

# Strong-serving Illini end Huskers' season

By Jeff Singer  
Senior Reporter

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — A reality check was given to the Nebraska volleyball team Thursday night.

Even with the return of All-American middle blocker Stephanie Thater, the Cornhuskers' season came to an end with a 15-10, 15-7, 15-10 loss to Illinois in the NCAA Midwest Regional semifinal.

With the win, the Fighting Illini advanced to tonight's final in front of 4,123 fans at Huff Gymnasium.

The match started off well for the Huskers, as they jumped out to a 9-6 lead in game one, but Illinois fought back to tie the game at nine. At that point, the return of Thater, who has been hobbled by an ankle sprain and

hasn't competed in Nebraska's three previous matches, didn't faze the Illini.

Illinois went on a 6-1 run to close the first game and take a 1-0 lead in the match. The Illini used three aces in the opening game to pace them.

The Illini again had a winning hand in the second game, as their eight-point domination was fueled by six more aces.

And just when it looked like Nebraska was going to get back in the match with a 10-8 lead in the third game, Illinois registered three more aces in a 7-0 run that closed the match and propelled them into the finals of the regional against Stanford.

Nebraska volleyball coach Terry Pettit said it was easy to see why the Illini were able to win.

"We were certainly outplayed in every game," Pettit said. "I was disappointed in two aspects of our game — serving and passing. We thought for us to be competitive in the match, it was important for us to serve and pass really tough."

"You can do all you want and substitute all you want, but if you don't pass, that's the ballgame."

Illinois coach Mike Hebert agreed. "I thought clearly serving was a factor in the match — a combination of our serving and passing breakdowns by Nebraska," said Hebert, whose team improved to 32-3.

Nebraska's final record dropped to 22-6, as the Huskers lost for the second time this year to the Illini. Illinois beat Nebraska in four games in September.

Pettit said his team became disorganized at the end of the match.

"At the end, we were just scrambling; I was just trying to get six people on the court that would compete," Pettit said.

One of the few bright spots for the Huskers was outside hitter Allison Weston. The freshman hit .375 despite the Huskers' overall .158 percentage as a team.

Thater, the Big Eight Player of the Year who played in her last match at Nebraska, hit .364 with five kills.

She said she fought hard despite her injury to try to help the Huskers win.

"Personally, I know I did whatever I could," Thater said.

Both coaches said they were proud of Thater's effort on the gimpy ankle.

"I couldn't have asked for anything more from her," Pettit said. "She competed as hard as anybody could in that situation."

"You just can't take a piece of your offense like that out of your lineup and function the same way," Hebert said. "I thought it was admirable she gave it a go — she's a real warrior."

**Notes:**

●The loss marked Nebraska's earliest exit from the tournament since 1988, when the Huskers lost to Oklahoma. That match was also played in Champaign.

●In the other semifinal, Stanford beat Penn State 15-13, 15-6, 15-3. Stanford will meet Illinois in a 7:30 p.m. match tonight.

# Offense carries 'sloppy' Huskers past pesky Jays

By Nick Hytrek  
Senior Reporter

From the expression on Eric Piatkowski's face after the Nebraska basketball team's 100-83 win over Creighton Thursday night, it was hard to tell the Cornhuskers had won.

A crowd of 14,011 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center had watched the No. 25 Huskers open up a 26-point lead in the second half, only to have 0-3 Creighton cut that lead to as few as 14 with four minutes to play.

"We got up big and maybe then it was just a mental lapse," Piatkowski, who led Nebraska with 21 points, said. "I think our team's good enough; we've got good enough players that we shouldn't have done that."

"It was just mental mistakes tonight. We weren't really playing solid basketball. We were trying to take a few short cuts here and there."

Forward Bruce Chubick also said the Huskers, now 4-0, let their concentration slip a little down the stretch.

"We played pretty good for a period of the game but then we got a little bit lackadaisical," Chubick said. "The last 10 minutes of the half we got a little sloppy and they were executing really well. That's why they were in the game."

But the Bluejays couldn't get quite close enough. Nebraska answered every Creighton threat and held on for the win.

Husker coach Danny Nee complimented the Bluejays on their attempted comeback.

"Creighton played hard," Nee said. "They executed their offense. They never gave up. They kept always being a threat, but I think we took control of the game early and that's what counts."

From the beginning, it looked as if Nebraska was counting on putting the game away by halftime. The Huskers opened up an 8-2 lead that grew to 18-8 with 11:57 left in the half. By the 6:20 point, Nebraska had upped its lead to 32-17 on a shot by Chubick, who scored 14 points and pulled down a team-high 11 rebounds.

But Creighton wouldn't go away. The

“I think we kind of got out of it mentally and started thinking about all the trash that was talked this summer about ‘We’re going to beat you guys in your house’.”

—Boone  
NU guard

Bluejays outscored the Huskers 16-10 to cut Nebraska's lead to 42-33 at halftime.

Husker guard Jaron Boone said the team's emotional level affected Nebraska's play.

"I thought we got a little too excited," Boone said. "Being an in-state rivalry, I think we kind of got out of it mentally and started thinking about all the trash that was talked this summer about 'We're going to beat you guys in your house' and I think we just got a little too excited."

But at the beginning of the second half, the Huskers showed they had shaken their emotions and threatened to blow the game wide open.

The two teams played evenly for the first four minutes until an 11-2 Husker run put Nebraska up 67-44 with 12:28 left. After six straight Creighton points, the Huskers reeled off a 9-0 run to take a 76-50 lead at the 8:43 mark.

Creighton was not ready to concede the victory, however. The Bluejays outscored Nebraska 16-4 in the next four minutes and had the lead down to 81-67. That was as close as Creighton would come before the game's final minute.

Creighton's Mike Amos, who had a game-high 28 points and 17 rebounds, couldn't pull the Bluejays any closer before the game was decided. Nebraska sustained its lead and Jamar Johnson's three-point shot with three seconds left provided the final margin of victory.



Staci McKee/DN

Nebraska's Tom Best attempts a layup during Thursday's game against Creighton. Nebraska won 100-83.

# Beck hoping to establish depth in tournament

By Phil Carter  
Staff Reporter

After posting four straight wins, the Nebraska women's basketball team will host the four-team CableVision Classic at the Bob Devaney Sports Center Friday and Saturday.

In Friday's opening game, the Cornhuskers will face 0-2 Howard at 6 p.m. The second game will feature Saint Mary's College (2-0) against Eastern Washington (1-1) at 8 p.m.

The losers from Friday will play at 1 p.m. Saturday in the consolation game with Friday's winners scheduled for a 3 p.m. tip-off in the cham-

pionship game.

"This is going to be a different change for us again," Husker coach Angela Beck said. "Howard's coming off an 0-2 record."

"I don't think it's going to be our toughest opponent, but it's going to be an opportunity for me to see some other things and try to work some combinations."

Nebraska is fresh off an 84-67 victory against Illinois on Wednesday at the Devaney Center. Illinois came into that game with a 3-0 mark.

"It's been tough with this schedule here," Beck said. "We haven't had very many kids be able to play. It's been tough for our young kids. As

Danny's (Nee) been able to play a lot of his young kids, I haven't been afforded that opportunity yet."

Beck said she was worried about the possibility of injuries to her veteran players, and how hard it would be for her younger players to step in and fill the positions.

"If somebody goes down, we'd be in trouble," Beck said. "I'd like to try and mix it up and get a little deeper in our bench Friday night and give our starters a little more rest."

Howard enters this weekend's tournament after losing 70-50 to Massachusetts and 76-75 to Rider. Former

Omaha North standout, Annette Lee, leads Howard in scoring with 55 points this season.

Saint Mary's brings an unbeaten record to the Devaney Center after posting wins in their own tournament over Northern Arizona and Southern Utah.

Eastern Washington won its season opener against Seattle Pacific, 77-72, but lost to Wisconsin-Green Bay, 67-55.

"Saint Mary's is a very solid team. They've gotten some national points," Beck said. "And Eastern Washington's not bad either. We'll just have to see what happens."

**Probable Starters**

|                       |      |
|-----------------------|------|
| <b>Nebraska (3-0)</b> |      |
| G Meggan Yedsena      | 5-8  |
| G Kate Galligan       | 5-8  |
| C Rissa Taylor        | 6-1  |
| F Karen Jennings      | 6-2  |
| F Sara Offringa       | 5-10 |

**Cablevision Classic  
Tournament Schedule**

**FRIDAY**

6 p.m. Nebraska vs. Howard  
8 p.m. St. Mary's vs. Eastern Washington

**SATURDAY**

1 p.m. Consolation game  
3 p.m. Championship game

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