

# NU volleyball aims to maintain upswing

By John Adkisson  
Staff Reporter

It's amazing what playing well can do.

Just look at the 12-3 Nebraska volleyball team, which is now riding a five-match winning streak after a Sunday thrashing of No. 15 Illinois.

According to Cornhusker Coach Terry Pettit, good play from his team is making everything, including practices, more fun.

"We had a real good practice today," Pettit said Monday. "Everybody was eager to come in and practice, and it's fun to work. We're definitely on an upswing."

The Huskers, at 3-0 and first place in the Big Eight, will try and continue that upswing tonight when they play 9-5 (2-1) Iowa State in a 7 p.m. match at the Physical Education Building in Ames, Iowa.

Pettit said better fundamentals are the reason for his team's improved play and the winning streak.

"We're communicating better and our movements are stronger," Pettit said.

Another reason for Nebraska's success is the increased confidence of setter Nikki Stricker, who racked up 35 set assists in the win over Illinois.

"We've worked extra with both Nikki and Christy Johnson in practice," Pettit said. "And I think now it's starting to pay off."

In Iowa State, Nebraska will see a team that is coming off of a heart-breaking defeat. Saturday against Kansas, the Cyclones and Jayhawks split the first four games before Kansas pulled out a 17-15 win in the fifth.

Cyclone Coach Vicki Mealer said her team is looking forward to playing Nebraska, but added that the Cornhuskers' reputation may hurt her



Kiley Timperley/DN

Nebraska's Nikki Stricker (No. 12) and Stephanie Thater go for the block earlier this season against UCLA. The two will help lead the Cornhuskers into action against Iowa State tonight in Ames, Iowa.

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## Redshirt freshman enjoying starting spot

By Todd Cooper  
Senior Reporter

Cornhusker offensive tackle Rob Zatechka didn't have time to get nervous for his first collegiate start against Arizona State Sept. 28.

"You really don't have too much time to get all worked up about it," Zatechka said. "You have so many things to worry about—technique, running the plays right."



Zatechka

"And, besides, I didn't find out until the night before."

But the redshirt freshman wasn't all that surprised when Husker offensive line coach Milt Tenopir told him he'd start against then-No. 24 Arizona State. Nebraska won the game 18-9.

"It was between Lance Lundberg and I," Zatechka said. "Either one of us could have started. We were just in the right place at the right time."

Nebraska's coaches decided to move Erik Wiegert from left tackle to left guard, where Wiegert started most of last year.

The coaches gave the nod to the 6-foot-5, 305-pound Zatechka, who said he hadn't played in a "pressure situation since high school."

"I was anxious to get out and see how well I could do against top-notch competition," Zatechka said. "That was definitely the fastest game I had ever been in."

"I just had to adjust to keeping up with everything."

Zatechka said he kept pace fairly well.

"Game situations are almost overwhelming," Zatechka said. "My performance was nothing to scream about. But I was a young guy in a pretty big situation."

Although starting as a freshman is a rarity at Nebraska, Zatechka said he didn't dwell on that "honor."

"It felt good to start," Zatechka said. "But I couldn't think about it. It doesn't matter what age you are, the coaches expect you to get the job done."

But when the season began, Zatechka said, he didn't expect to be starting.

"I thought I'd basically be a reserve this year," Zatechka said. "I thought I'd see a decent amount of playing time, but only if we were really ahead or really far behind."

Zatechka said he prefers his new role.

"I'm not sure if I'll start from now on," Zatechka said. "I'm one of only two left tackles so I should see a decent amount of playing time."

Zatechka said that and his 4.0 grade-point average could lead to some post-season honors, like Academic All-Big Eight.

"If I see enough playing time, I'd like to achieve that," Zatechka said. "It would be great to be in that position."

"But for now I'm just trying to take care of what will help this team win. That's the only pressure I feel."

## Fan chooses best baseball players

Now that the regular season has ended for major league baseball, the whole focus has changed for baseball fans.

Fans are no longer watching individual races in the divisions. Fans will now choose to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of Toronto, Minnesota, Pittsburgh and Atlanta.

I for one choose not to get involved in these debates until the World Series begins, and even then that isn't



Nick Hytrek

very interesting. It's a lot of wasted effort to analyze four teams and much easier to just wait until the field is cut in half.

Also, every TV sports program and newspaper puts out an overwhelming amount of information on the matchups, leaving little for fans to ponder. Fans have been force-fed all of this information so that the views aren't really their own. What people are really doing is just regurgitating the ramblings of some so-called expert.

The real debate at this time of the year, however, is not who's going to win the playoffs or the World Series. I prefer to discuss the Most Valuable Player awards.

This is the race that is much more intriguing since the choices aren't limited to just four.

I think it very unfortunate that many times players are selected as league MVP on the basis of statistics alone.

Sure, stats have a place when determining who the MVP should be.

Statistics indicate what kind of performance the player had during the season, but I don't think some people have ever contemplated what the words "Most Valuable Player" really mean. Valuable is the key word here.

How instrumental was the player to his team's success? And by success, I don't mean winning the pennant.

You must consider how big of a role a player had in maybe keeping his team from ending up 30 games out of first place and finishing 40 games under .500.

This is more important than someone who hits 50 home runs for the team that wins the pennant because mainly, one assumes that a pennant winner has talent across the lineup and that one player isn't so vital in that team's success.

Pitchers don't count either.

A really good year for a pitcher usually means winning 20 to 25 games. But an outstanding year from an everyday player means that this player will probably win at least 30 or 40 games with clutch hits or outstanding defense day in and day out. With a pitcher, this happens only every fourth or fifth day.

So that leaves us with the question of who should be the MVPs this season.

Let me provide my input into that debate.

First, for the American League.

It's hard to ignore the 44 homers by Detroit's Cecil Fielder and Oakland's Jose Canseco. Also, one must consider the fact that they were also the top two in the league in runs batted in.

But both played for teams that could overcome a lapse in these two players' performances.

In Detroit, there are players such as Mickey Tettleton and Rob Deer who both capable of picking up the

slack should Fielder have an off year.

In Oakland, there is enough talent on the team to make up for a poor year by Canseco. It was proved last year when Canseco sat out the first half of the season. The A's still were in first place at that time however, proving that they could win without him.

Cal Ripken Jr. in Baltimore also merits serious consideration. He can do it all.

Ripken rarely makes an error, can hit for both power and average, and he hasn't missed a game in years. He is unquestionably the leader of the Orioles.

What hurts Ripken is that he is expected to put out those numbers every year, and since he is so steady, he doesn't have the eye-catching season to win the MVP. Voters tend to overlook the steady player and opt for the man with the unusually large stats.

In my view, Ripken deserves the award, but not this season. Runner-up honors to Cal.

For MVP, I'll go out on a limb and give it to Paul Molitor of the Milwaukee Brewers.

Molitor quietly put together an impressive season for a team that really has no other All-Stars besides Robin Yount, who suffered through a bad year.

Molitor hit .325, led the league in runs and hits and tied for the lead in triples. If Molitor hadn't had this type of year, the Brewers wouldn't have finished in fourth place in the AL East. Without him, you would have seen Milwaukee right above Cleveland in the final standings.

In the National League, I think the race is much closer.

Tony Gwynn of San Diego comes to mind, but like Ripken, he produced what everyone has come to expect of him.

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