

Husker coach downplays Pacific showdown

By John Adkisson
Staff Reporter

A year ago, Pacific smashed the Nebraska volleyball team's national championship dreams. Now comes Nebraska-Pacific 1991,

and a silent buildup to the showdown in matches tonight and Saturday in Stockton, Calif.

Pacific was responsible for two of the Cornhuskers' three losses last year, including a four-game semifinal win that sent Nebraska packing from the

NCAA Final Four.

But Nebraska Coach Terry Pettit isn't talking payback this season.

"The key is to be patient and poised, not revenge," Pettit said. "You can't afford to be too emotional about it, because it's a skill sport. If you get

too emotional, you'll be undisciplined."

Pacific, at 20-4 overall and ranked third nationally by the NCAA this season, lost in last year's national championship match to UCLA. Three of the Tigers' losses this year have come to No. 1 Stanford, No. 2 Long Beach State and No. 4 Hawaii.

Nebraska, ranked eighth, is 22-3 and riding a 15-match winning streak. In that span, the Huskers have won 45 of 47 games.

Pettit said that the matches will help him gauge his team entering next month's NCAA Tournament.

"It allows us to play a Final Four opponent and learn from it without being in the Final Four," he said. "Beyond winning, it will give us the opportunity to evaluate what things we handle well against a quality opponent, and what things we don't."

One key ingredient missing from last year's Pacific-Nebraska matchup is graduated Tiger outside hitter Krissy Fifer, who pounded 21 kills in the Final Four victory last season.

Another Pacific All-American, setter Melanie Beckenhauer, returns from last year's team and is the "go-to person" in the Tiger offense, according to Coach John Dunning.

"I don't think there's any doubt that Melanie is the best setter in the country," Dunning said. "We've played some teams with awfully good setters, and Melanie seems to be a whole cut above the rest."

Dunning, in his sixth year at Pacific, is 4-1 against Pettit's Nebraska teams. The Tigers also own a 7-1 advantage in the all-time series, the best record of any team against the Huskers.

Pacific's dominance of Nebraska,

Dunning said, can be attributed to luck.

"I don't know why," he said. "But every time we played them, they had very, very good teams. We've just happened to score a few more points that they have."

Dunning said he expects the same thing from Nebraska that he has been seeing for the past few years.

"There's no reason to think they will be a whole lot different," he said. "They have a new setter, but I think the system they run allows (setter) Nikki (Stricker) to step in like that without Nebraska missing much."

Dunning said that for the Tigers to beat Nebraska, his team needs to serve and pass well.

"We're a really good serving team, and that's been our strength all year," he said. "And I don't think that it's any secret to Nebraska that we plan to serve them tough."

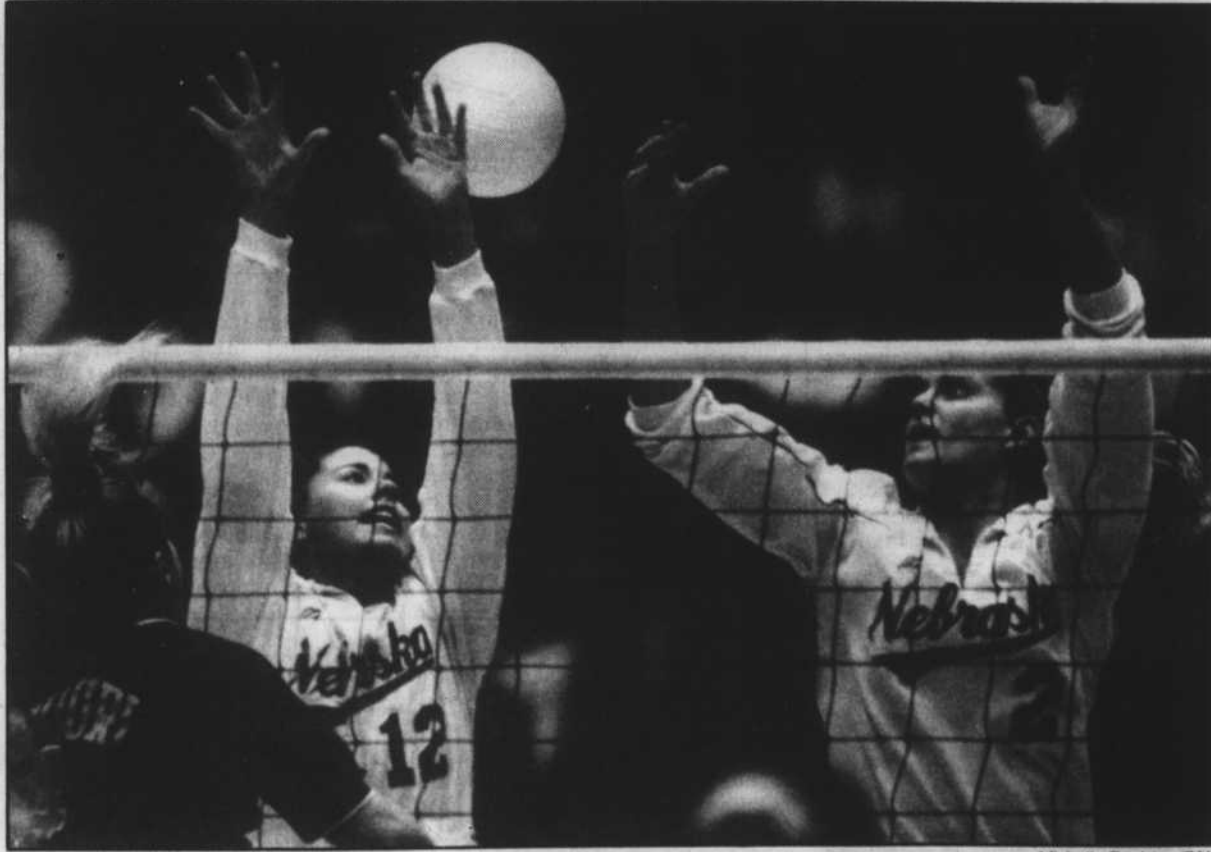
Pettit agreed, but said his team has not worked on any particular service receptions this week in practice.

"They serve a tough ball and they make very few errors," he said. "Every team works on that, but we haven't worked on receiving any particular serves from Pacific."

Another advantage for Pacific is the friendly confines of the 6,000-seat Spanos Center, the Tigers' home court. With a home average of nearly 2,500 fans per match, Pacific ranks in the top five nationally in attendance.

Nonetheless, Pettit said the Pacific fans are not "rabid."

"It's a very pleasant place to play," Pettit said. "I think the fans will be more interested in seeing what type of team we are this year than they will be anything else."



Michelle Paulman/DN

Nebraska's Nikki Stricker (12) and Stephanie Thater miss a block against Missouri on Nov. 15. The Cornhuskers will travel to Stockton, Calif., this weekend to play Pacific.

NU basketball squads to open seasons

Nebraska to use new equation Husker coach says team special

By Erik Unger
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska men's basketball team starts the season with three new faces and one new attitude.

The Cornhuskers' three newcomers will experience first game jitters against Sam Houston State at 7:35 p.m. Saturday at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, Coach Danny Nee said.

But he said all three — junior college transfers Michael Hughes and Derrick Chandler and Prop 48 casualty Jamar Johnson — are capable of having big nights scoring.

Chandler averaged 18.9 points per game in junior college last year, and Hughes averaged 18.9 ppg.

"(For) the three newest players, their progress has been really steady and solid, and those three guys are going to be an important part of our program," Nee said. "How quick and how fast they mature and get to the level of Big Eight competition is how good we will be."

The Huskers' also have a new attitude following last year's 26-8 finish, the most wins in school history.

"A year ago it was a group of men, who, generally speaking, had the bitter taste of losing, and there was a certain pride and effort for a senior dominated team . . . a commitment, 'Hey, we are going to get it done,'" Nee said. "This year's team doesn't have that."

"It is a different type of team, and it will develop its own personality as we go along, but it doesn't have that motive."

But Nee also said the team doesn't yet understand what it takes to win.

The learning process will begin this weekend with the game against Sam Houston State and a game Monday against Southern Cal. The game against Southern Cal also will start at 7:35 p.m. at the Sports Center.

Nee said he is impressed with both teams. He said Sam Houston State's strength is speed.

"(The Bearcats) are a small quick team,"

See MENon 8

By Chris Hopfensperger
Senior Editor

Nebraska women's basketball coach Angela Beck sees something special in this year's team.

The players are determined to win, she said. They're dedicated to the game.

"Of course we haven't lost any games yet," Beck said, "so it's easy to talk. But good things are going to happen to the Nebraska basketball team."

Beck's players get their first chance of the season to stand behind their coaches' hopes tonight. Nebraska will play host to Creighton at the Bob Devaney Sports Center at 7:05 p.m.

Offensively, Beck said, Nebraska has an edge over the Bluejays.

"I think we can score on Creighton," she said. "I don't think they can match up with us at all."

Nebraska's inside game, led by Karen Jennings, will key the Huskers, Beck said.

Jennings, who averaged 20.5 points and 8.9 rebounds per game last year, scored 58 points

in Nebraska's two exhibition games. The 6-foot-1 junior will match up with Creighton's Shannon Struby. Struby, a sophomore, scored 16.1 points and grabbed 8.4 rebounds a game last season.

"I don't know how they can compete inside," Beck said. "Jennings has more speed than Struby. They are going to have match-up problems, especially if they go man-to-man."

But the Huskers may have problems of their own against the outside-shooting Bluejays. Kathy Halligan, one of the Bluejays' three-point specialists, averaged 20.3 points a game.

Nebraska shot only 99 three-pointers last season, converting 25.

Creighton is a lot like the Huskers, Beck said. Both teams like to run, but the Bluejays' bench isn't as deep as Nebraska's.

Yet the Husker bench may not be as deep as Beck would like.

Sophomore Meggan Yedsena sprained her ankle in the first half of Nebraska's 98-85 exhibition loss to Athletes in Action. Yedsena

See WOMENon 8

NU men's probable starters

NU vs. Sam Houston State Fri. Nov. 23, 7:35 p.m. Bob Devaney Sports Center.



Nebraska			Sam Houston St.		
	PPG	RPG		PPG	RPG
G 52 Eric Platkowski	6-6	So. 10.9 3.7	G 10 Ray Johnson	5-8	Jr. 12.3 3.3
F 23 Michael Hughes	6-7	Jr. *	F 32 Joel Donaldson	6-3	Jr. 8.7 4.0
C 34 Derrick Chandler	6-10	Jr. *	C 33 James Sears	6-5	Jr. 9.4 5.5
F 21 Carl Hayes	6-9	Sr. 13.5 5.3	F 22 Giabbarra Outten	6-3	Sr. 16.6 7.9
G 12 Jamar Johnson	5-11	So. *	G 25 Roosevelt Moore	5-10	So. 7.0 2.0

Brian Shellito/DN

NU woman's probable starters

NU vs. Creighton Fri. Nov. 22, 7 p.m. Bob Devaney Sports Center.



Nebraska			Creighton		
	PPG	RPG		PPG	RPG
G 24 Meggan Yedsena	5-8	So. 7.3 3.1	G 20 Mindy Hendrickson	5-4	Jr. 2.8 1.0
F 42 Sue Hesch	6-1	Sr. 8.0 5.8	F 30 Kathy Halligan	5-10	Sr. 20.3 7.9
C 51 Karen Jennings	6-2	Jr. 20.5 8.9	C 44 Kris Kugel	6-2	So. 3.8 2.4
F 22 Rissa Taylor	6-1	Jr. 4.1 3.0	F 43 Shannon Struby	6-1	So. 16.1 8.4
G 25 Sara Offringa	5-10	Jr. 2.4 0.8	G 22 Melissa Sanford	5-10	Sr. 15.0 4.8

Brian Shellito/DN