

NIT continues

The Nebraska basketball team heads southwest to Nevada in its quest to become the first team to repeat as NIT Champions in 53 years. PAGE 7

Video break

For students who don't have the money to go on a real spring break trip, this week's new video releases offer affordable escapism. PAGE 9

Winter Hangover

Windy, light snow, high 40. Clear tonight, low 27.

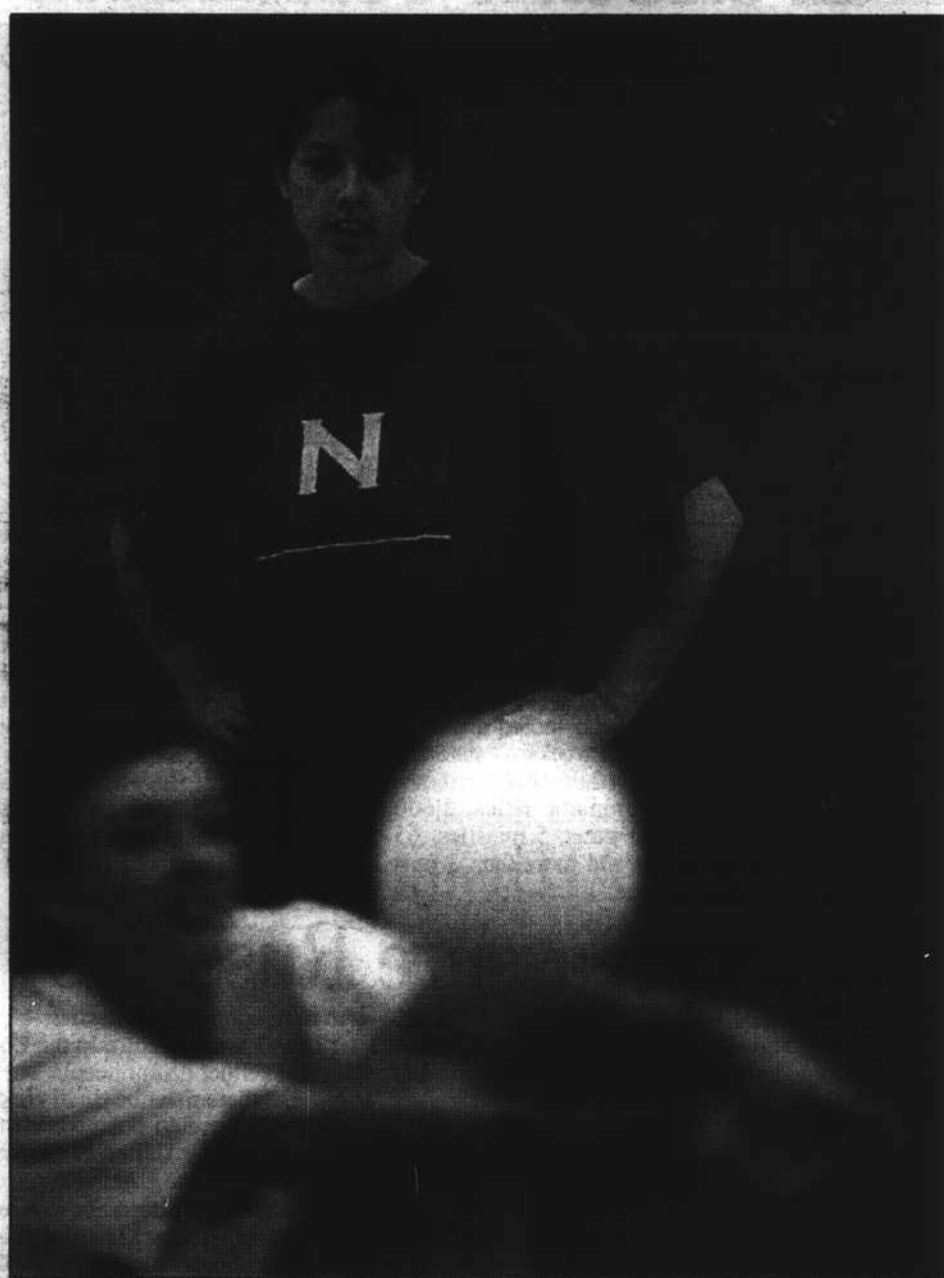
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Tornado



MATT MILLER/DN

NU ASSISTANT Volleyball Coach Nikki Best helps freshman Tonia Tauke with her digging technique. Best is outside hitter for the Nebraska Tornados.

Professional volleyball takes Nebraska by storm

BY ANGELA HEYWOOD
Staff Reporter

It's the middle of March and tornadoes are tearing through the Midwest.

As the state's newly acquired professional women's volleyball team, the Nebraska Tornados (sic) have already drawn a whirlwind of excitement.

Coach Joel McCartney said the franchise, which moved here from San Diego in November, attracted a National Volleyball Association record crowd of 3,046 to its first match against the St. Louis Spirits. The Tornados won the Feb. 1 match at

Omaha Burke High School.

"It was an awesome crowd," McCartney said. "We were stunned at how many people came out to see us."

Since then the Tornados (2-3) have fallen on hard times winning one of their last four matches — a win over the Arizona Flames, a loss to the Iowa Blizzard and back-to-back losses to the Colorado Thunder.

Dave Spencer, commissioner of the Great Plains Regional Volleyball Association, said the Tornados' second and third home matches drew crowds of 2,120 and

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Business alliance to give Nebraskans affordable housing

BY ERIN GIBSON
Senior Reporter

About 25,000 Nebraska families will find affordable housing thanks to a \$2 billion partnership announced Monday between the state and a private business.

Fannie Mae, a private company that is the nation's largest provider of home mortgage funds, announced its "HouseNebraska" plan would help middle- and low-income Nebraskans overcome the housing crisis in Nebraska.

Robert Zoellick, executive vice president of Fannie Mae, said the lack of affordable housing in Nebraska could slow the state's solid economic growth.

"If not addressed, the lack of affordable housing could impede business investment," Zoellick said.

To prevent this, Fannie Mae will team up with the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority to help reduce down payments required on homes for families making at or below the median income of the area.

The company and NIFA will also help rural employers offer housing assistance to workers, and help American Indians living on reservations get affordable loans for construction and renovation of homes, he said.

Fannie Mae will open its office in Lincoln at 13th and O streets to coordinate the \$2 billion affordable housing partnership, Zoellick said.

U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel said in a letter the partnership was an excellent answer to the affordable housing question in Nebraska and a great way to help Nebraskans and the economy at the same time.

"Public-private partnerships, such as this one

"

At the end of the day, nobody does anybody any good if you get somebody in a home they can't heat."

ROBERT ZOELICK
executive vice president of Fannie Mae

with Fannie Mae, have my full support," Hagel wrote.

Zoellick said the company chose Nebraska because of state and business leaders' commitment to solving the lack of affordable housing in the state.

He was "extremely impressed" by the turnout at Gov. Ben Nelson's recent affordable housing summit, Zoellick said. Although the state has an excellent record of addressing housing needs, "Fannie Mae wants to do even more," he said.

The company allocated \$10 million to NIFA to reduce down payments to as little as 3 percent of the home's value.

This will help low- and middle-income Nebraskans purchase homes, he said, because they often have no nest egg for a down payment on a home but have good credit, he said.

"These people are people who pay their bills,"

Please see **HOUSING** on 6

Law enforcement unites to protest handgun bill

BY ERIN SCHULTE
Senior Reporter

Law enforcement officials presented a unified front Monday protesting a bill that would allow Nebraskans to carry concealed handguns.

Representatives from the Fraternal Order of Police, the Nebraska Sheriffs' Association and the Nebraska Police Officers' Association vowed to speak with one strong opposing voice to LB465.

The bill, whose principal introducer was Sen. Stan Schellpeper of Stanton, would allow Nebraskans to apply for a license to legally carry a concealed weapon.

If the bill passed, 70,000 more concealed handguns would be carried by Nebraskans, said North Platte Police Chief Martin Gutschenritter, who spoke on behalf of the Nebraska Police Officers' Association.

Gutschenritter said the public should be concerned about public safety if the bill passed. He

Legislature

said he suspected if the bill was fully understood, people would tell their legislators not to vote for it.

"If the public understands what's happening, they'll be up in arms," he said.

Nebraska law does not allow carrying concealed weapons unless carriers can prove they are protecting themselves, their property or their families.

Douglas County Sheriff Tim Dunning said the bill is an unfunded mandate and will leave law enforcement agencies in the red. Each applicant must pay a \$75 fee for a license, he said, but only \$15 goes to sheriffs' departments to do background checks on applicants.

Another problem with the bill is that it can leave officers professionally, personally and criminally liable if people misuse firearms after

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