

No matter who's foe, Huskers glad for shot

By Jeff Griesch
Senior Reporter

The coalition poll is out, and so is West Virginia.

Florida State nipped the Mountaineers by 69 points in the bowl poll to capture the No. 2 spot and give the Seminoles the inside track to a New Year's Day matchup with No. 1 Nebraska.

And despite Nebraska's past frustrations with Florida State, Cornhusker players said they didn't care who they played.

Nebraska linebacker Troy Branch said that as long as the Huskers played to their potential, they had the ability to beat any team in the country.

"If we go down and play to our ability, we will win the game," Branch said.

Although bowl pairings will not be officially announced until Dec. 5, Husker cornerback Tyrone Williams said he did not have a preference between playing Florida State or West Virginia.

"Whoever we play is who we play," Williams said. "No matter who we play we are going to play as hard as we can and give everything we have."

But Branch said he understood the Mountaineers' frustration at not getting a shot to play for the national championship despite an undefeated 11-0 season.

"You have to feel sympathy for them," Branch said. "You want to think that if you go 11-0 that you should get a chance to play for the title."

Despite the Huskers' No. 1 ranking, they

probably would be considered underdogs against Florida State in a rematch of last year's Orange Bowl.

The Huskers have lost to the Seminoles three times in bowl games during the past six years.

Last year, the Huskers lost 27-14, finishing the season 9-3 and ranked 14th. The Seminoles finished the season in the No. 2 spot with a 11-1 record.

In 1988, the two teams met in the Fiesta Bowl, which Nebraska lost 31-28. Florida State rolled against the Huskers in the Fiesta Bowl again in 1990 with a 41-17 win.

With those outcomes, Branch said, Nebraska's underdog status is not surprising.

"I don't think it would come as a shock to anyone on this team that we are underdogs," Branch said. "And it is probably deserving based on our past record. That doesn't really matter, though, because it is not this team's mentality to go into a game and play like underdogs."

Branch said the Huskers only cared that they had the chance to play for the national championship.

"That is why guys from all over the country come to play at Nebraska — to have a shot to play for a national title," Branch said.

Regardless of Nebraska teams' past performances in bowl games, defensive back Toby Wright said the Huskers held their destiny in their own hands.

"It's up to them to try and play against us," Wright said. "As long as we keep our desire and our fire, I think we'll win."



Shaun Sartin/DN

Nebraska rover Toby Wright heads upfield after intercepting a pass during the second quarter of the Cornhuskers' win over Oklahoma. Wright says Nebraska should win this year's Orange Bowl. "As long as we keep our desire and our fire, I think we'll win," he says.

Coaches, player debate volleyball rally scoring

By Tim Pearson
Senior Reporter

Nebraska and Colorado had each won two hard-fought games when they squared up for the final game in the Big Eight Tournament volleyball championship Saturday.

The winner of the match would be the team that thrived best under the concept of fifth-game rally scoring, in which every serve results in a point for either the serving team or the receiving team.

In the fast-paced fifth game, the Buffaloes came up with the win and the automatic NCAA Tournament bid.

Although he was on the losing end Saturday, Nebraska coach Terry Pettit, whose team is 1-2 in five-game matches this season, said he liked rally scoring because it was good for the fans.

"I think it's good," he said. "I think a lot of coaches think that it removes the coaching part, but it makes it better for the player's health and it makes the fan interest exciting."

"It raises the overall level of play." But not all coaches like the concept of rally scoring, which was introduced in 1991.

Penn State coach Russ Rose, whose team lost its match against Pettit's Nebraska team in a rally scoring fifth game earlier this season, said he despised it.

"To me, it's ridiculous to play 2 1/2 hours of volleyball and then settle the final game in six minutes," Rose said. "It equalizes the team that is not as good as the other team."

"After 2 1/2 hours, it comes down to a pinball game in the fifth game."

While Rose said it equalized the two teams, Nebraska assistant coach Cathy Noth said it favored the better team.

"I think it's a great thing," Noth said. "It comes down to who is the better ball-handling team and who can put the ball away."

"You have to play a pretty errorless game. An error is a point no matter what."

However, Nebraska senior setter Nikki Stricker said rally scoring ruined a team's chemistry on the court.

"I really don't like it," she said. "It makes it faster for the fans, but you get into a rhythm in volleyball."

"You've got to be able to sideout." Andy Banachowski, coach of sec-

RALLY KILLING

Nebraska is 6-4 since rally scoring began in 1991. Rally scoring is used only in the fifth game, and awards points after each serve, no matter which team is serving.

Nebraska's results in five-game matches that have used rally scoring:



DN graphic

ond-ranked UCLA, said rally scoring helped fans.

"It was made to make matches more acceptable for fans to watch," he said. "It's helped the average fan a little more in enjoying volleyball."

Odds even that Alberts will play, McBride says

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

As the Nebraska defense repeatedly stuffed Oklahoma for little or no gain in the second half of the Huskers' 21-7 victory Friday, a message flashed on the scoreboard above the Memorial Stadium's north end zone:

"You should see us when Trev plays," it read.

The sign referred to All-American outside linebacker Trev Alberts, who left the Oklahoma game early after suffering a dislocated elbow.

And Alberts, who was named the Defensive Player of the Year on Monday by Football News, thinks he has a 50 percent chance of playing in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 1, defensive coordinator Charlie McBride told the Extra Point Club Monday.

McBride said Alberts' arm was placed in a cast Monday in order to prevent nerve and ligament damage while his elbow heals.

McBride said Alberts moved his hand "like nothing ever happened."

"So that's good, because it showed there was no nerve damage," he said. It's also surprising, McBride said,

after seeing the extent of his elbow injury.

"When he came out of the game his elbow was completely out of place," McBride said. "There was a great big hole and you could see where his elbow was supposed to go."

"After it happened, he couldn't move his hand at all."

Losing Alberts did not hurt the Blackshirts too much, McBride said.

"Of course it was a blow to us when Trev got hurt," he said, "but the way our players responded on the sidelines, it almost helped. They knew they had to play a little harder and step it up a little bit."

McBride said a similar defensive performance would be needed in the bowl if the Huskers are to stop the Florida State offense.

At the head of the Seminoles' offense is quarterback Charlie Ward, who is a virtual lock to win the Heisman Trophy, McBride said. In last year's 27-14 Seminole victory over Nebraska in the Orange Bowl, Ward completed 15 of 30 passes for 187 yards and two touchdowns, while throwing one interception.

This could be the year for a national title—in volleyball

All those leaving for Madison, Wis., and the Final Four, please board now.

May I see your NCAA Volleyball Championships bracket please?

Thank you, Mr. Pettit. Enjoy your stay in Wisconsin. Next.

Brad Saindon. I don't see your name on the list, sir. Not so fast, Saindon. Your Colorado team may have to go through Lincoln first before making the journey to Madison, Wis., for the Final Four.

And if the Nebraska volleyball team has its way, the Buffs won't be seeing much of the dairy state.

The Cornhuskers, at first glance, seem to be sitting pretty in their pursuit of Terry Pettit's first-ever national title.

The Buffs, on the other hand, received a bye to the second round where they will face either Illinois or Southwest Missouri State, two teams the Huskers have defeated this sea-

son.

And then Colorado would face Penn State in the regionals which would be held in Lincoln if the Huskers make it that far. Then a rematch between Nebraska and Colorado would be in the makings in the Regional final.

Can the Buffs beat Nebraska in Lincoln? No. They haven't ever come close to beating the Huskers at the NU Coliseum.

But let's not look too far ahead. The Huskers will face Cornell in the first round of the NCAA Championships Wednesday night. Cornell?

How did they make it into the land of giants? These are the 48 best teams out of the 277 total and you're telling me Cornell is among the best?

Take a look at the Big Red — not Nebraska, but Cornell.

The Big Red is the Ivy League champion with a 17-9 record. It is a



Tim Pearson

relatively small team by Big Eight standards. Cornell has one player over six-feet tall, and she's played in three games all season. Nebraska has three players over six feet, and all three receive significant playing time.

Look at Cornell's schedule. They haven't played anyone in the Top 25, but the 24-5 Huskers have played five teams in the Top 25.

The Huskers should send Cornell back to New York in dominating fashion. We're talking three games and a bus trip back to Ithaca, N.Y.

But this is Cornell's first-ever appearance in the big dance. They'll be

pumped up and ready to go. But the Huskers have been shooting for the Final Four since the start of the season.

When the NCAA announced the brackets Sunday night, not even a whoop or a holler was heard from the Nebraska players when they found out who their first-round opponent was.

Pettit said his team was in the tourney for the long haul.

"If this was our first year in the tournament, it would be different," he said.

And a victory over Cornell would mean another date with Notre Dame, the same team that defeated the Huskers earlier this season. Talk about motivation. The Huskers will have plenty of it going into South Bend, Ind.

Nebraska was beaten decisively in four games by the Irish. But Notre

Dame may need more than the luck of the Irish to get by a determined Husker team this time.

Even the normally reserved Pettit is excited about his team. He wants a return to the Final Four more than anything, and after Saturday's loss to Colorado, part of his bubble seemed to have burst.

But it looks like the Husker loss will turn out to be a win if Nebraska can make it to the regionals at the NU Coliseum. It'll be home sweet home for the Huskers at a place where they haven't lost this season.

Maybe this is the year. A year which was thought to be a rebuilding year after the losses of Stephanie Thater and Eileen Shannon may turn out to be a rewarding year for Pettit and his team.

Pearson is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and columnist.