

Freshman's career starts with a bang

Outside hitter joins elite lineup

By Jeff Singer
Senior Reporter

This year's starting lineup for the Nebraska volleyball team is comprised of a group of experienced players.

And then there's Allison Weston. Weston, a freshman, is hoping she can be the added dimension needed to push the defending-Big Eight champion Cornhuskers to a first-ever national championship.

But the 6-foot Omaha native said she was amazed with her success so far on a team that has won the last 16 conference championships.

"It's surprising that it's happened to me this early in the season," Weston said. "I can only give credit to the coaches and the older players."

The numbers have so far translated into one of the best starts ever for a Nebraska freshman. Weston has 52 kills and a .280 hitting percentage so far this season.

Weston said she was happy to blend into a starting lineup that features senior middle blocker Stephanie Thater, senior outside hitter Eileen Shannon as well as juniors Laura Luther and Nikki Stricker.

"I like it this way because it's more evened out," Weston said. "Opponents don't have just one person to focus on."

Weston's contributions on the court are already evident. She has helped Nebraska to a 3-2 record against five ranked teams as well as to the First Tier Invitational championship two weeks ago, in which she was named to the Invite's all-tournament team.

As a regular starter as a freshman, Weston joins a list of select company: Last year, Kim Tonniges was a starter at middle blocker; in 1990, Stricker started and in 1989, Shannon helped lead Nebraska to a berth in the national championship match in Hawaii.

Nebraska assistant coach Cathy Noth said Weston's early success had not surprised her.

"We knew right from the start Allison was going to come in here and contribute," Noth said. "She has all the tools to come in here and be one of our better right-side players."



Nebraska freshman Allison Weston is third on the team in kills through five matches. A match-by-match look at her statistics:

	Kills	Hitting %
New Mexico	16	.265
Pittsburgh	17	.560
Pacific	7	.154
Illinois	9	.217
Ohio State	3	.100
totals	52	.280

Daily Nebraskan

The 18-year-old Weston had all the tools in her senior season at Papillion-LaVista High School. In addition to being named the Outstanding Female Athlete of the Year in Nebraska, she earned varsity letters in volleyball, basketball, soccer and track.

She was also named the 1992 Gatorade female basketball Player of the Year in Nebraska, but she said she wouldn't like to be like Cris Hall, a two-sport star who earned All-American honors in 1991 in both volleyball and track for the Huskers.

"I've thought about how much the seasons (volleyball and basketball) overlap, and it's difficult just playing one sport, since volleyball is pretty much an all-year sport," she said.

Weston received recruiting letters from such national volleyball powers as Stanford, Pacific and defending national champion UCLA.

But Weston's desire to stay in the Midwest as well as being coached at Papillion-LaVista by former Husker volleyball standout Gwen Egbert helped make coming to Nebraska an easy choice.

"It is a big name school and close to home, so it was a perfect opportunity," Weston said. "(Egbert) was very helpful in my recruiting and she was very happy with my decision."

As for winning a national championship, Weston said it was among her goals she would like to accomplish in her Husker career.

"I'd love to win a national championship — or two or three," Weston said. "Hopefully, I'll also be an All-American."



Jeff Haller/DN

Middle Tennessee quarterback Kelly Holcomb jumps to pass over Nebraska middle guard David Noonan in Saturday's 48-7 Cornhusker win over the Blue Raiders at Memorial Stadium.

Experience may decide outcome of Washington game, coach says

By Jeff Griesch
Staff Reporter

As his team begins preparation for this week's game against second-ranked Washington, Nebraska coach Tom Osborne thinks that experience on defense will help decide the outcome.

During the Big Eight coaches' teleconference Monday, Osborne explained that defensive mistakes resulted in a 36-21 Washington comeback victory in Lincoln last season.

"We didn't hold up very well in the fourth quarter," Osborne said. "We had some confusion on defense, and I guess we didn't score enough points either."

"This year we're a little bit more

mature, and confusion won't be as big of an issue," Osborne said.

Osborne also said that the Huskers would not do anything differently to defend against the two different styles of Husky quarterbacks Billy Joe Hobert and Mark Brunell.

"I don't think you do anything differently against them," Osborne said. "Brunell is a little bit more of a runner, and Hobert is an excellent thrower, but they're both good quarterbacks."

Nebraska leads the nation in rushing offense at 444.5 yards per game, 111 yards ahead of Oregon State. Nebraska is also first in total offense, averaging 558.5 yards per game.

Elsewhere around the Big Eight, Kansas defeated Ball State 62-10 on Saturday to improve to 2-0 and now

leads the nation in scoring. Nebraska ranks second in scoring offense, with Oklahoma third and Colorado fourth.

Kansas is also on the threshold of cracking the Associated Press Top 25. The Jayhawks received 68 votes and were the leading non-ranked vote getter.

Kansas placekicker Dan Eichloff was named as the Big Eight offensive Player of the Week. Eichloff kicked field goals of 55 and 61 yards against Ball State.

Despite Kansas' dramatic turnaround and a 2-0 start, Jayhawk coach Glen Mason said his rebuilding job was not over.

"We are not turned around yet," Mason said. "As far as we have come — turning a loser into a winner — we aren't done."

Football players adjusting plays for the big game

From Staff Reports

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne said Monday's practice was spent making adjustments for Saturday's game against No. 2 Washington.

"We always change a little on Monday," Osborne said. "We have to

adjust to a little bit different style of offense and defense which we're looking at. A lot of learning goes on on Monday.

"I thought we had a reasonable practice. It was a little sluggish to start with but as time went on they played pretty well."

I-back Calvin Jones missed practice, but Osborne said he expected Jones would return Tuesday.

Safety Ernie Beler, who has been bothered all season with a sore ankle, practiced, but Osborne said he didn't know how close to full speed Beler was.

Rushing numbers irrelevant to Saturday's showdown

This season, just like every season, Nebraska football has turned into a numbers game.

Once again, the Cornhuskers have been able to dominate two lesser opponents and have proved nothing other than anyone can go 2-0 with a little creative scheduling.

Hey, but how else can the Huskers get the jump on the rest of the NCAA in the rushing charts?

In case you didn't notice, or maybe just chose to ignore it because of its irrelevance, Nebraska is at the top of the rushing charts after the first two weeks of the season with a 444.5 per-game average.

Yippee. The Huskers have also taken the top spot in the total offense category at 558.5 yards per game.

Hi-ho. And the mighty Big Red is scoring 48.5 points a game, good enough for

second.

Yawn.

Too bad these statistics don't mean anything. The only thing those numbers mean is that misguided Nebraska fans from the Missouri River to the Panhandle will send newspapers letters spouting off about how Nebraska is going to go out to Seattle and pay the Huskies back for last season's embarrassment.

What these same people fail to notice is that Nebraska appears in none of the categories that involve defense.

Defense. You know what that is. Those are the 11 guys that play while the offense is on the sidelines sucking oxygen so it can run over the boys from Utah and Middle Tennessee State some more when it gets the ball.

But who cares about offense and defense — the only number that really counts is the number 12. That's what



Nick Hytrek

ranking the Huskers received in the latest Associated Press poll.

And where are the Huskies? You'll find them way up at No. 2.

That's where reality kicks in. In case you have a short memory, take a look at a few numbers before last year's Husker-Husky meeting.

— Nebraska was averaging 573 yards rushing after playing Utah State and Colorado State.

— The total offense average was 741.5 yards.

— The Huskers were scoring 65 points a game.

If memory serves me correctly,

these numbers topped the charts in all three categories. But Washington again had the numbers advantage in the polls. The Huskies were No. 4, Nebraska No. 9.

And by the end of that game, Washington had the most important numbers advantage of all — 36-21.

But that was no reason for Husker fans to despair. Nebraska went on to win another coveted rushing title, which is something we can all point to with pride, isn't it?

Yeah, whatever.

By comparing last season's numbers with this season's, it's easy to see some similarities developing.

Nebraska romping past two low-rate football teams and piling up those big offensive statistics. Letters pouring into the papers. Husker fans saying "We're going to kick Washington's butt. Huskies are just dogs."

And the biggest similarity of all will appear after the game is over because Washington will beat Nebraska.

The Huskies will do it with passing and defense — two concepts that are foreign to the Nebraska football program.

Oh, and they also have a pretty good rushing game.

But maybe everything won't turn out so bad.

Maybe it will rain the whole game. Maybe an official will make a bad call. Maybe something — anything — will happen so Husker fans will have a good excuse when Nebraska loses by at least three touchdowns.

But despite all that, the season won't be all lost.

There's always that rushing title to look forward to.

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