

Cardinal ready for tourney

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

Stanford volleyball coach Don Shaw said he had mixed emotions about playing in the State Farm-NACWAA Volleyball Classic this weekend.

Shaw isn't worried about the play of his defending national champion Cardinal. He's worried about losing valuable, early-season practice time.

Preseason No. 1 Stanford began practice Aug. 14, and traveling to Lincoln for Friday and Saturday's matches, the Cardinal lose five practices.

Once the Cardinal return to Palo Alto, Calif., they must comply with NCAA practice rules in which teams can practice only 20 hours a week.

But Stanford does get to compete in two matches, and one of those two matches could be against No. 2 Nebraska.

Despite the loss of practice time, Shaw said the tournament should benefit his team.

"We're always excited to play the top teams," Shaw said. "It has worked well for us because we always try to play as tough a schedule as we can."

Another regret, Shaw said, was that the tournament was played in the small NU Coliseum. Shaw said he thought the tournament could draw more interest if it were played in the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"If a Stanford/Nebraska match were to materialize, that would be great for the sport to have Nebraska fans fill the place," Shaw said.

Shaw, the winningest active coach in Division I (.838), said Nebraska and Stanford would have played in early September in Lincoln anyway, but a chance arose to play two matches, and the Cardinal couldn't pass it up.

"The NACWAA people contacted us, and the tournament has been something that is a long time in coming," Shaw said.

The Cardinal will bring an experienced team to the NU Coliseum.

Four of six starters return from last year's 32-1 team that finished No. 1.

Setter/outside hitter Lisa Sharpley, Volleyball Magazine's 1994 NCAA volleyball player of the year, setter/outside hitter Cary Wendell, outside hitter Marnie Triefenbach and middle blocker Barbara Ifejka all return.

One other starter will join the team in mid-September. Kristin Folkl, the NCAA freshman of the year, is currently touring with the U.S. National team and should return after tournaments in Japan and China.

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Stanford volleyball coach

Even though four seniors return, Shaw said three starting positions remained open for this weekend. That has made for some very competitive practices, Shaw said.

Shaw said returning so many players — 13 letter winners in all — had been a great help in getting the team ready quickly.

"It's good in that we don't have to prepare a lot of brand new players and don't have to take things real slow," Shaw said. "We usually sort of backtrack and take things slowly, and we've stressed execution high on the priority list."

Shaw said without Folkl this weekend, the Cardinal might experiment with different line-ups.

Regardless of the outcome this weekend, Shaw said, it was too early in the season for the tournament to be any kind of measuring stick for his team.

"You don't want to be operating at maximum ability in August; you want to be at that point in December," Shaw said. "We've been looking at a lot of different combinations without Kristin, and three spots are up for grabs. So things are very competitive."

NOTES:

● Nebraska's Billie Winsett returned to practice Tuesday after suffering a pulled quadriceps last week.

● Maria Hedbeck missed Tuesday's practice with a back injury, and Jen McFadden left practice early after straining a knee ligament doing a defensive drill. Pettit said both players should return to practice within the next two days.

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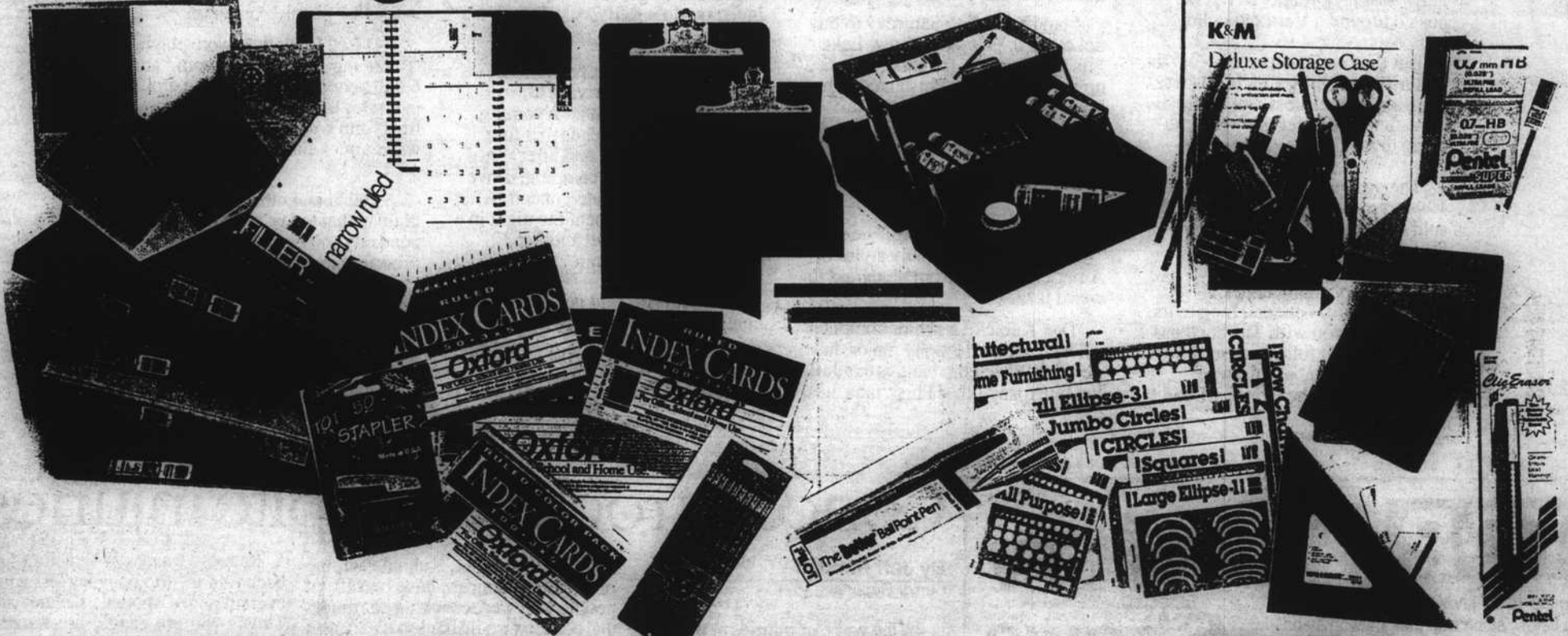
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