

Sports

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Cinderella Pepperdine to play Huskers

BY ANDREW STRNAD
Staff writer

Unlike March Madness in college basketball, where upsets dominate the NCAA tournament, volleyball's NCAA tournament historically doesn't have many Cinderella stories.

This year's tournament is no different, as 15 of the 16 seeded teams have advanced to the regional finals to be played this weekend at four different sites. But there is one Cinderella: unseeded Pepperdine. Friday, Cinderella gets to play Nebraska.

NU (30-1), the top seed in the Pacific Region will play host to the Waves (19-10) Friday night at the NU Coliseum at 7:30.

No. 2 seed Wisconsin (29-4) will play No. 3 seed UC-Santa Barbara (28-5) at 5 p.m.

Nebraska vs. Pepperdine

Pepperdine found its way to Lincoln thanks to a five-game victory, the Waves' first ever tourney win, over No. 4 Michigan State in the first round.

The Waves beat North Carolina in the second round and will make their first appearance in the Sweet Sixteen.

"I'm not too surprised," Volleyball Magazine editor Jon Hastings said. "They've got some good recruits coming next year, but the team they have this year is pretty good."

NU Coach Terry Pettit, who often says he is never surprised, wasn't shocked to learn that Pepperdine would make its first-ever appearance in Lincoln.

"Obviously Pepperdine is pretty good," Pettit said. "If we want to keep playing, we'd like to get

better." As the lone unseeded team remaining, the Waves represent the last team left from the West Coast Conference in the tournament.

Along with Nebraska, Texas is the only remaining Big 12 school in the tournament, which surprised Hastings.

"Colorado losing to Illinois was a mild upset in our minds," Hastings said. "We had them ranked pretty high all year."

Texas, which finished second to NU in the Big 12, will face Stanford in the Mountain Regional semifinals which are hosted by Big West Conference Champion Long Beach State.

The top-ranked 49ers will play the Illini, who swept the Buffaloes in the second round.

Like the Big 12, the Western Athletic Conference and the Big 10 Conference each sent six teams to the tournament with three remaining

in the Big 10 and two in the WAC.

Penn State, top seed in the Central Region, will play host to Louisville, while WAC champion Brigham Young will play Pacific.

The East Region, which has Florida as the top seed, will have the Gators playing No. 4 seed Southern California.

Florida's Southeastern Conference rival Arkansas will play Hawaii in the other regional semifinal.

Hastings said LBSU would win the tournament before it started and is sticking with his pick.

"Even though they drew a tough region with Stanford in it they're still the team to beat," Hastings said.

The tournament resumes play Thursday night, with NU playing on Friday. Only 300 general admission tickets remain for the Friday/Saturday session.

NU fans rush for flights, tickets to Holiday Bowl

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Senior staff writer

The Nebraska football team's 9-3 season has eliminated it from a bowl game with national championship implications for only the second time since 1994, but Cornhusker fans haven't proven apathetic about NU's postseason situation.

Fans are scrambling to find airline flights to San Diego and cheap tickets to the Culligan Holiday Bowl, and the supply for both is dwindling. The Dec. 30 game officially extended invitations to the 11th-ranked Cornhuskers and 7th-ranked Arizona (11-1) Sunday.

And Holiday Bowl officials are expecting this year's crowd to eclipse the attendance record of 61,892, a mark that was set in 1987 when Heisman Trophy winner Barry Sanders and Oklahoma State beat Wyoming.

"We feel that this matchup is one of the best in Holiday Bowl history, and that is certainly indicated by the amount of tickets being purchased," Holiday Bowl President Weldon Donaldson said.

The Nebraska ticket office reported selling between 1,500 and 1,800 tickets by Monday afternoon, and about 4,000 tickets remain. The Holiday Bowl allotted both NU and Arizona 11,500 tickets.

Finding flights to San Diego presents a greater challenge to fans than nabbing game tickets. Laura Stueck, a travel agent at Lincoln Travel, said fans have purchased tickets ranging from \$500 to \$900. But Laura Tanksley, an agent at Omni Travel, said the supply of flights costing less than \$1,000 is rapidly declining. Many Husker fans traveling to San Diego bought plane tickets before NU's final conference game, a 16-14 victory over Colorado.

"A few weeks ago you could get a ticket for \$200," Tanksley said. "Now the only fares left, for the most part, are first class seats that could cost you up to \$1,800."

Tanksley said some fans have inquired about flying to Los Angeles International Airport, renting a car and driving to San Diego, but that strategy saves little money, if any at all. The problem, Tanksley said, is not flying into San Diego.

"The problem with that is that to fly out of Lincoln, Omaha or Kansas City into California, you will most probably have to get a connecting flight from Phoenix, Salt Lake City or Denver, and those connecting flight tickets have been hard to come by," Tanksley.

Marti Paquette, Nebraska Alumni Association Travel Coordinator, recommends complete travel, lodging and ticket packages as a way to avoid outrageously high airfares. The NAA began

Holiday Bowl
Dec. 30, 5 p.m.
San Diego, Calif.
Qualcomm Stadium
Huskers vs. A

JON FRANK/DN

"A few weeks ago you could get a ticket for \$200. Now the only fares left, for the most part, are first class seats that could cost you up to \$1800."

LAURA TANKSLEY
Omni Travel agent

offering five package options, ranging in cost from \$300 to \$1,115, two days after the Colorado game. The most expensive package, the Deluxe Air, costs \$1,115 and includes a four-day stay at the Wyndham Emerald Plaza Hotel as well as transportation and some meals.

The most popular package offered by the NAA, the Ticket Combo, includes passes to both the game and the Husker Huddle pep rally beforehand. Paquette estimated 500 Ticket Combos have been sold.

The NAA requested 750 tickets from Holiday Bowl officials and have sold around 600.

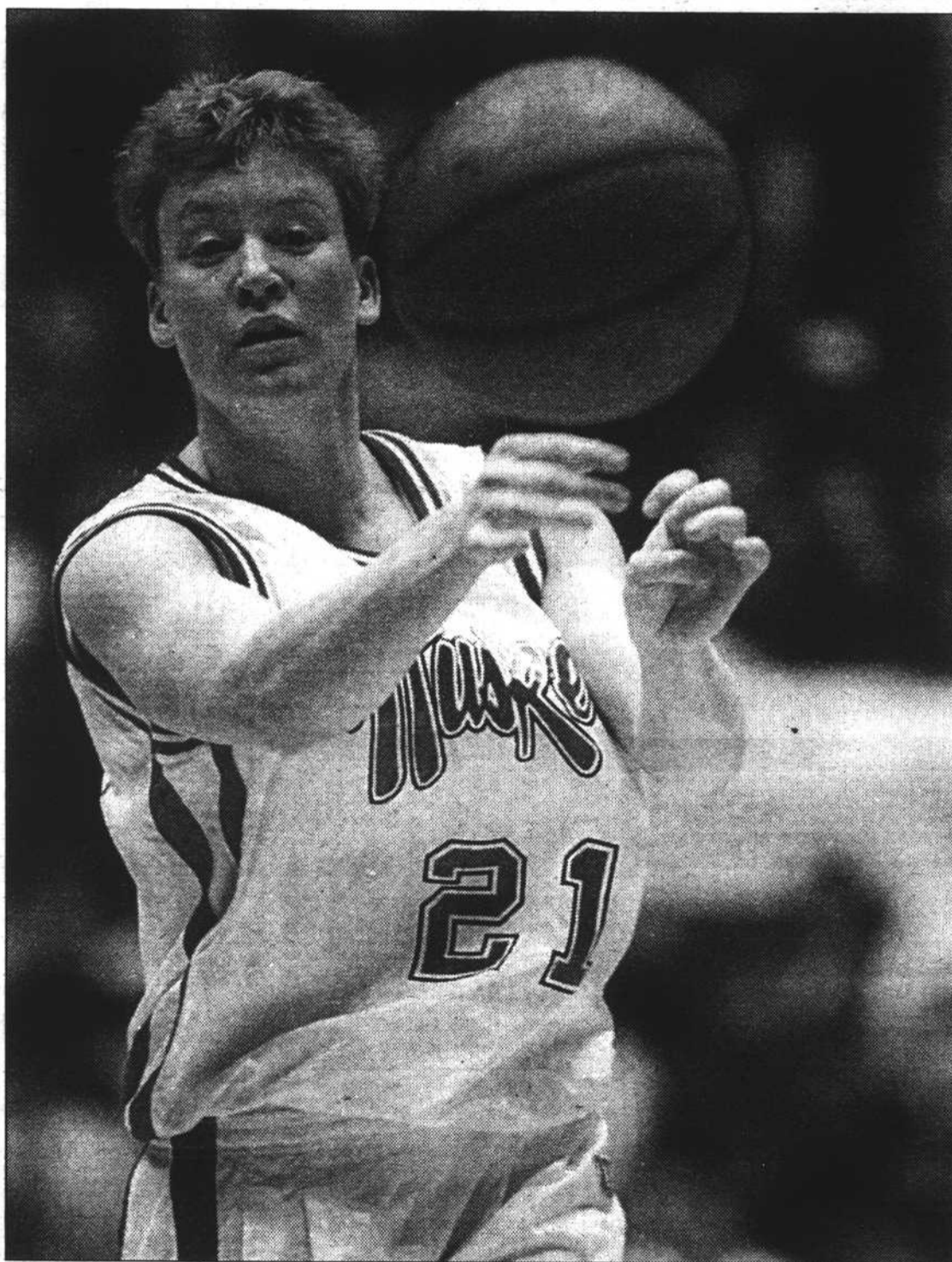
Paquette said the high interest in the second-tier bowl has been pleasantly surprising.

"Nebraska has gone to a Florida bowl game so many times that it didn't appear to be really exciting to the fans traveling last year, even though it was a national championship bowl game," Paquette said.

"We've been surprised and delighted in the interest," she said, "but had we been in Miami again, I don't know that it would have been as high."

Fans wishing to purchase travel and ticket packages can contact the NAA at (402) 472-2841.

For tickets only, fans can call the NU ticket office at (800) 824-4733 or (402) 472-3111. A small number of limited-view seats are sold out at the San Diego box office.



DN FILE PHOTO

Guard Brooke Schwartz will help lead the 6-1 Huskers tonight at the Devaney Center against Troy State.

NU hopes for better start vs. Troy State

BY CHRISTOPHER HEINE
Staff writer

The Nebraska women's basketball team is out to break a bad habit before it becomes a serious problem at home tonight against Troy State.

The Cornhuskers have started sluggishly in their last two games against Drake and Creighton. They trailed both teams by more than 10 points well into the second half before coming back to win each contest.

After Monday's practice, the Huskers sounded intent on playing well early against the 0-6 Trojans.

Husker guard Nicole Kubik knows her team can't get into the routine of starting slowly. Kubik said NU was fortunate to be playing teams that have yet to establish a lot of confidence, and therefore couldn't

threaten NU late in the game.

"We just have to come out and play right at the beginning of the game," she said. "We can't get down 10, 15 points against a good team and expect to come back and win. Creighton, I think, got a little scared towards the end."

Forward Naciska Gilmore said the Huskers have had a hard time keeping mentally focused during their current stretch of six games in 15 days.

"I think all the games have something to do with how we've been starting," Gilmore said. "We are not coming out mentally focused enough, and that's something we need to start doing."

Kubik said NU won't take the winless Trojans lightly in the 7:05 p.m. game. She said the Huskers have talked about starting fast against TSU.

"We talked about it at the end of practice," Kubik said. "We said, 'Let's go out and jump on them early.'"