

Buffs pound NU in Big 8 Tournament

Thater's absence hurts Huskers in title matchup

By John Adkisson
Senior Editor

OMAHA — With their cornerstone missing, the Nebraska Cornhuskers' reign over Big Eight volleyball opponents finally crumbled Saturday night.

Colorado beat the Huskers for the first time in 16 tries by pounding Nebraska in the finals of the Big Eight Tournament 16-14, 15-11, 9-15, 15-8 at Civic Auditorium.

Playing without All-American middle blocker Stephanie Thater, the Huskers were outmuscled by a powerful Buffalo hitting attack that consistently took advantage of Thater's absence in the middle.

As a result, Colorado claimed the conference's automatic spot in the NCAA Tournament and forced Nebraska into an at-large bid in the 32-team tourney.

The Buffs also became the first conference team to beat Nebraska since Oklahoma won a match from the Huskers in 1988.

Thater, who sat out both of Nebraska's matches in the tournament, sprained her left ankle in warmups prior to the Huskers' win over Oklahoma on Friday night.

Husker coach Terry Pettit gave credit to Colorado, although he said Thater's injury hurt his team.

"Colorado may have beat us if (Thater) was on the court," Pettit said. "I thought we played hard and well. I never like to lose, but I'm never disappointed losing to a good team."

The two teams battled in a classic first game that lasted a little more than 45 minutes and included six service rotations. The Buffs raced to a 9-4 lead before Nebraska came back to tie the game at 10.

With the game tied again at 14, Colorado was able to win on a kill by senior hitter Michelle Kohler and an



Nebraska middle blocker Billie Winsett (left) and outside hitter Eileen Shannon block Colorado's Janine Zumerchik in the finals of the Big Eight Tournament in Omaha Saturday.

Kiley Timperley/DN

ace by jump-server Staci Wolfe. Pettit said that in the first game, his team was adjusting to not having Thater.

"I thought we spent the first game getting organized," Pettit said. "I wasn't real concerned with whether or not we lost the first game, as long as we were playing better."

Nebraska outside hitter Laura Luther said it was easier adjusting to Thater's absence against Colorado than it was the night before against Oklahoma.

"We seemed a lot more confident," Luther said. "The night before helped us adjust."

Colorado again jumped out early

in the second game, taking leads of 5-1, 10-6 and 14-8. The Huskers tried to rally by scoring three unanswered points, but outside hitter Allison Weston was called for a net violation on game point, and the Buffaloes took a 2-0 game advantage.

At that point, Buffalo setter Nicole Vranesh said, the Huskers became

unnerved.

"There was definitely something missing," Vranesh said. "I looked across the net, and I noticed that they didn't have anywhere to look."

Nebraska did rebound in the third game, sprinting away from an 8-8 tie

See TOURNAMENT on 10

Cornhuskers to face CU in first-round NCAA match

By Jeff Singer
Senior Reporter

Familiarity won't be a problem for the Nebraska volleyball team in this year's NCAA Tournament.

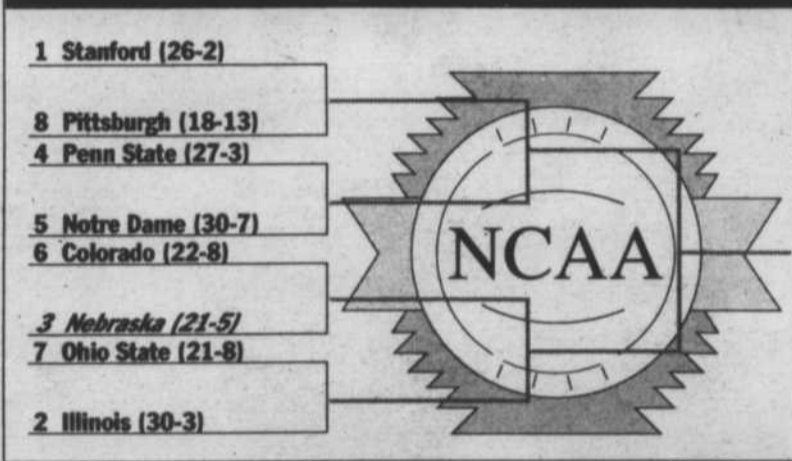
The Big-Eight champion Cornhuskers will battle conference tournament champ Colorado Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at the NU Coliseum.

Nebraska, which lost to the Buffaloes in the finals of the Big Eight tournament over the weekend, earned an 11th straight trip to the NCAA playoffs and the third seed in the Mideast Regional. The 22-8 Buffaloes received the sixth seed in the region.

The 21-5 Huskers beat Colorado twice in the regular season, but lost in four games to the Buffaloes on Saturday without Husker All-American Stephanie Thater, who sat out with an ankle injury.

Stanford, which had a 26-2 record

NCAA Tournament Mideast Regional



Scott Maurer/DN

this season, earned the Mideast's top seed, while Big 10 champion Illinois is No. 2. Other teams in the region include No. 4 Penn State, No. 5 Notre Dame, No. 7 Ohio State and No. 8 Pittsburgh.

Other No. 1 regional seeds are 29-0 UCLA in the West, 31-1 Florida in the South and 27-2 Long Beach State in the Northwest.

Nebraska assistant volleyball coach

Cathy Noth said she was pleased with the Huskers' bracket.

"It couldn't be a better draw for us," Noth said. "We don't know any team better than Colorado."

Fellow assistant coach Brian Begor agreed.

"It will be exciting to play Colorado again," Begor said. "Both teams know each other so well, it wouldn't matter if we played them tomorrow."

NU gymnasts win Colorado meet

From Staff Reports

The Nebraska men's gymnastics team kicked off its season on Saturday by winning the Rocky Mountain Open in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The Cornhuskers won the team title, earning 276.8 total points and easily outdistancing second-place

Brigham Young (274.1). Big Eight rival Oklahoma (272.6) finished third.

Nebraska sophomore Richard Grace won the all-around with a total of 108.8. Grace tied for second in the vault and finished third on the parallel bars.

Husker freshman Jason Christie,

making his debut, finished second in the all-around with a score of 107.0 and captured the individual title on the parallel bars.

Junior Dennis Harrison won the individual title on the pommel horse with a score of 9.7. Harrison also finished fourth in the all-around,

Chandler shines in Nebraska win

By Jeff Singer
Senior Reporter

Derrick Chandler struck oil Saturday night.

The senior center scored 24 points and pulled down 10 rebounds to lead the Nebraska men's basketball team to a 126-96 win over Marathon Oil at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The win enabled the No. 25 Cornhuskers to end their exhibition season with a 2-0 record in front of 10,172 fans. Nebraska beat the Cuban National team 114-76 two weeks ago in its exhibition opener.

Chandler was one of seven Huskers to score in double figures, as Nebraska prepared for its regular-season debut Friday against Colgate in the Ameritas Classic.

Chandler led the Huskers in scoring in both exhibition games, but he said he didn't know if that trend would continue when the season began.

"I don't see myself as a scorer; I concentrate more on rebounding and defense than on scoring," Chandler said. "I just try to get a double-double (10 points and 10 rebounds) — that's my objective for the season."

Chandler didn't get his first points until 16 minutes had elapsed in the first half, but his tip-in at that point gave the Huskers a 40-27 lead, and Nebraska cruised from there.

Chandler scored 10 points in the first half, but he said his lack of production in the game's first 16 minutes inspired him for the rest of the evening.

"Coach said if you want to be a pro, these are the times you've got to suck it up," Chandler said. "I wanted them to know I was out there."

Freshman guard Andre Woolridge made his first start and scored 11 points from the shooting guard position.

Woolridge got the start over Jaron Boone, who started in Nebraska's win over the Cuban National Team. Woolridge said starting and coming off the bench were two separate roles that he could get used to.

"It feels a little bit different than in the last game — I was a little more pumped up," Woolridge said. "I started all four years in high school, but it was different not starting in the first game."

He said whatever the starting lineup was during the regular season, he would have to help the team by whatever means necessary.

"Jaron Boone is a great two guard and Erick Strickland can also fill the position, so if I don't start, I'm going to have to adjust and come off the bench," Woolridge said.

Forward Eric Piatkowski had 18 points, while Strickland added 17.

Nebraska coach Danny Nee said he was happy with the entire team's effort against Marathon Oil.

"I was pleased with it — I can't think of anyone who didn't do something good tonight," Nee said. "I thought the effort and attitude were really good; if I had to grade it, I'd give it a B or B+."