

Big 12 volleyball teams set up NU for possible loss

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Oklahoma will rely on four returning starters, including senior outside hitters Patrice Arrington and Melissa Peterson.

"I don't dare look into my crystal ball and predict what will happen throughout the conference this season," said Texas A&M coach Laurie Corbelli. "I think that a lot of the teams are depending on certain individuals and if they aren't there, it will be a totally different story."

With several talented and experienced athletes in the conference, it is difficult to determine a preseason MVP. Most coaches agree that the Huskers' Lisa Reitsma and Fiona Nepo, Texas' Demetria Sance and Texas A&M's Kristie Smedsrud will dominate. Reitsma, Nepo and Sance were All-Americans last season and Reitsma and Sance are strong national player of the year candidates this season.

Moore, who is in his first year at Texas after leading Kansas State to a 26-9 mark last season, gives the advantage to his new player, Sance, when predicting the league MVP race.

"Demetria Sance, in my opinion," Moore said, "is one of the best, if not the best, player in the nation. She has a great all-around game. She's just a huge attribute to our team."

Texas will need to rely on Sance for stability this season, Moore said, if the Longhorns hope to challenge Nebraska.

"I'd like to think that we'll know what direction we're heading by the time we go up to Wisconsin for the Big Ten-Big 12 Challenge," Moore said. "But I don't think we will. The real goal is to feel comfortable by the second round of conference play. By then, we need to feel confident in our system."

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Laurie Corbelli
Texas A&M coach

Corbelli, whose team also figures to be involved in the league race, predicts little drop-off at Texas despite a new coach.

"It's hard to tell whether a new coach will mesh or clash with new players," Corbelli said. "But I think Texas will be as strong as ever. I know the ability of that team and Jim Moore is a good coach."

Corbelli's team is one of four conference teams ranked in the USA Today Coaches Poll. No. 13 Texas A&M is joined by No. 3 Nebraska, No. 9 Texas and No. 23 Colorado.

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