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Staci McKee/DN

Nebraska's Allison Weston (18) and Stephanie Thater miss a block against Colorado at the NU Coliseum. The Cornhuskers won the match in straight games.

Huskers sweep Colorado, break tie atop conference

By Jeff Singer
Senior Reporter

If the Nebraska volleyball team is to be challenged for the Big Eight title, it looks like it must come another year.

The Cornhuskers swept their first-place battle with Colorado on Saturday night 15-5, 15-9, 15-12, putting themselves in good position to win their 17th straight conference championship.

Nebraska improved its Big Eight record to 7-0 and dropped the Buffaloes to 6-1 in conference play before a NU Coliseum record crowd of 4,538 fans.

The Huskers had a .322 team hitting percentage, compared with Colorado's .044.

Nebraska volleyball coach Terry Pettit said his team fought hard to take possession of first place in the conference.

"We were in rhythm and we were real prepared," Pettit said. "It was a war out there even though we won in three."

The Buffaloes started by scoring the opening game's first three points, but a service ace by Husker middle blocker Stephanie Thater got Nebraska on the scoreboard and the Huskers never looked back.

Nebraska went on a 15-2 run in game one and the momentum carried

over to the second game, as the Huskers registered a six-point victory.

The third game was a seesaw effort, as both teams exchanged the lead numerous times. With the score tied at 12, Nebraska outside hitter Allison Weston registered a kill to put the Huskers up by a point and propel Nebraska to win the match's final game.

Weston, who had seven kills in the match, said the third game was a challenge for the Huskers.

"Colorado came out really strong

“ I thought we played good for a while — but the times we didn't play well we got stomped on.”

Saindon
Colorado volleyball coach

in the third game," Weston said. "When it got up to 12, we said enough of that, and we showed them what we could do."

Colorado volleyball coach Brad Saindon said mistakes by his team killed the Buffaloes' chances of upsetting the Huskers.

"I thought we played good for a while — but the times we didn't play

well we got stomped on," Saindon said.

Nebraska setter Nikki Stricker, who had 39 set assists, said Nebraska played as well Saturday as it had all year.

"I think it's the best we've played," Stricker said. "The passing was right there, and I couldn't have asked for better defense."

Outside hitter Kim Tonniges came off the bench to lead the Huskers in hitting against the Buffaloes. The sophomore had 10 kills in 15 total attacks for a .667 hitting percentage.

Seniors Thater and Eileen Shannon also had big statistical nights against Colorado. Both players hit .318 in helping fifth-ranked Nebraska improve its overall record to 13-2.

The No. 13 Buffaloes' overall mark dropped to 15-4, but Saindon said it was tough to compete with the Huskers since Colorado had only been competing in volleyball since 1987.

"It takes time — Nebraska had a 16-year head start on us," Saindon said.

The Buffalo coach said he was looking forward to another shot at the Huskers in two weeks in Boulder, Colo.

"We still get Nebraska at our place and we're expecting the biggest crowd in history," Saindon said. "This match helped us prepare for them, and we're going to give it all we've got to get a share of the conference title."

CU coach praises record-setting crowd

By Tim Pearson
Staff Reporter

The record lasted only one week.

The all-time attendance record at the NU Coliseum, set just one week ago against Oklahoma, was broken again Saturday night.

The Nebraska-Colorado volleyball match attracted a record-setting crowd of 4,538 fans, bettering last week's attendance against the Sooners of 4,373.

In the battle of two undefeated Big Eight teams, the Huskers won 15-5, 15-9, 15-12.

And many Nebraska players agreed that the crowd played a part in the Huskers' victory.

"(The crowd) pumped us up," said

sophomore Christy Johnson. "They were very enthusiastic and very loud."

Outside hitter Kim Tonniges agreed.

"The crowd was awesome," she said. "It really got the juices flowing."

Junior outside hitter Laura Luther said the Huskers wanted to play well in front of a big crowd after last week's match against Oklahoma.

"We were a little disappointed with last week's match," she said. "We wanted to show the crowd what we could do."

The crowd played a big factor in the match, said Colorado coach Brad Saindon.

"The crowd gives Nebraska a big edge," he said. "Communication on the court is important for us, and the

noise just killed us."

Begor said he thought the crowd affected the Buffs at the start, as Nebraska went on a 15-2 run to eliminate an early Colorado lead.

"The crowd didn't overwhelm them," he said. "They adjusted to the crowd and played better as the match went on."

Tonniges said she thought that the crowd may have affected Colorado.

"When you hear a crowd yelling like that, it can be very intimidating," she said.

Saindon praised the Nebraska program and the Husker fans.

"It's hard to come in here and play," he said. "This is a great environment for volleyball."

Coach evaluates runners at invite

By Phil Carter
Staff Reporter

Going into this week, Nebraska cross country coach Jay Dirksen said the men and women's teams would rest up for the Big Eight Championships in Boulder on Saturday.

However, Dirksen used Saturday's Kearney Invitational as preparation for the lower-position runners on the men's and women's teams.

"We sent a few people to Kearney for runoffs," Dirksen said. "We mainly used it to see where we're at with our fourth and fifth runners on the women's team, and the eighth and

ninth spot for the men's."

JoDi Schufelt was the highest finisher for the Husker women at Kearney, placing fifth. Becky Lund finished close behind in sixth place.

"They both ran strong," Dirksen said. "Becky's been hurt for a while. I'd say it's the best race she's run in a year."

Eric Scadden was the men's top finisher for the Huskers. He finished 11th followed by David Rhodes, who finished 13th, and Mike Myers, who placed 14th.

"On the men's side it was a very tough meet," Dirksen said. "Our runners ran strong and ran well. We're

just a really young team right now. Ten of our runners are either freshmen or sophomores so we just have to be patient."

The Husker women are predicted to win the Big Eight Invitational next weekend, Dirksen said he expected the men to compete for the No. 5 spot.

"Our women are picked to win it," he says. "If we're healthy we could win, but Kansas State is awfully tough."

"And the guys should compete with Oklahoma State for the fifth-place spot," he said. "There are four teams that will compete for the top spot."

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