

NU wrestling team returns 4 starters

By Chuck Green
Senior Editor

Nebraska's wrestling team will be starting this season right where it left off last year — in 10th place.

The Cornhuskers, returning only three of their 10 starters from last season, were picked No. 10 in Amateur Wrestling News' preseason poll.

The ranking was a surprise to Nebraska Coach Tim Neumann. "It's real unusual for us," Neumann said. "When you're starting a program from scratch, you have a lot of younger, inexperienced guys who get beat a lot. We might face that at the beginning of the season."



The Huskers return three starters — John Buxton, who will move up to the 126-pound weight class, Corey Olson at 177 and Chris Nelson at 190 — who were All-American or All-Big Eight finishers last season. Other than those three, Neumann said, Nebraska has wrestlers "who are capable, but just haven't done it at this level yet."

"I would have to say that our guys' strength is that they recognize their weaknesses," he said. "They're out to prove something this year, not protect something."

Neumann said the Husker roster is full of redshirts and junior college transfers "who are ready to make a big jump."

One junior college transfer who figures prominently in Nebraska's starting lineup plans, Neumann said, is Rulon Gardner, who won the junior college heavyweight championship last season at Ricks Community College in Rexburg, Ind.

"He's beaten several quality Division I opponents in junior college,"

Neumann said, "and hopefully he can keep that up here. I anticipate great things from him."

One of the biggest jobs facing Neumann and assistant coach Mark Perry this season is replacing graduated 126-pound national champion Jason Kelber. Buxton, who wrestled at 118 pounds last season, will move up one weight class to replace him.

Buxton's twin Jason will be the starter at 118.

At 134, Neumann said freshmen Tony Geiger and Joe Stevens will compete for the top spot, and starters in the middle weights — 142, 150 and 158 — will be freshmen and junior college transfers.

At 167, Tommy Robbins, another returner from last season, will battle Dan Harrison for starting honors. Neumann said Robbins has improved significantly since last season.

"He's made the biggest improvement on the team," Neumann said. "On the way home from nationals last season (in Iowa City, Iowa), he told me he was tired of being just an average wrestler. He dedicated his summer to improving."

Olson, who earned All-America honors last year, and Nelson won't need as much improvement. Neumann is looking for them to provide leadership for the younger wrestlers this season.

"They've both taken a verbal leadership role in practice," Neumann said. "If they sense that practice is a little stale, they'll do what they need to do to get the others going. If they sense attitude problem in someone, they either talk to them themselves or tell me, and I take care of it."

"They know what they're doing, and know what needs to get done."

Last season, one of Neumann's biggest challenges was to keep his starting lineup from changing every week. During one stretch last Febru-

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NEBRASKA WRESTLING

ROSTER & SCHEDULE

The Team

Michael Burns	Fr.	142	LaCrescent, Minn.
Jason Buxton	Jr.	118	Spearfish, S.D.
John Buxton	Jr.	126	Spearfish, S.D.
Richard Coltvet	Jr.	150	Eagle Grove, Iowa
Scott Dobson	Fr.	126	Alliance
Rulon Gardner	Jr.	Hwt.	Afton, Wyo.
Tony Geiger	Fr.	134	Sidney
Peter Gomez	Fr.	134	Cozad
Dan Harrison	So.	167	Plymouth
John Hiffernan	Jr.	142	Council Bluffs, Iowa
Jason Hutson	Fr.	142	Wahoo
Eric Justus	Fr.	150	Cedar Grove, Wis.
Kelvin Krietman	Sr.	126	North Bend
Matt Lindland	Jr.	158	Oregon City, Ore.
Jason Lockett	Fr.	142	Cedar Falls, Iowa
Chad Nelson	Fr.	167	Stewartville, Minn.
Chris Nelson	Sr.	190	LeRoy, Minn.
Corey Olson	Jr.	177	Rochester, Minn.
Ovanes Oganislan	Fr.	190	Moscow, USSR
Jamie Penning	So.	158	Waverly, Iowa
David Pope	Jr.	150	Amery, Wis.
Tommy Robbins	Jr.	167	Tulsa, Okla.
James Schmid	Fr.	142	Columbus
Joe Stephens	Fr.	134	Centerville, Iowa
Russell Vering	Jr.	Hwt.	Howells

Head coach:

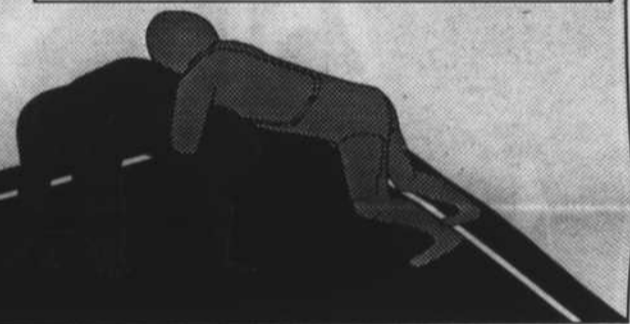
Tim Neumann (sixth year, 69-28-4)

Assistant coaches:

Mark Perry,
Mark Cody

Meets

Nov. 23	all day	— Omaha Open, Omaha
Dec. 6-7	all day	— Las Vegas Invitational, Las Vegas, Nev.
12	7:30 p.m.	— Iowa State, Ames, Iowa
28-29	all day	— Midwest Classic, Des Moines
Jan. 4	7:30 p.m.	— Indiana, Bloomington, Ind.
	7:30 p.m.	— Purdue, Bloomington, Ind.
11	7:30 p.m.	— Notre Dame, Lincoln
18	2 p.m.	— Clemson, Atlanta
	7 p.m.	— Tennessee-Chattanooga, Atlanta
24	7:30 p.m.	— Oklahoma State, Stillwater, Okla.
Feb. 2	7:30 p.m.	— Missouri, Lincoln
8-9	all day	— National Duals, Ann Arbor, Mich.
15	7:30 p.m.	— Oklahoma, Lincoln
19	7:30 p.m.	— Minnesota, Minneapolis
22	5 p.m.	— Northern Iowa, Lincoln
26	7:30 p.m.	— Wyoming, Laramie, Wyo.
March 7	11 a.m.	— Big Eight Championships, Stillwater, Okla.
19-21	all day	— NCAA Championships, Oklahoma City, Okla.



Amie DeFrain/DN

9 lucky number

Coach hopes his substitution pattern pays off

By John Adkisson
Staff Reporter

Nebraska volleyball coach Terry Pettit is getting particular.

Pettit is hoping that his formula of using particular players in particular roles in particular matches pays off in one thing in particular — a national championship.

"I think you have to have nine good players," Pettit said. "Nine people that you have ready to play in certain situations. You can't do it with just six."

The Cornhuskers' starting lineup of Janet Kruse, Cris Hall, Stephanie Thater, Eileen Shannon, Kim Tonni-ges and Nikki Stricker has been intact all season. As a unit, those six have started the past 14 matches, all Nebraska victories.

But it's the backups and the roles they will play in next month's NCAA tournament that Pettit has been honing in recent conference matches.

Pettit said his bench — which includes junior Debbie Brand, sophomore Laura Luther and freshmen Christy Johnson and Peggy Meyer — had steadily improved with his team throughout the season.

"Things are happening when they come in," he said. "They're starting not to just hold around, but they're giving us something when they come in."

Luther, a 6-foot outside hitter from Grand Island, started earlier this year while Kruse returned an ankle injury. Since Kruse's return, Luther's playing time has decreased considerably.

Luther said she doesn't mind and added that her role now might be even

more important than that of a starter.

"When I go in in crucial situations, I need to go in and lift the team and make plays that aren't going to be made when I'm not on the court," Luther said.

Luther said she and her teammates had accepted their roles and were eager to get into big matches.

"You just have to be prepared in all areas," she said. "I think it makes me keep in the game a lot more."

Pettit said Luther had picked up her play as of late.

"Laura's playing real well," he said. "She's serving tough, and I think her level of play is right with the starters."

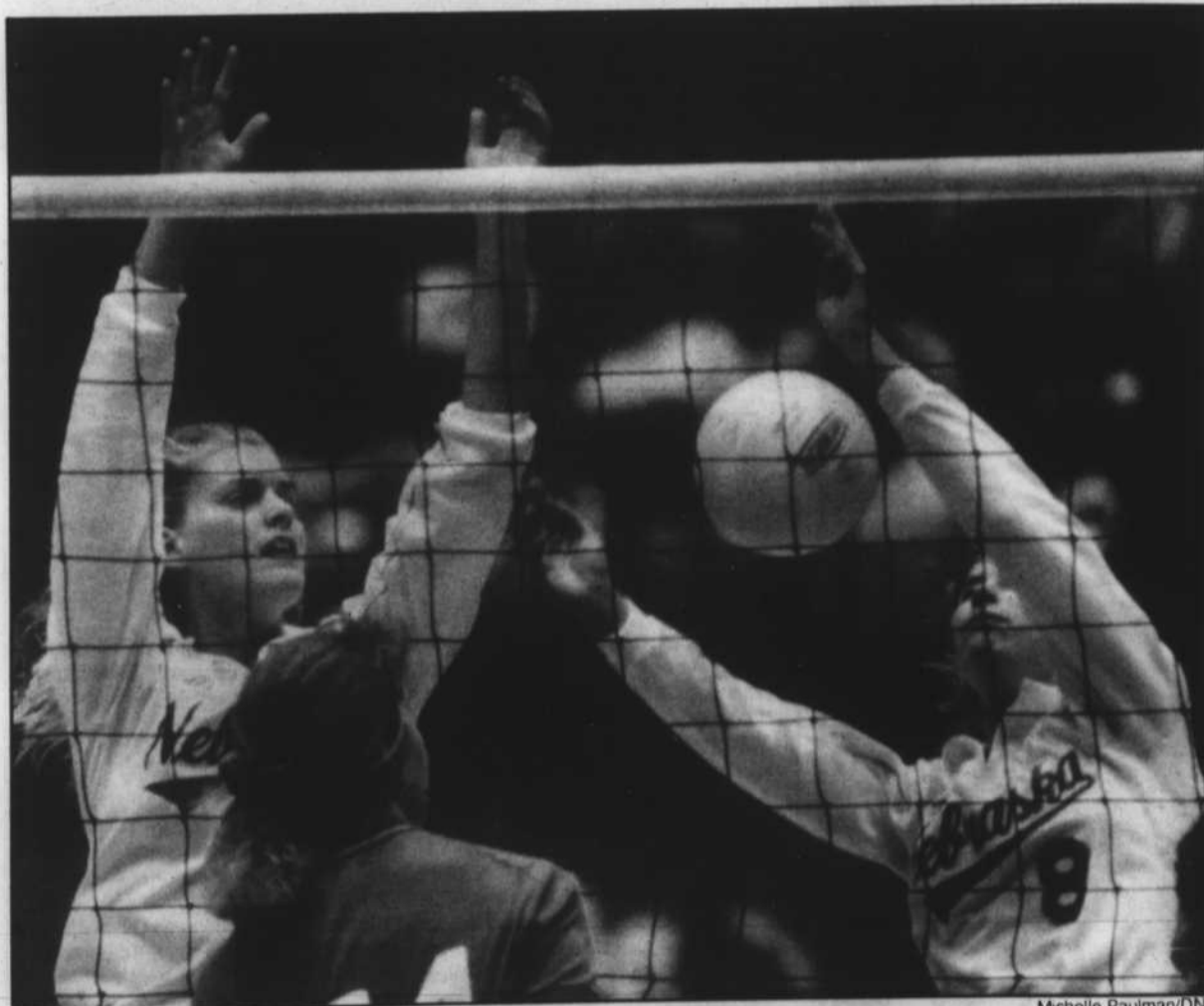
Brand, a 5-foot-9 junior outside hitter from Adelaide, Australia, has been used primarily this season in back-row defensive situations.

Pettit said Brand, who already has been to two Final Fours with Nebraska, would play an integral part in his team's drive toward a third straight national semifinal.

"Debbie's one of our better defensive players," Pettit said. "She can make two or three digs in rallies. The faster the play, the better she plays."

Johnson and Meyer have been used in vastly different situations this season, with Johnson mostly used in serving situations and Meyer used in the front row to spell one of the starters.

In addition, Pettit has two jump-serving specialists in freshmen Kelly Aspergren and Tami Thompson. In Friday's match against Missouri, Thompson served the last three points of the match, the last two on aces.



Michelle Paulman/DN

Nebraska's Debbie Brand (8) and Stephanie Thater go for the block against Iowa State earlier this season. Cornhusker Coach Terry Pettit said he has been trying to get reserves Brand, Laura Luther and Christy Johnson into the past few matches to prepare them for to play key situations the rest of the season.