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Recruits familiar with NU

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

When the Nebraska volleyball team's four recruits arrive next fall, none will need to wear a name tag. The reason is: Tonia Tauke, Katie Jahnke, Mandy Monson and Kim Crandall should all be familiar to the Nebraska players as well as with each other.

Three of the players have played with current Cornhuskers. Only Monson has not played with anyone on the Nebraska team.

But Monson, a 6-foot outside hitter from Wallace, has participated in the Nebraska volleyball summer camps. She was selected the camp's MVP in the summer of 1994.

Monson, who selected Nebraska over Kansas State, Ohio State and Clemson, helped Wallace to a state quarterfinal appearance as a senior. Playing Class D-2 volleyball, she said she hadn't been exposed to the play that Jahnke and Tauke had.

"All I can say is the level of competition might not be as good," Monson said, "but there are a lot of good individuals."

Tauke is a 6-3 middle blocker from Abraham Lincoln High School in Council Bluffs, Iowa. She said her familiarity with the Nebraska program made it an easy decision to come to Lincoln.

"I was really close with the play-

"A lot of the players already knew me at Nebraska. At the other places, they wouldn't even talk to you."

KATIE JAHNKE

Nebraska volleyball recruit

ers, and that helped my decision," Tauke said. "I played with a lot of the players over the summer, so playing with them won't be new to me."

Current Husker Renee Saunders played with Tauke on her club team, and Tauke said she was good friends with sophomore Lisa Reitsma. Tauke also has played with freshmen Jaime Krondak and Lisa Avery.

Before signing with Nebraska, Tauke made trips to Colorado and Iowa State.

To prepare for next season, Tauke said she was working on fundamentals with Gwen Egbert, who played for the Huskers from 1981-82.

One of Tauke's club teammates, Crandall, will walk on at Nebraska. Tauke said she was happy that Crandall, a 5-7 setter from Papillion-LaVista High School, would be following her to Lincoln. Crandall has been the setter on Tauke's club team for the past four years.

Jahnke led her West Bend (Iowa) East High School team to a state championship with a 49-5 record and a No. 22 national ranking last year. She chose Nebraska over Florida, UCLA and Notre Dame.

"A lot of the players already knew me at Nebraska, so that was nice," Jahnke said. "At the other places, they wouldn't even talk to you."

The 6-foot middle blocker played on a junior national team with Avery, Saunders and freshman Fiona Nepo in Puerto Rico. Another reason she chose the Huskers was because of Coach Terry Pettit.

"He had a plan, and he told me exactly where he wanted me to be in my four years at Nebraska," Jahnke said. "He was honest, and I appreciated that."

Pettit said it was a typical recruiting class.

"You won't know until four years later how this class compares to others," Pettit said.

Grace puts focus on Olympics

By Gregg Madsen
Staff Reporter

Richard Grace's drive to the 1996 Olympic Games almost came to a premature halt last summer.

At the Olympic Festival last July, Grace, a former Nebraska gymnast, decided to compete on rings when another competitor backed out. It was a decision he said he later regretted.

In that unscheduled routine, Grace injured the rotator cuff on his left shoulder.

"We thought he might be done for good after he hurt his shoulder," Nebraska coach Francis Allen said.

But Grace had surgery to repair the injury, and competed again Feb. 2-3 at the Winter Cup Challenge in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Grace said he felt terrible about his 19th-place finish at the challenge, but Allen said he was pleased that Grace was able to stay healthy.

"We're just looking for continued improvement up to the Olympic Trials for him," Allen said.

Grace won the NCAA all-around title last year, scoring a 58.325 and helping the Cornhuskers to a runner-up finish at the NCAA Championships

meet.

After competing for the Huskers from 1991-95, Grace said he was able to focus all of his attention on preparing for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta.

Besides the shoulder injury, Grace recently has had to deal with another problem, a divorce. He was married on Dec. 16, only to separate with his bride in early January.

"Three weeks ago I was in shambles," Grace said. "But I would come into the gym and take all my frustrations out here."

Grace said the support of friends and family had allowed him to focus his attention on his Olympic dream.

"He's back in the grind now," Allen said.

A product of the Cahoy gymnastics school in Omaha, Grace said he decided to remain at Nebraska to prepare for the Olympics instead of training at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

"Francis is the best," he said. "I feel I have to follow a tradition. I look around the gym here, and there's these great gymnasts everywhere. I need to keep the tradition alive."

Grace's training over the past few

months, he said, has been focused on maintaining consistency. Even though he cannot compete in meets with his former Nebraska teammates, Grace still works out daily with the Huskers.

"Competing instills confidence," he said. "It's like starting over to go out there and compete."

The Winter Challenge was a preliminary event, but at the USA Championships on June 7-8, only the top 14 gymnasts will advance. From there, the top six and one alternate will be chosen for the Olympic team at the Olympic Trials in Boston.

"The Olympic Trials are brutal," Allen said. "But if he can get healthy and clean up on routines, then he'll make the Olympic team."

The competition at the Olympic Trials, Allen and Grace said, will be at a much higher level than the NCAA Championships.

An All-American as a sophomore, junior and senior, Grace co-holds the school record on floor exercise with a 9.90. One reason he said he hoped to make the Olympic team was to bring more attention to the integrity of Allen and the quality of the Nebraska gymnastics program.

Big 8

Continued from Page 7

felt we were going to check it in."

Oklahoma lost four straight conference games from Jan. 15 to Jan. 27. The Sooners have turned things around recently, winning their last three Big Eight games.

"I can't say enough about the character of our guys," Oklahoma coach Kelvin Sampson said.

Missouri also struggled this year, losing four of five before rebounding with home victories over Nebraska and Kansas last week. Tiger coach Norm Stewart said he was proud of his team's character. Missouri is 13-0 at home this year.

"We've always had good people. When we have adversity we come closer together," Stewart said.

Colorado, which is tied with Oklahoma State for last place in the league

Team	Conference		Overall	
	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses
Kansas	7	1	19	2
Iowa State	6	2	17	5
Missouri	5	4	15	8
Kansas State	5	5	14	8
Oklahoma	4	4	13	9
Nebraska	3	6	15	9
Oklahoma State	2	6	12	8
Colorado	2	6	8	12

at 2-6, is showing signs of life, having won three of its last four, including an 84-55 win over Missouri-Kansas City

Saturday and a 1-point win at Kansas State on Feb. 7. The Buffaloes are 3-3 under interim coach Ricardo Patton.

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