

Sports Opinion



Antone Oseka Undefeated teams can't look ahead

Is it Jan. 3 already?
If so, Nebraska should be losing to Kansas in basketball.
As a matter of fact, I haven't seen any snow yet.
I thought it was the middle of October, half way through the football season. I guess not.
I guess it's the end of the season and Penn State is crushed after going undefeated and still not winning at least a piece of the national title.
Silly me, I thought it was October and the World Series was still being decided.
That's what everyone seems to be forgetting. There's a lot of football to be played yet. Who's to say the national championship is the Nittany Lion-Cornhusker showdown anyway?
Aren't there still some other teams in the undefeated circle? Michigan, Florida State, North Carolina, Oklahoma State and Toledo all have goose eggs at the end of their respective records. Even Husker quarterback Scott Frost isn't sure that a Penn State-Nebraska game would decide the national title.
"It's insane to go through a whole year and have two undefeated teams and not know who the national champion is," Frost said. "I don't think it was right for Penn State not to get in '94, I don't think it would be right for either of us not to get it this year."
"If it got to be the end of the season and two teams were undefeated, it could be Florida State and Michigan, or it could be Penn State and Nebraska. It just would not be right for that to happen."

And he's right. But let's get back into the reality that the season is far from over. Michigan and Penn State still have to face off, eliminating one of them. Nebraska has yet to face Colorado. And even though the Buffaloes look bad now, they'll be a challenge for the Big Red.
So let's get back to pre-Halloween bliss. Enjoy the weekends and watch the teams eliminate each other from the national-championship hunt. It could be in two weeks there are no undefeated teams left in the country. That would cloud the picture even more. All the teams that were supposed to be eliminated with a loss - Tennessee, Florida and Washington - could find new life.

So get those games underway and enjoy the rest of the season. I'm not ready for 1998 quite yet.

Oseka is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.

NU freshmen find court time

■ Meendering and Oxley help pull NU out of its three-match slump.

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Assignment Reporter

Nancy Meendering and Angie Oxley share a long list of contrasting characteristics. The left-handed Meendering occupies the right side of the frontcourt for the Nebraska volleyball team. The right-handed Oxley plays on the left.

Meendering owns an outspoken demeanor. Oxley speaks softly and deliberately.

Meendering accumulates her kills with an explosive leap and a strong swing of her arm, sending the ball directly to the floor. Oxley collects hers with smart placement, sending the ball around or over opposing blockers.

The strength of one is often the weakness of the other, but the one similarity the two NU freshmen share remains their greatest asset.

"The key with freshman is not always what they can do for you, it's what they don't do," Pettit said. "When they get to the point where they don't make errors, it increases their opportunities to play."

Both Meendering and Oxley enjoyed increased court time last weekend in Texas. In the midst of the Cornhuskers' first three-match losing streak in 20 years, the two freshmen emerged for the first time this season as key contributors.

Oxley pounded nine kills and recorded five digs against No. 11 Texas Friday. Oxley, who gave up her redshirt season 18 matches into the year to fill the offensive void left by Jaime Krondak, has mixed feelings about forgoing her redshirt season. Back spasms limit Krondak to play in the back row.

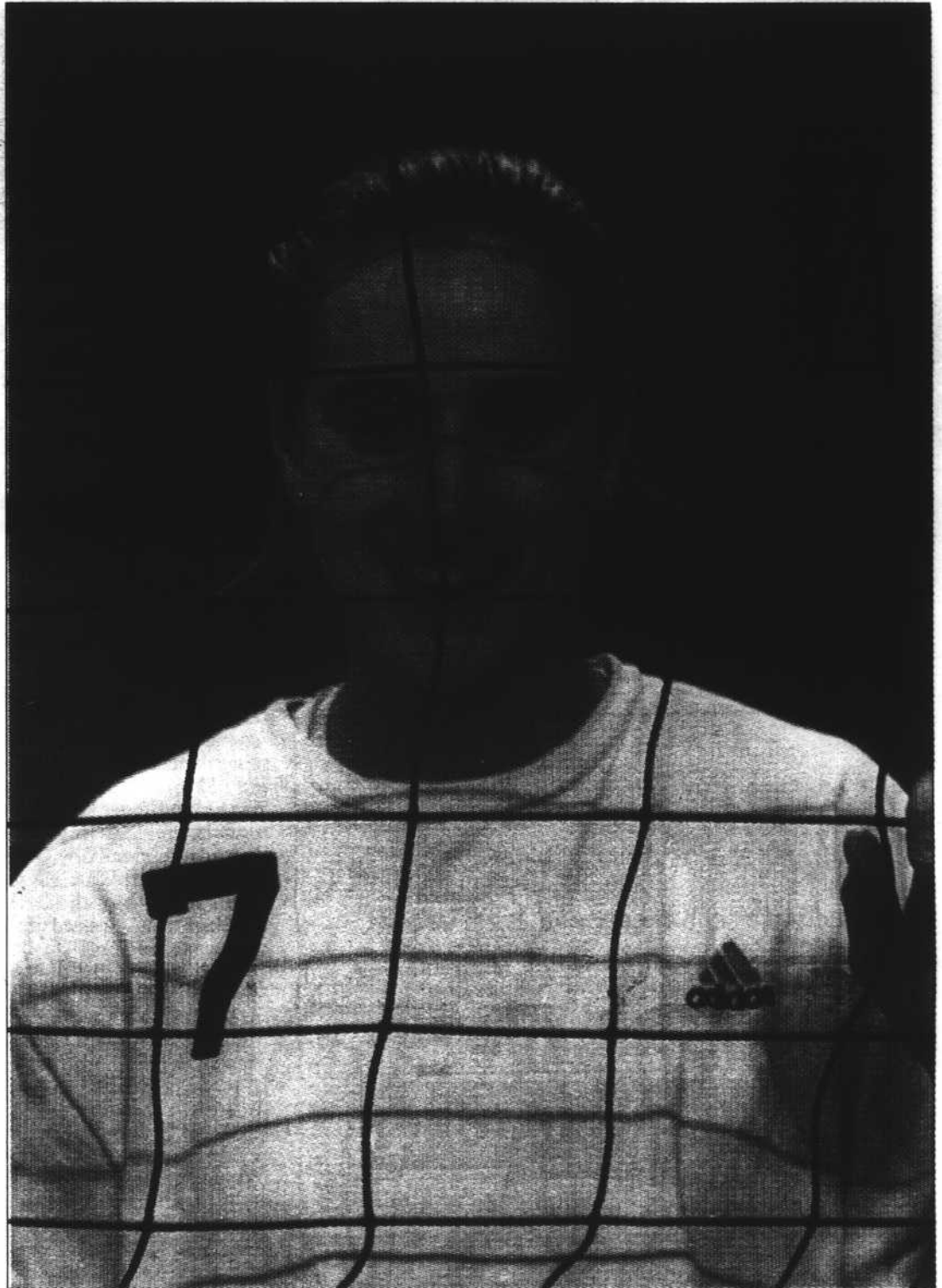
"It's definitely a positive if I can help the team," Oxley said. "But I lost a year by doing that, so it's negative in that way."

"I'm really happy, but I know I can play better. My main priority is not to make errors at critical times."

The 6-foot former middle blocker from Ogallala continued her success Saturday against 12th-ranked Texas A&M in College Station, Texas, by topping her debut performance when she led NU with 14 digs and totaled 10 kills as Nebraska snapped its three-match skid.

"You have to watch her to know how good

Please see **FRESHMEN** on 8



NIKKI FOX/DN
NANCY MEENDERING pounded five kills Saturday in Nebraska's four-game win over Texas A&M. Meendering and fellow NU freshman Angie Oxley have assumed important positions in the Nebraska lineup after shifts to correct the Huskers' three-match losing streak.

Injuries end Avery's career

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Assignment Reporter

The inevitable conclusion to 2½ injury-plagued years for Lisa Avery arrived last week when the Nebraska volleyball player accepted a medical hardship scholarship, surrendering her remaining two years of eligibility with the Cornhuskers.

Avery, a 6-foot-1 middle blocker, has suffered from lingering effects of reconstructive surgeries on both knees since coming to Nebraska in 1995. Avery tore her left anterior cruciate ligament in 1993 while competing for Shawnee Mission (Kan.) South High School.

Two years later, after accepting a scholarship from the Huskers, Avery tore her right ACL.

The injuries damaged Avery's jumping ability and lateral movement, which proved too difficult for Avery to overcome, NU Coach Terry Pettit said.

"She's very gifted and very talented, but it's very difficult in a sport where you have to jump this much to have two ACL injuries," Pettit said.

"I'm disappointed for her because so much of an athlete's identity and they way they express themselves comes while participating in athletics at a high level."

Avery redshirted in 1995 and played in 12 of NU's 34 matches in 1996. Avery pounded a career-high 10 kills against Brigham Young University before sustaining a stress fracture in her left femur.

Avery totaled three kills in Nebraska's NCAA Tournament semifinal loss to Stanford last season, the final match of her career.

Pettit has seen these circumstances before. Last season, middle blocker Stacie Maser accepted a medical hardship after suffering ACL injuries and a rehabilitation period similar to Avery's. The situation is

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TERRY PETTIT
NU volleyball coach

always difficult to accept, Pettit said.

"When they're injured, it's certainly no fault of their own," Pettit said. "It's not that they did anything technically wrong. In Lisa's case, it happened before she even came to Nebraska."

"You have to feel for her, but she has the focus to concentrate on something else just as intently as she concentrated on sports. She's a very intelligent person, and she'll be all right."

Osborne says No. 1 ranking changes little for Nebraska

BY ANTONE OSEKA
Senior Reporter

It's hard to keep Nebraska off the top of the polls.

The Cornhuskers (6-0 overall and 3-0 in the Big 12 Conference) ascended to the top of the polls this week after a 29-0 shutout of Texas Tech and previously No. 1 Penn State struggled at home to defeat Minnesota 16-15.

Twice in the last three years, the Cornhuskers have finished the season as the No. 1 team in the nation.

Last year, the Huskers started the season as the top team, but an early season 19-0 loss to

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Avery