

# Pettit says loss didn't ruin season

By Tim Pearson  
Senior Reporter

One disappointing defeat didn't spell failure for Nebraska's volleyball season, Nebraska coach Terry Pettit said.

The loss to Notre Dame in the NCAA Championships may have been disheartening, but Pettit said he was encouraged by his team's overall performance this year.

"It ends the season," Pettit said. "But you judge your season overall, and we had a very good year."

The Huskers finished the season with a 25-6 record. Five of their six losses were to teams ranked in the

**Pettit**  
Top 25.

With the loss of All-Big Eight player Eileen Shannon and two-time Big Eight player of the year Stephanie Thater, Pettit said his goal for this year's Husker team before the start of the season was for the team to be

ranked in the Top 20.

"I knew we'd be talented, and I think, as a coaching staff, we felt we could be a Top 20 team. We were eighth in the final poll, so we did that."

Nebraska's 17-year reign atop the Big Eight also ended with two consecutive losses to Oklahoma and Colorado. The Huskers finished second to Colorado with a 9-2 conference mark.

"There were a couple other goals we didn't get," Pettit said. "We wanted to defend our conference championship, and we lost by the slimmest of margins to Colorado and also to Oklahoma."

The NCAA loss to Notre Dame wasn't a result of a lack of intensity, Pettit said.

"It was more-so a lack of concentration," he said. "We seemed to lose concentration. We'd lose a point or two and then lose our concentration."

"In the second game when we were up 10-8, we lost our concentration, and they scored seven points to win the game."

The Huskers' play during the season brought in school records and several post-season awards.

Setter Nikki Stricker was named the Big Eight player of the year, and she was named first-team All-Big Eight for the second year in a row.

Sophomore middle blocker Allison Weston also was named first-team All-Big Eight. Freshman Jen McFadden was second-team All-Big Eight and the newcomer of the year in the conference. And freshman Stephanie Clerc was tabbed the Big Eight's backcourt specialist of the year.

With five starters returning next year, Pettit sees a bright future for Nebraska volleyball. Christy Johnson, who has two years of experience, will take the departing Stricker's place at setter next season.

"Christy Johnson comes out of her redshirt year," Pettit said. "On the face of it, we should be good. It depends on whether they work hard now and during the spring volleyball season."

## Nee

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Strickland is averaging 7.6 points and Badgett 9.5 points per game.

Nee said Glock, who is averaging 6.0 points per game, might be the player who could step up his play the most in Johnson's absence.

"Jason was playing at an A or A-plus level in November but then he hasn't shown what he is capable of in game situation," Nee said. "I think this weekend is a great opportunity for him to show what he can do."

Creighton enters the game with Nebraska at 1-3. Its only win came against UNO, a Division II school.

But Nee said records wouldn't matter when the Bluejays and the Huskers renewed their annual rivalry.

"It's a big game," Nee said. "We play against them all summer long in summer leagues in Omaha so we know them well. It's a healthy rivalry, and it hasn't mattered what our records have been — they've been good games."

## Huskers drop to 3-3 after loss to SMSU

From Staff Reports

Nebraska's women's basketball team was handed its third loss of the year when 17th-ranked Southwest Missouri State beat the Cornhuskers 71-57 Wednesday night in Springfield, Mo.

Nebraska, which now stands at 3-3 on the season, was held to its smallest point output since suffering a 69-57 loss at Oklahoma State on Feb. 1, 1992.

The Bearcats never trailed in the game, and had a comfortable 32-21 lead at halftime, and extended its lead to 23 at 68-45 during the second half to help pull away from the Huskers.

Nebraska forward Nafeesah Brown had a team-high 13 points, and Husker center Emily Thompson, who is a Springfield native, had a career-high eight points in the loss.

"I thought we gave them a pretty good battle," Nebraska coach Angela Beck said. "It is frustrating, but we have had a heck of a preseason already."

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## Ward

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including ESPN's Lee Corso.

"I think he's the most gifted quarterback since Roger Staubach," Corso said, comparing Ward to Navy's 1963 Heisman Trophy winner. "The best college football player I've ever seen was Staubach, and he's the best since 1963."

Although Florida State is a 17-point favorite to beat the Huskers, Ward said, it's premature for people in Tallahassee, Fla., to begin celebrating a national championship.

"(Nebraska's) a good team, and

they're not getting a lot of credit that they deserve," Ward said. "They're a lot better than they've been given credit for."

With the Seminoles being ranked No. 1 in the Associated Press poll but only third in the CNN/USA Today coaches rankings, Florida State may only be able to win a part of the national championship with a win over the Huskers.

But, Ward said, any part of the national title will suit him just fine.

"When you've been waiting five years, we can be co-champs, semi-champs, whatever — just as long as we are champs," Ward said.

Two years ago, however, a national title might have seemed out of reach when the senior from

Thomasville, Ga., took over at quarterback.

Before the 1992 season, Florida State installed its "fast-break offense" — a version of the run-and-gun — to use Ward's talents. But early on, he was plagued with an interception problem that caused many to doubt his quarterbacking abilities.

But this season Ward has thrown only four interceptions in 380 attempts, and he said being able to overcome that problem symbolized what he was about — confidence.

"The thing about me is that I never doubt my ability to do anything, and I'm confident in my abilities," Ward said. "Everyone should be confident in themselves, because if you're not, then you're doubting yourself."

## Defend

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rushing for four touchdowns, he threw for 27. Nine Seminole receivers have caught 10 or more passes this season, compared to four for the Huskers.

But the Huskers do have some reason to be optimistic about their chances against the Seminoles.

The secondary leads the Big Eight

in pass defense and ranks 12th nationally, allowing 163.9 yards per game through the air.

A victory over the Seminoles, which would assure Nebraska of its first national title since 1971, would be extra sweet for Wright and safety John Reece, the two senior starters said.

"I can't even describe what it would mean to me," Wright said. "It would

be the best feeling to win the national title. It's always been a dream. It's unspeakable right now."

Reece feels the same way.

"It would mean the world to me," he said. "I would probably be the happiest person on the earth. I can't really come up with the words to describe the way I would feel. What better way would there be to go out than on top?"

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