

NCAA title in reach for volleyball team, Husker setter says

By Tim Pearson
Senior Reporter

Nebraska's volleyball team comes into the NCAA Championships as the fifth-seeded team in the Mideast Region.

They hope to come out of the NCAA Championships as the top team in the country.

The Cornhuskers' quest for a trip to the Final Four begins when they face Cornell in the first round in a 7 p.m. match Wednesday at the NU Coliseum.

Husker setter Nikki Stricker, who was part of the last Nebraska team to go to the Final Four in 1990, said another Final Four appearance is possible.

"We're real excited," she said. "It's within our grasp. I'm just glad to be there, and I'm ready to get going."

Nebraska enters the match with a 24-5 mark. They'll go up against 17-9 Cornell, which will be making its first-ever appearance in the tournament. Cornell won its final five matches.

Husker coach Terry Pettit said he knows little about the Ivy League champions.

"I assume they'll be a good ball club," he said. "Cornell will be a good team but we're going to spend all of our energy on us."

A win against Cornell tonight would mean a rematch with Notre Dame, which defeated the Huskers earlier this season in four games. A win over the Irish would make Nebraska the host of the Mideast Regional.

Husker middle blocker Allison

— 66 —
(The Final Four) is within our grasp. I'm just glad to be there, and I'm ready to get going.

—Stricker
Nebraska setter

Weston said the Fighting Irish, which received a bye to the second round, will see a different Nebraska team.

"It'll be a good rematch," she said. "We've improved on just about everything. This team has grown tremendously."

But Husker outside hitter Billie Winsett said the Huskers can't overlook Cornell because of its record.

"Records are no indication of how good a team is," she said. "Volleyball is a game of momentum and you can't not take anyone seriously."

Pettit said his team is in a good position to advance to the Final Four in Madison, Wis., Dec. 16 and 18.

"It's an interesting draw for us," he said. "There's not a dominant volleyball team out there this year."

"I suspect that had we not been a possible regional site, we might've gotten a bye, but I'm willing to trade that for hosting the regional."

Nebraska has made it to the NCAA Tournament the past 12 years. Their record in the tourney is 22-11, and they have never lost a tournament

See **TOURNEY** on 8

Nee: First loss won't hurt basketball team's chances

By Tim Pearson
Senior Reporter

Last season, the Nebraska basketball team didn't lose at home during its non-conference season.

After two games this season, the Cornhuskers have already lost one non-conference game in the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

But after Sunday's 78-75 loss to Texas, Husker coach Danny Nee said he's confident his team can rebound against Appalachian State tonight in a 6 p.m. game in Boone, N.C.

"It's very disappointing to play 39 minutes and 30 seconds and in the last few seconds let it slip away," Nee said. "In the last minute there were four critical errors."

"I'm very concerned, but I do think the errors are correctable."

Nee said the one loss to Texas was

disappointing, but it won't affect the Huskers' play.

"We know we'll be playing a lot more games," he said. "(Texas) will probably win the Southwest Conference. We can learn from it."

"They certainly exposed our weaknesses. We'll take this and build on it."

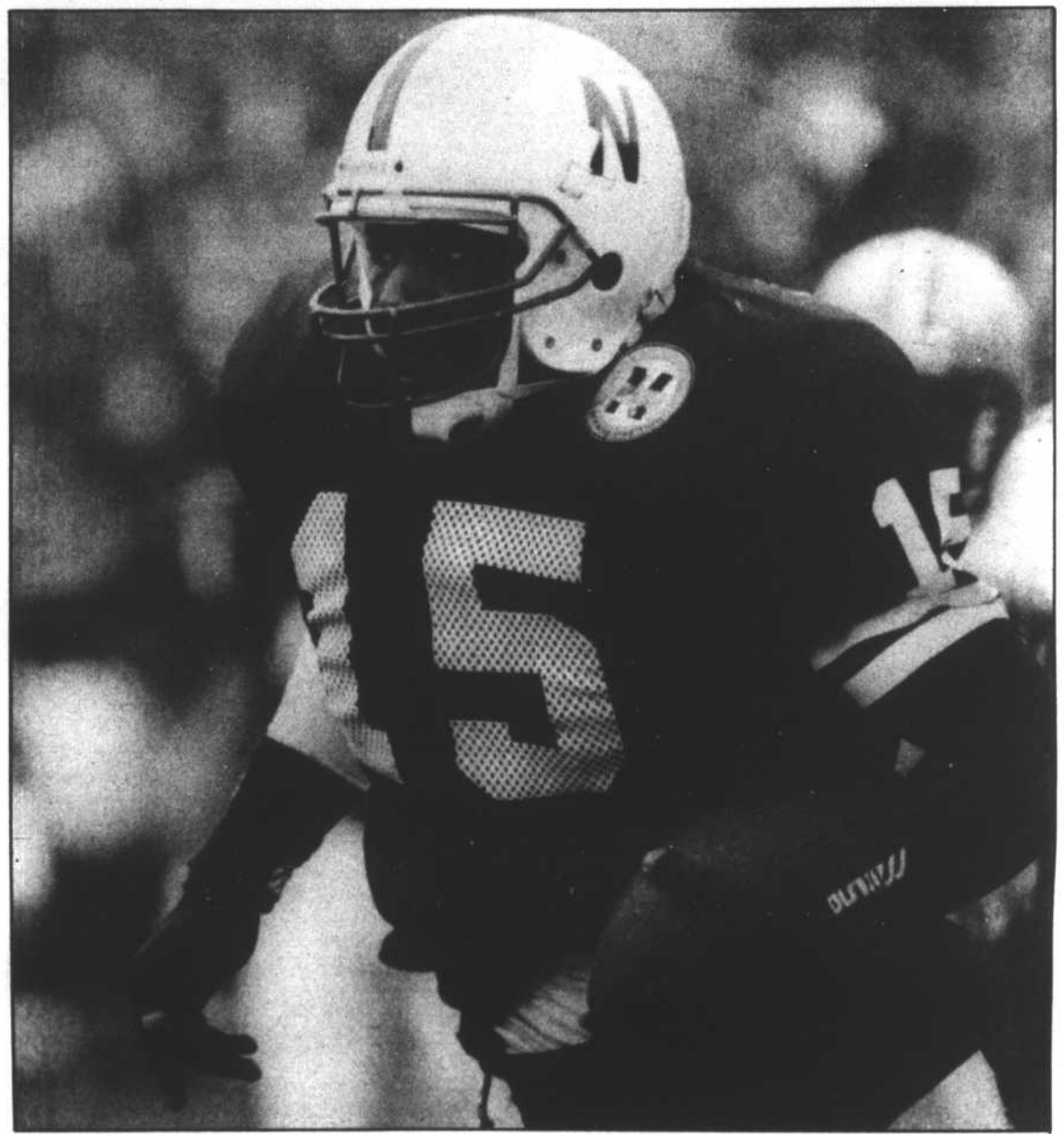
Texas went to a zone defense, which surprised Nee and the Huskers.

"Their zone defense was very effective," he said. "Last year, we didn't see a zone until I don't know when."

"But I feel comfortable with the shots we're getting."

Appalachian State comes into the meeting with a 72-65 win over University of North Carolina-Wilmington. The Mountaineers, coached by former Creighton and Colorado coach Tom

See **REBOUND** on 8



Shaun Sartin/DN

Nebraska's Tommie Frazier, a sophomore from Bradenton, Fla., looks forward to a return trip to his home state and a chance for revenge against Florida State. "I always wanted a chance to play for a national championship," Frazier said.

Winning attitude

Frazier: Huskers can beat FSU this year

By Derek Samson
Staff Reporter

Nebraska quarterback Tommie Frazier can't wait to go home again.

Frazier, a 6-foot-2, 200-pound sophomore from Bradenton, Fla., said he and his teammates were ready for the chance to redeem themselves against the Seminoles in Miami Jan. 1, after losing to Florida State in last year's Orange Bowl.

"It's meaning a lot more to me this year than last year," he said. "There is a lot more on the line."

The heavily recruited Frazier said he left his family and friends behind in his home state for exactly what he's getting this season — a shot at the national title.

"I always wanted a chance to play for a national championship,"

Frazier said. "I felt coming to Nebraska would give me the best chance for that, and it has. I am looking forward to going back to Florida, especially being No. 1."

However, Frazier said, he expects to end this homecoming on a happier note than last year. Frazier threw for 146 yards and two touchdowns on 10-of-21 passing against the Seminoles last season. But he also threw two interceptions and had just one yard rushing.

He said he and his teammates seemed to have a different attitude this season.

"We feel like no matter what, we're going to find a way to win it," Frazier said. "We went through a lot of adversity this year, and people just kept putting us down. Most teams would have broken down and fell apart, but we stuck together

and kept winning.

"When you set your goals high like we did and you accomplish them, it feels mighty good. We just have one goal left now."

Frazier said Nebraska realized it would be in the role of David against Goliath when it met Florida State.

"That's the thing about college football, is any team can beat any other team from week to week," he said. "It's hard for a team to play 11-straight games with the same emotion and come out undefeated. We proved we could get through our schedule undefeated."

"I think a lot of people were surprised that we weren't winning by 40 or 50 points every week, but we kept winning. This team finds a way to win, and we'll be ready for the Orange Bowl."

Husker luck improves during season — will it continue?

When did the Nebraska football program get so lucky?

Since Turner Gill's pass slipped through Jeff Smith's fingers in the end zone in Miami in the 1984 Orange Bowl, Nebraska fans have felt jinxed.

Every time it appeared the Huskers had that mythical national championship within reach, they faltered in November.

On Nov. 4, 1989, the Huskers were 8-0 and ranked No. 3, but fell to Colorado 27-21 in Boulder.

In 1990, the Huskers were 8-0 again and had a 12-0 lead over the Buffaloes in Lincoln on Nov. 3, before collapsing in the fourth quarter. The Huskers lost 27-12 and ended the season 9-3.

Last year, the Huskers saw some bad breaks in a 29-14 loss to Washington, but bounced back by bashing the Buffaloes and the Jayhawks in Lincoln.

They played themselves back into title contention with the impressive

wins, but then not only tripped, but fell flat on their faces in a 19-10 loss to Iowa State on Nov. 14.

But this November, Nebraska's luck changed.

In the last month, the Huskers didn't exactly look like the best team in college football, but they did pick up the breaks they needed to ascend to the top spot in the coalition poll.

The Huskers were fortunate to escape Lawrence, Kan., with a 21-20 victory after a failed two-point conversion by the Jayhawks.

But Nebraska didn't look so lucky the following Sunday, Nov. 8, the day the bowl coalition controversy began.

The win against Kansas moved the Huskers to 9-0, but Nebraska dropped one spot in the bowl poll to No. 4, behind once-beaten Miami.

Associated Press writers wanted to see a rematch of Florida State and Miami, but those ideas were short-lived after the mighty 'Noles fell to



Jeff Griesch

the Irish in South Bend, Ind., 31-24 on Nov. 13.

The Huskers moved ahead of the 'Canes, but after some clever crying by some Seminoles who couldn't accept that they had let another title slip away, Florida State held on to No. 2. Writers again looked for a rematch, this time between the Seminoles and No. 1 Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl.

Nebraska looked like it would be locked out of a title shot if Notre Dame could beat Boston College and Florida State could survive in Gainesville, Fla., against the Gators.

During the game with the Seminoles, it appeared the luck of the Irish

and God were on Notre Dame's side, but Notre Dame's luck soon ran out. The Huskers got their second big break when Boston College upset the Irish 41-39 in South Bend.

The Huskers claimed the top spot in the coaches and coalition polls and it looked like justice had been served. Now all Nebraska had to do was beat Oklahoma.

After the first Oklahoma drive, it looked like the Huskers' luck had run out, but a string of turnovers by the usually sure-handed Sooners gave Nebraska its chance.

Oklahoma dominated statistically, amassing 294 total yards to Nebraska's 179 yards — the lowest total ever in a win by a Tom Osborne coached Nebraska team.

This may not be Nebraska's most talented team under Osborne, but it has certainly been his luckiest so far.

"Yeah, I guess you could say that we have been pretty lucky," Nebraska

I-back Calvin Jones said after Nebraska's win over the Sooners. "You know the old saying that the nice guy always finishes last... it's not happening to us."

Linebacker Troy Branch said he hoped the Huskers' luck continued. "Maybe it's destiny — maybe it's luck combined with a lot of hard work — whatever it is we're focused on finishing 11-0."

While a lot of Husker fans think Nebraska's luck may have run out with Florida State finishing No. 2 in the bowl poll, maybe they should take another look.

Maybe Nebraska's luck will continue to improve.

Maybe the Huskers' luck will finally change in January.

It certainly couldn't get any worse.

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