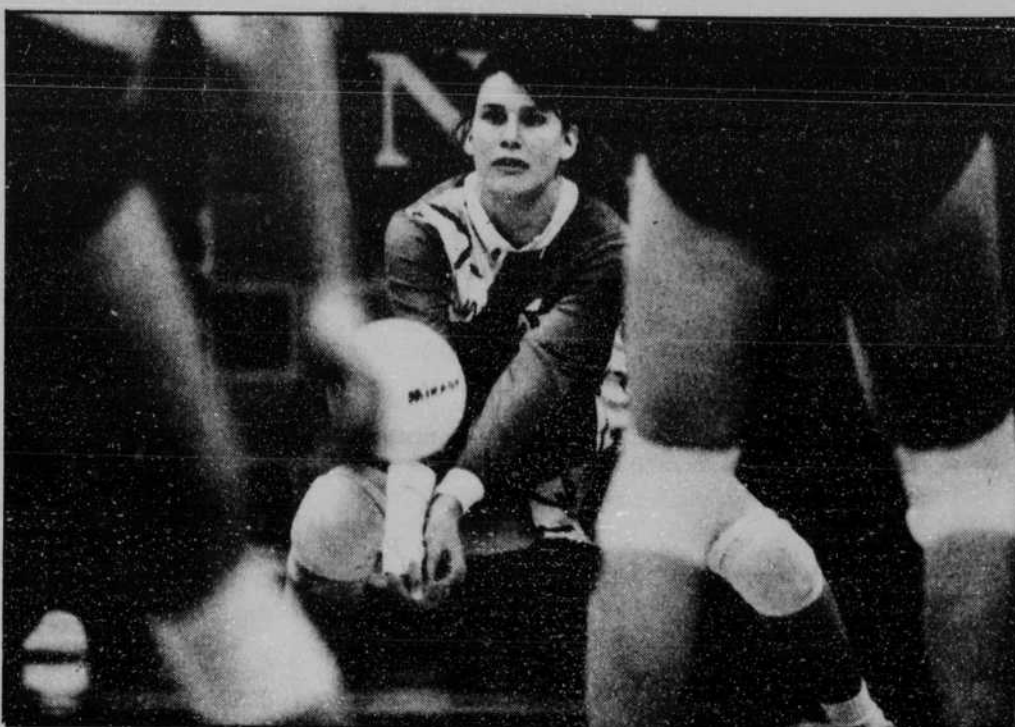
The Huskers have won 15 consecutive matches dating back to an Oct. 12 loss at Stanford. Last weekend, Nebraska won the Midwest Regional in Lincoln by turning away previously-undefeated Penn State 15-12, 16-14, 10-15, 15-5. The Huskers ended the Lady Lions' season at an impressive 44-1.

Pettit said if Nebraska duplicates Saturday's performance against Penn State this weekend, the Huskers have a good shot to win it all.

"If we play as well as we did Saturday night, we will put ourselves in the position to win a national championship," Pettit said. "And that's all you can ask for."

But before talking about a national championship, the Huskers first have to get by Pacific. The Tigers have won six matches against Top 10 teams this season, including a four-game victory over Long Beach State in the finals of the Northwest Regional.

The Tigers have no player under 6-foot in their starting lineup, and Pettit said that height



Nebraska's Cris Hall picks up a kill during the Huskers' match with Pittsburgh on Friday at the NU Coliseum. Nebraska is in the Final Four and plays Pacific tonight at 7:30.

David Fahleson/Daily Nebraskan

definitely is a concern.

"Pacific's the biggest team in the country,"

Pettit said. "They're a very complex team to prepare for, and we really have our work cut out for us in terms of that."

In a meeting between the two schools earlier this year at the Illini Invitational, Pacific handed the Huskers their first loss of the season by winning in four games.

"I didn't think either team played exceptionally well, but they certainly played better than we did," Pettit said. "They outplayed us, and they outpassed us."

Nebraska outside hitter Janet Kruse said defense was the difference.

"Our defense wasn't where it was supposed to be," Kruse said. "They're a quick team, and we just didn't play very well."

Pacific won back-to-back NCAA titles in 1985 and 1986, but hasn't returned to the Final Four since. Kruse said Nebraska, which returned 10 players from last year's Final Four team, has the edge in experience.

"When it comes to crunch time, we're really focused," Kruse said. "Being at the Final Four

last year certainly will help us."

In comparing this team with the team that made it to the 1989 Final Four, Pettit said the 1990 team is more consistent.

"I think the difference may be mentally this team has a better chance to play three great matches than last year's did," Pettit said.

Pettit also said this team plays well under pressure and on the big points. For this year's team the magic number is 12, he said.

"If we can get ourselves in position for 12 (points) on, we're an exceptional team," Pettit said. "Husker fans can sit on the edge of their seat until we get to 12 or 13, then they can think 'The Huskers are where they're comfortable'."

In the other semifinal, top-ranked and 34-1 UCLA plays South Regional champion Louisiana State. The Bruins, who are the favorites to win it all, lost early in the season to Nebraska in a five-game match at the Wahine Invitational in Honolulu.

Although the team isn't looking past Pacific to a possible matchup with UCLA, Pettit said, the Bruins are a team that Nebraska feels comfortable playing.

## Coaches: UCLA, Huskers favored in Final Four

By John Adkisson  
Staff Reporter

UCLA and Nebraska will be the favored teams in this weekend's volleyball Final Four, participating coaches said.

Louisiana State and Pacific round out the field for this year's national semifinals and finals to be played tonight and Saturday in College Park, Md.

Pacific's John Dunning, whose Tigers won national championships in 1985 and 1986, said the Bruins are the best team in the country.

"Out of the teams we've seen all year, UCLA by far played the best match against us," Dunning said. "I'd say they have to be the favorites this weekend."

But Dunning also added that Nebraska is a talented team that could beat UCLA.

"Nebraska's got the Final Four experience," Dunning said. "And they've got some girls who can really smash the ball."

Louisiana State coach Brad Luster coached the Tigers to a five-game upset over Texas in the finals of the South Regional. That match was played at Texas.

Now Luster has to prepare his team for UCLA on a neutral floor.

"They (UCLA) are obviously the team to beat," Luster said. "But Nebraska also has some great athletes that have been there a long time."

Although LSU is a decided underdog in tonight's match against the Bruins, Luster said the Tigers may surprise some people.

"My team is so loose," Luster said. "We're just going to the Final Four with the attitudes that we have nothing to lose."

UCLA coach Andy Banachowski said although his team is 34-1 and No. 1 in the nation, he doesn't see any of that as a clear edge.

"We've all got a good shot," Banachowski said. "Both we and Nebraska have some confidence going in, and that should help us a little bit."

The Bruins were upset in the Final Four semifinals last season by Nebraska, and the

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## Osborne needs to stop kicking his quarterback with motivational tactics

Shelled by injuries, interceptions, a loss and time on the bench, Mike Grant now is being shot in the back by his coach.

Grant is the only healthy quarterback on the Nebraska football team with enough talent and experience to lead the Cornhuskers on New Year's Day against second-ranked Georgia Tech. Yet Coach Tom Osborne hasn't committed to starting Grant.

Osborne declared the spot open after the Huskers were crushed 45-10 by Oklahoma on Nov. 23. He



Paul Domeier

has milked this for all possible good, scaring Grant into practicing hard. But if Osborne keeps this up, all he will be doing is undercutting an already shaken player.

After this season, Grant needs to be built up, not threatened with humiliation and replaced for a big game by Nebraska's third-string quarterback. Remember, Osborne once thought enough of Grant to make him the starter ahead of Mickey Joseph.

That was at the beginning of the season, when Grant led Nebraska to a 13-0 victory against Baylor.

Grant then missed two games with a knee strain. He returned to start against Oregon State and

Kansas State and, frankly, the offense looked terrible when he was in the game. Joseph, poor arm and all, became the starter.

With Joseph having earned the spot, Grant was free to retreat, lick his wounds and prepare for spring practice and a chance to reclaim the starting spot.

Of course, Joseph's career-threatening injury on the sixth play of the Oklahoma game forced Grant back onto the field. Grant came in to complete eight of 19 passes, throwing three interceptions and losing a fumble.

He didn't play well and should be replaced if Osborne had a Bruce Mathison, Travis Turner or Cleve Blakeman as an option. But he has third-string junior Tom Haase and fourth-string junior Keithen McCant.

If Osborne is using the ambiguity as a psychological ploy, secretly planning to present Grant as the starter in a week or two, he's wasting his time.

Osborne threatening to bring up a third-string player for the bowl game is like saying, "Well, if you don't shape up, maybe we just won't have a quarterback." Grant will have to use his imagination to take this threat seriously.

If Osborne is actually considering replacing Grant, he's making a mistake. Grant, despite all of his problems against Oklahoma, is the only player with the minimum amount of experience.

See GRANT on 14

## NU volleyball player credits team's chemistry for success

By John Adkisson  
Staff Reporter

If the Nebraska volleyball team is able to put it together and win a national championship this weekend, it may be a chemistry lesson to other teams across the country.

The Cornhuskers' roster includes two All-Americans and several all-conference selections. Senior setter Val Novak and junior outside hitter Janet Kruse were named to the 1989 and 1990 All-American first-team selections. Sophomore middle blocker Stephanie Thater was named second team this season. The team returned four starters from last year's team that lost in the NCAA championship final match.

Too many egos? No, that's not a problem.

As it has been all season, the team has the unity it takes to win a national championship, outside hitter Cris Hall said.

"We work together incredibly well," Hall said. "Instead of trying to work through our problems individually, the whole team has focused on picking up somebody who may be down."

The Huskers, who play Pacific at 7:30 tonight in the semifinals of the NCAA tournament's Final Four in College Park, Md., have lost only two matches all season.

A large part of Nebraska's success this season can be attributed to the team's chemistry, Hall said.

"We are all totally different people on the court," she said. "I know I'm not like anybody else out there. But on this team, we emphasize the positive aspects of each player, and it's

worked well."

Hall, a two-time All Big Eight pick, said personal egos and statistics are irrelevant. "When a team is fighting for a national championship, individual goals don't matter," Hall said. "And the people we have this year realize that."

Kruse said the team's cohesiveness showed Saturday when the Huskers rallied from a 12-4 deficit in the first game to beat Penn State 15-12. The Huskers went on to win that match in four games.

"Nobody got down on anybody else, and that's the way it has been for us all season," Kruse said.

Whenever strife surfaced, Kruse said, it was resolved quickly.

"Any time a problem comes up, if somebody's having trouble with somebody else, we've gotten it into the open right away and talked it out," Kruse said.

Kruse said Husker coach Terry Pettit stresses that a good atmosphere on the court is essential to a winning volleyball team.

"The whole coaching staff has an influence on how we play," Kruse said. "We can see how well they get along, and that positive relationship comes through in our play." Hall agreed.

"Coach Pettit is a very good person when it comes to getting a team to work well together," Hall said. "However far a team is down, if they're still touching and talking to one another positively, they're not going to lose."

Hall said players such as Becki Bolli, Debbie Brand and Linda Barsness have accepted their roles

## AVCA names Kruse, Novak All-Americans

From Staff Reports

Nebraska outside hitter Janet Kruse and setter Val Novak were chosen for the first team of All-American squad for the second time, the American Volleyball Coaches Association announced Wednesday.

The announcement was made at College Park, Md., site of this year's Final Four. Kruse, a junior, and Novak, a senior, also were named to the 12-team 1989 AVCA All-American team.

Cornhusker sophomore middle blocker Stephanie Thater was named to the 1990 second team.

The Nebraska team is in Maryland, where it will play Pacific tonight at 7:30 in the Final Four semifinals.

and "done the job" when called upon. "I admire them for what they do," Hall said. "It's tough to sit on the bench sometimes and watch, but they have never had any qualms about their roles."