

SPORTS OPINION



Mitch Sherman

Coaches glad as volleyball gets attention

At the conclusion of the inaugural State Farm-NACWAA Volleyball Classic Saturday night at the NU Coliseum, Don Shaw was a happy coach.

His Stanford team had just whipped a Nebraska squad predicted by many to be the only group standing in the way of a second consecutive national title for the Cardinal.

But the victory, which will solidify Stanford's grasp atop the nation's polls, wasn't the main reason Don Shaw was a happy coach.

He was happy because women's volleyball is finally beginning to receive the attention it has long deserved. Besides the 4,000 fans jammed into the Coliseum, a national audience watched the tournament on ESPN and ESPN2.

"There is a great sport in women's volleyball," Shaw said, "and it's happening all over the country. People need to know that."

Unfortunately, not enough people do.

Women's volleyball does not exactly command attention around the Midwest.

This tournament, the first-ever of its kind, is a step in the right direction. If the Missouri and Oklahomas of the world are exposed to the level of play evident at the Coliseum this weekend, there's no telling how much the sport could grow.

One glimpse of Saturday night's Nebraska-Stanford contest is enough to hook a fan. It was a battle in every sense of the word. A battle that Penn State coach Russ Rose said might require a sequel this December in Springfield, Mass.—site of the 1995 Final Four.

"I hope people understand that Nebraska is very good," Rose said after his Nittany Lions were man-handled by the Huskers on Friday night. "This is not just a team that happened to show up. This is a team that they have been building. It's the best chance they have had to win the national title."

The whisper circulating around the Coliseum this weekend was that this Husker team may be the best since 1986, when Nebraska lost to Pacific in the final match of the NCAA Tournament.

Nebraska coach Terry Pettit never would confess to that at this point or any other point in the season. But Saturday night after losing, Pettit didn't seem too distraught. In fact, he almost seemed content that his team had been defeated in a regular-season match for the first time since Nov. 6, 1993.

"It's much easier to teach when you are not successful, than when you are successful," Pettit said.

The NACWAA Classic was a smashing success. A success for Nebraska. A success for Stanford. And a success for volleyball.

Sherman is a junior news-editorial major, a Daily Nebraskan night news editor, sports reporter and columnist.



Jon Waller/DN

The Nebraska football team elected its team captains during Sunday practice. The five Nebraska captains are, from left: Aaron Graham, Mark Gilman, Christian Peter, Phil Ellis and Tony Veland.

Huskers pick talented captains

By Mike Kluck
Staff Reporter

All five Nebraska football captains have paid their dues in the Cornhuskers' program.

They all redshirted, and they all struggled to work their way up the Nebraska depth chart.

They earned the respect of the Nebraska coaches, became starters, and Sunday, they each earned the highest honor bestowed on a Husker by his teammates.

The five senior captains: Phil Ellis, linebacker; Mark Gilman, tight end; Aaron Graham, center; Christian Peter, defensive tackle; and Tony Veland, free safety; all said they regarded their jobs as accomplishments for years of hard work.

"It's really not something you can make a goal," Graham said. "All you can do is go out every day and demonstrate leadership, hard work, and if your teammates are willing to listen, then hopefully you'll get voted in. I'm just happy I got selected."

During Veland's career, he has suffered from a broken collarbone and a ruptured right patellar tendon to limit

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TOM OSBORNE

Nebraska football coach

his playing time.

Veland, a three-year letterman from Omaha, also has switched from quarterback to free safety.

"It's a real big honor," Veland said. "I was at a point where I never knew if I was going to play or not, but now I'm playing, I'm captain and it's my last year. So it means a lot to me. I feel like I'm going out at the right time."

The captains said although they would be considered as leaders of their team, they didn't see their roles changing much.

"I think you've got to go in day in and day out and lead by example, work hard and be someone the rest of your teammates can look up to," Peter said.

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said

it was too early to determine how this group of captains compared to former groups.

"I would think they would be people you can count on," Osborne said. "They have proven themselves under fire and are good representatives, so hopefully they will work out well."

Osborne said the Huskers usually had two offensive and two defensive captains, but because the defensive vote for second place was so close, they decided to go with five captains.

Graham said there could be an additional honor to being a captain on this year's Nebraska team.

"If we win another national championship and to say I was captain of the team, that's something I'm looking forward to accomplishing," Gra-

ham said. "It probably would be one of the greater achievements I could leave here with, being the captain of a championship team."

NOTES:

●No. 2 I-back Damon Benning left football practice early with a pulled hamstring. Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said he did not know if Benning's injury would limit his action in the Huskers' season opener against Oklahoma State Thursday.

●Defensive tackle Christian Peter was held out of practice with a strained knee. Osborne said he expected Peter to return today. SAM linebacker Jay Foreman (hamstring) also was held out.

●Defensive backs Tony Veland and Eric Stokes returned after missing Friday's workout. The Huskers did not practice Saturday.

●Osborne said Nebraska would not see any more heavy contact in practice this week.

●Wingback Jon Vedral has been placed on scholarship, filling the spot opened when Tray Crayton quit the team last week.

Huskers blow big lead, lose match

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

The Nebraska volleyball team learned a valuable lesson from top-ranked Stanford in the State Farm-NACWAA Volleyball Classic Championship Saturday night.

Never get too comfortable with a lead.

The 2-0 Cardinal came from behind in the third and fourth games to defeat the 1-1 Cornhuskers, 8-15, 15-11, 15-13, 17-15, in front of a crowd of 4,074 at the NU Coliseum.

Trailing two games to one, the Huskers jumped out to a 7-1 lead and

held a commanding 14-6 advantage in the fourth game. But the No. 1 Cardinal showed why they won the national championship last season, fighting off four game points to win the game 17-15.

Stanford eventually tied the game at 14 when Nebraska setter Christy Johnson was called for a double hit violation. Nebraska was then called for a net violation, and Stanford took a 15-14 lead.

Pettit

and Stanford took a 15-14 lead.

Allison Weston, who had 20 kills and six service errors, said Nebraska was lackadaisical after getting the 14-6 lead in the fourth game.

"We weren't aggressive or assertive enough at the end of the match when it counted, and they were," Weston said. "In certain plays we didn't make the aggressive play."

The Huskers were led by Lisa Reitsma, who had a game-high 24 kills and a .408 hitting percentage.

The Huskers tied the game at 15 on a Jen McFadden block. Stanford took a 16-15 lead when McFadden was called for reaching over the net, and the Cardinal eventually won the match when Nebraska was called for another

net violation.

Coach Terry Pettit said the Cardinal kept their composure, and the Huskers didn't at the end of game four.

"We made poor decisions in the last six or seven plays," Pettit said. "You only learn that situation when you fail. And then you figure it out. And then you come back, and you're successful."

Stanford's Cary Wendell, who had 17 kills and was named the tournament's most valuable player, said Stanford never gave up in the fourth game.

See STANFORD on 12