

# Different shade of red reaches NCAA Final Four

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Senior Editor

Throw out Nebraska, but throw a splash of red into this season's NCAA Volleyball Final Four.

Ohio State combined inspired, aggressive, defensive play with just enough offense Saturday and defeated No. 7 Nebraska 9-15, 15-9, 17-16, 15-7 in the Midwest Regional final and earned a ticket to this weekend's national semifinal in Los Angeles.

The Cornhusker loss, before an estimated 4,000 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center, knocked Nebraska out of the Final Four for the first time since 1988 and left the Huskers with a 27-5 final record.

Nebraska Coach Terry Pettit said that despite the upset loss, he was pleased with the way his team set its goals high throughout the season.

"Rather than choosing to be just a good team, they stated to themselves that the goal was to try and win a national championship," Pettit said. "That makes tonight a little more painful, but it also got us to tonight as an exceptional team."

Ohio State Coach Jim Stone said the win had capped several years of effort by his team to break into the nation's upper echelon of volleyball teams.

"For so many years, we were taking a back seat to teams in our conference, in our region that we thought we were as good as," Stone said. "This is good for our program, but more than that, it's good for our players."

About the only good thing for Nebraska was the exceptional play of tri-captain Cris Hall. The senior from Chanute, Kan., unloaded for a career-high 30 kills in the match and recorded a .349 hitting percentage.

"I thought Cris played tonight really like she's been playing the last six weeks," Pettit said. "She's a dominant player."

But even Hall was not enough to pull off what would have been one of Nebraska's best comebacks ever.

With the match tied at one game apiece, Ohio State sprinted to a 14-6 lead in the third game. Then Hall and the Huskers came back, scoring slowly and holding Ohio State without a point on the Buckeyes' next 14 serves.

The Huskers pulled into a 14-14 tie when Hall slammed a kill. Then Nebraska went ahead 15-14 four serves later when Janet Kruse and Stephanie Thater blocked a kill attempt by the Buckeyes' Julie Chellevoid.

The rally fell short, however, when Nebraska was unable to convert on five consecutive game points. Kills by Ohio State's Leisa Wissler and Erika Schlitz gave the Buckeyes a 16-15 lead before a kill by Nebraska's Eileen Shannon tied the game at 16.

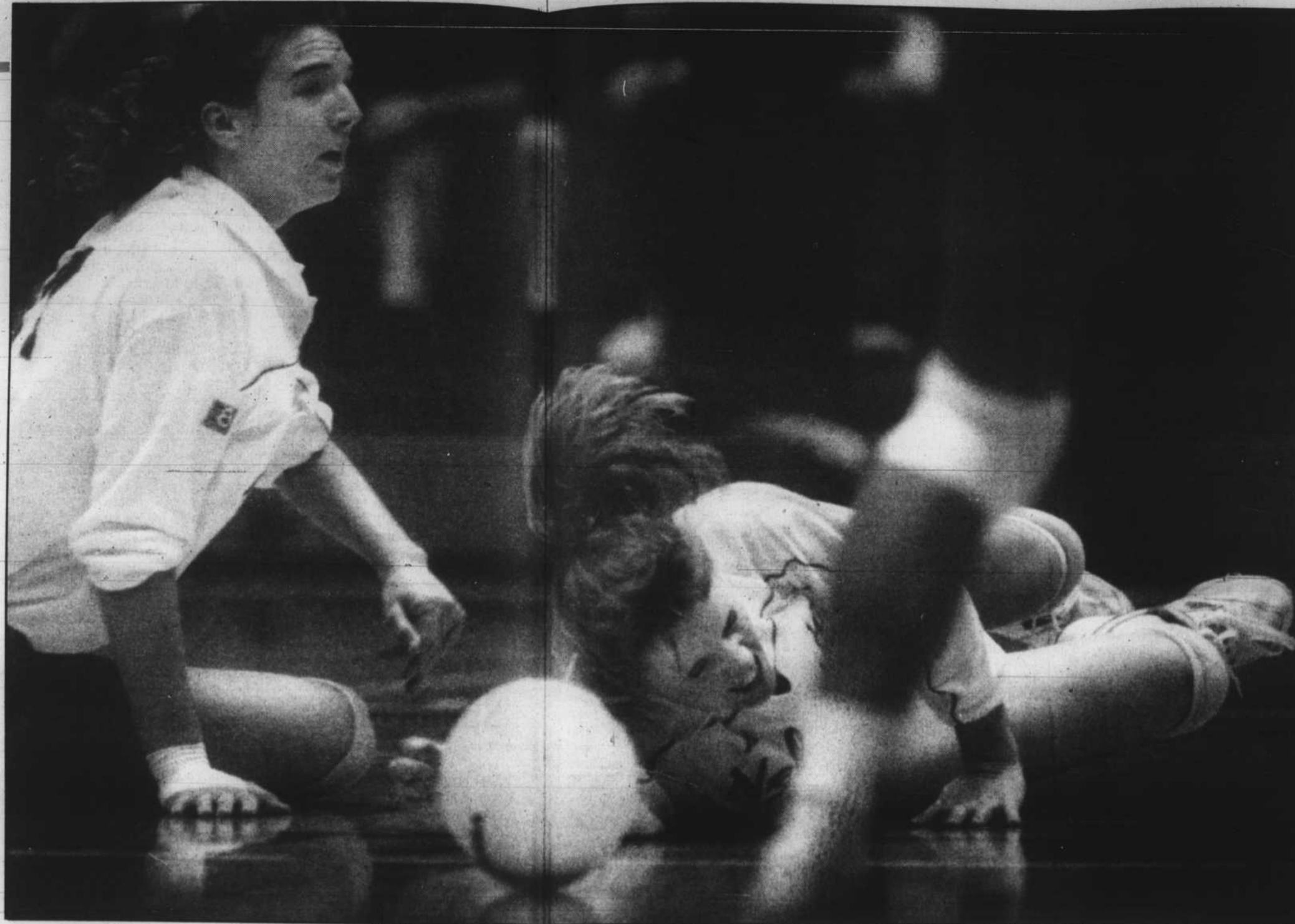
Ohio State then got the serve back, and a Chellevoid kill off of the hands of Nebraska's Kim Tonniges sailed beyond the baseline, giving the Buckeyes a 17-16 win, under a NCAA rule implemented this year which puts a 17-point cap on the first four games.

Hall said the Huskers' rally, despite its outcome, took heart.

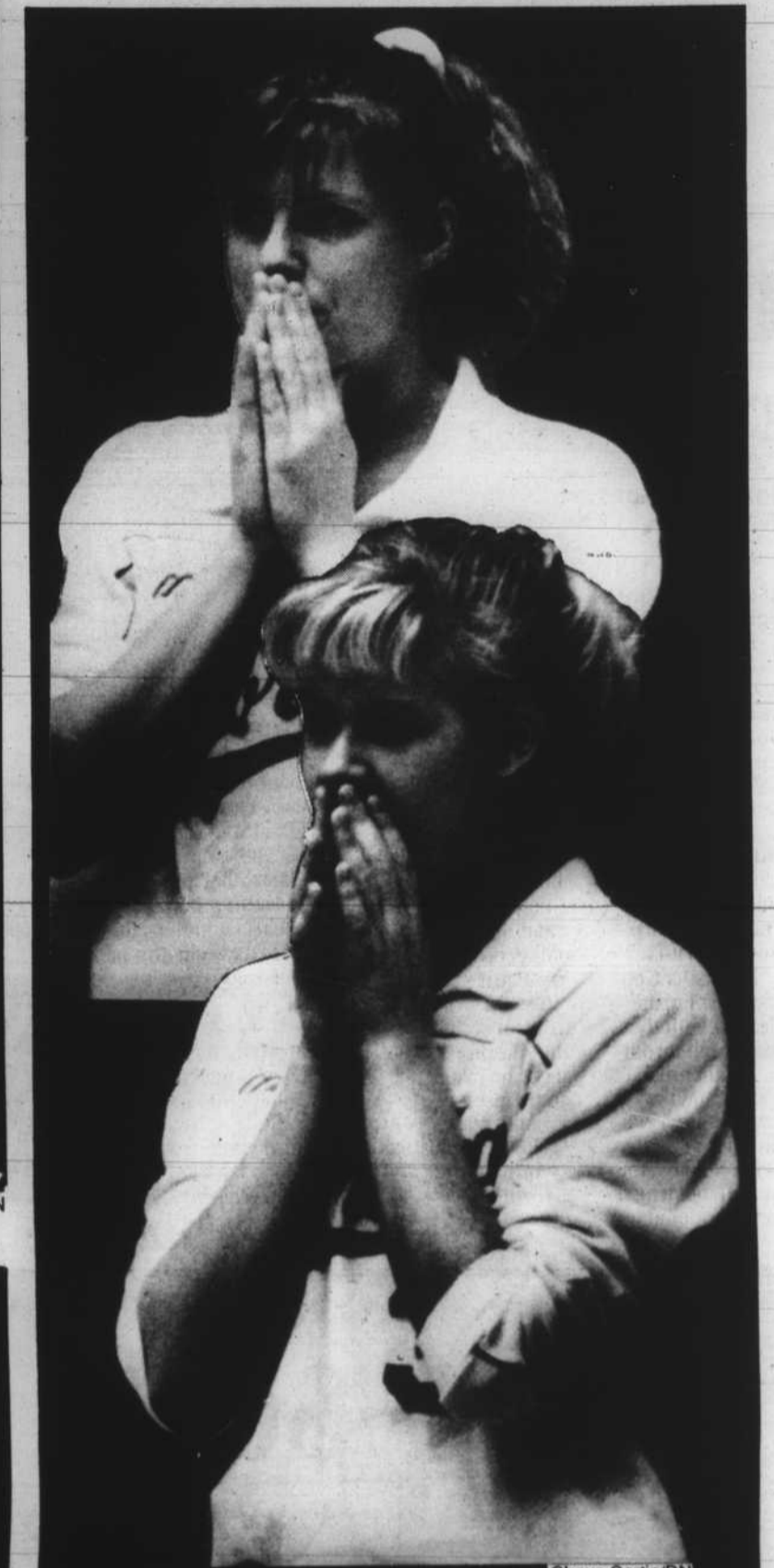
"Not too many teams can come back from a 14-6 deficit," Hall said. "I think that we showed a lot of poise, and showed that we are one of the top teams in the country."

Pettit said the turning point of the match had not been the emotional

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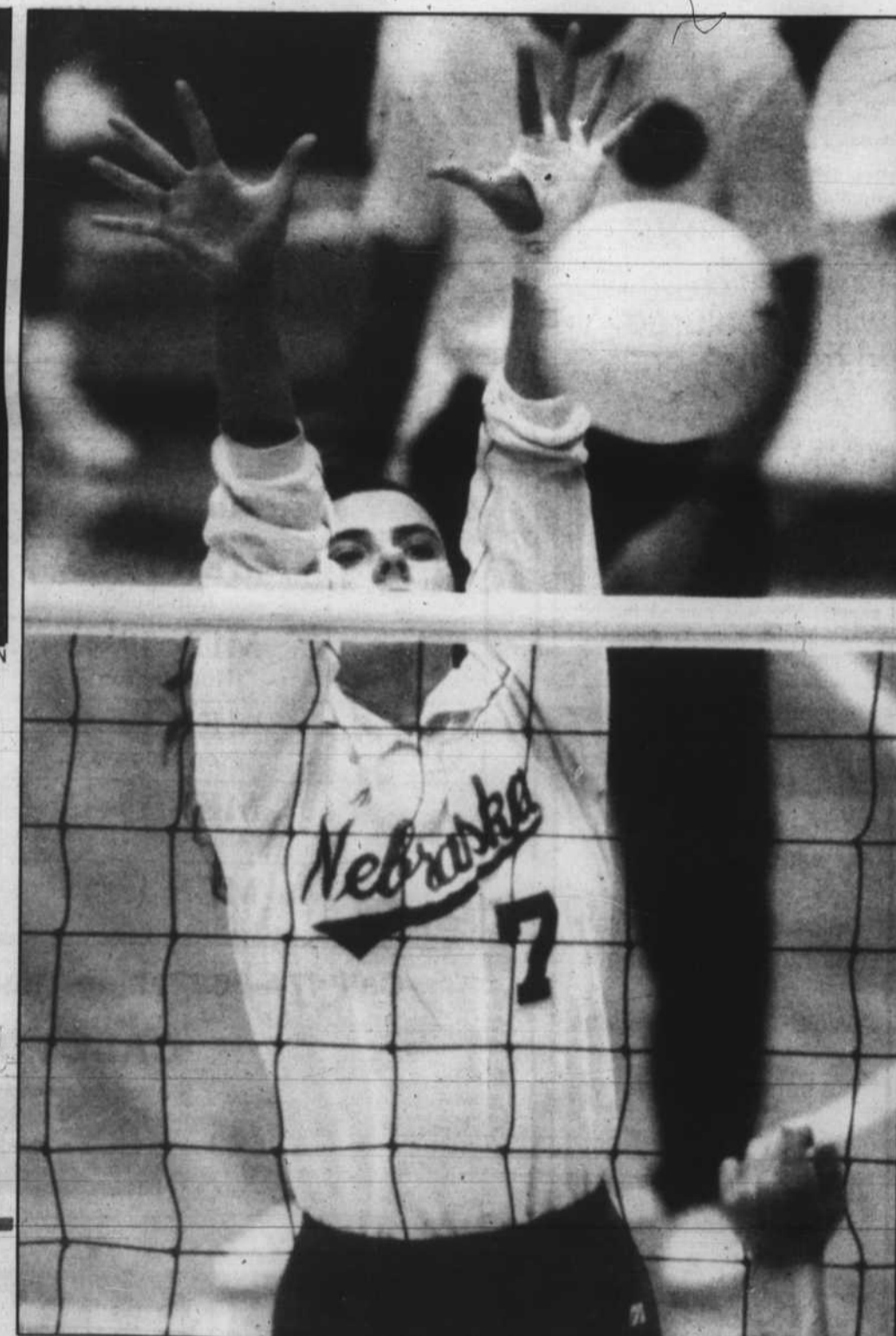
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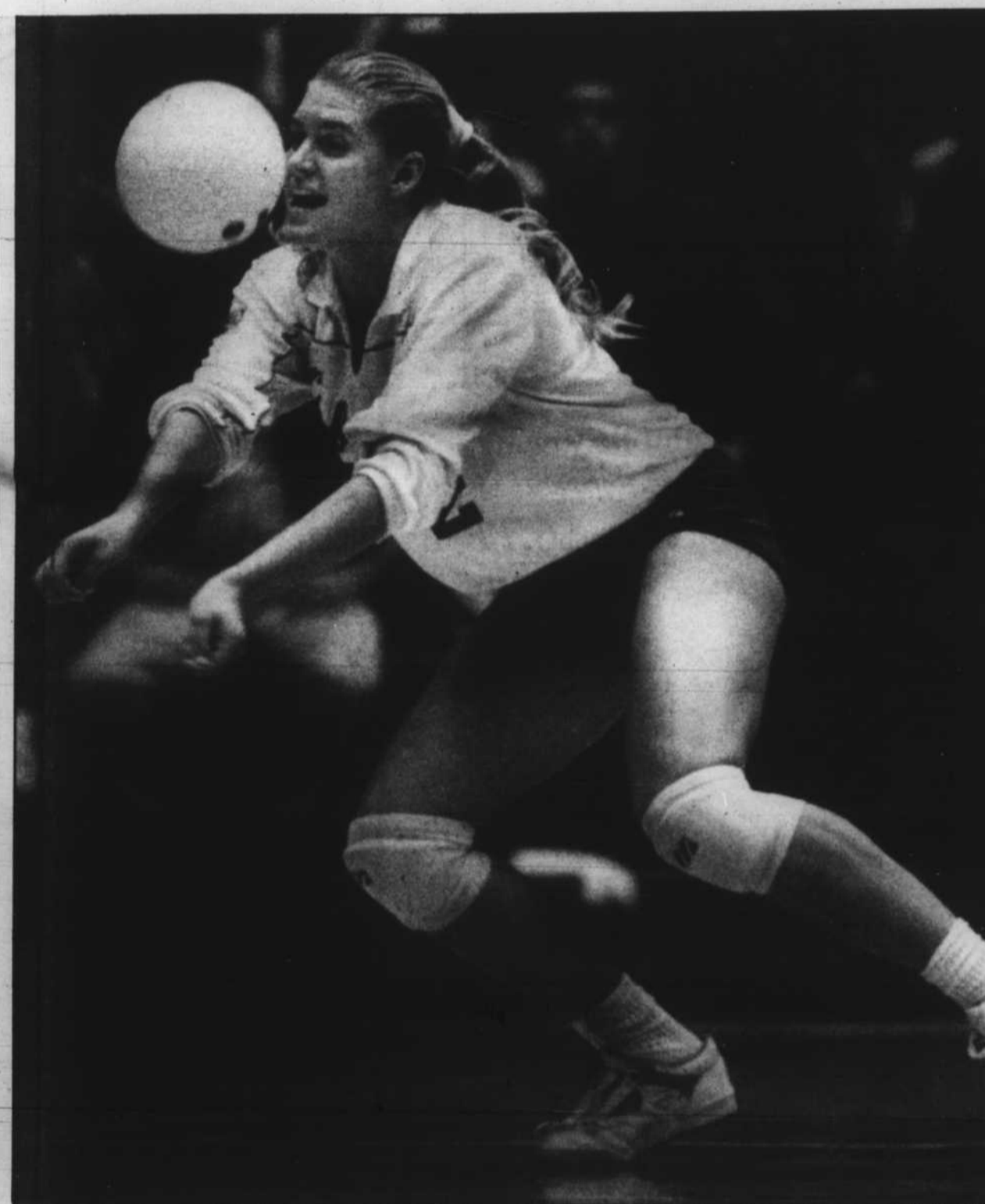
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP MIDDLE: Nebraska's Kim Tonniges dives for the ball as Janet Kruse tries to help Saturday night against Ohio State. Tonniges had seven kills with a hitting percentage of .385. Cornhusker reserves Christy Johnson (left) and Kelly Aspegren hope for a rally during the last few moments of Saturday's loss to Ohio State. Nebraska's Stephanie Thater saves an Ohio State kill. Thater had 13 kills, two solo blocks and 11 block assists. Eileen Shannon makes a solo block against Ohio State's Leisa Wissler. Shannon had 10 kills and 10 digs. Husker Kim Tonniges dives to dig a Buckeye kill. The freshman from Lincoln had seven digs on the night.