

# NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS

*For Nebraska, attitude is key to Final Four berth*

BY ANDREW STRNAD  
Staff writer

Simply put, the NCAA volleyball tournament is a player's tournament.

At least, that's how Nebraska Coach Terry Pettit describes it.

"Coaches can get a team to the tournament, but players are the ones who win it at this level," Pettit said.

If Pettit is right, then the Cornhuskers (30-1) have a lot going for them entering this weekend's Pacific Regional play.

The Huskers possess one of the top players in the nation in senior setter Fiona Nepo.

Nepo is certainly expected to be named to her third All-American team later this month, and Pettit said the Huskers' level of play is determined by

Nepo's presence.

"It all begins with Fiona," Pettit said. "Teams normally play to the level of their setter."

Nepo has played in 14 tournament matches and along with senior outside hitter Jaime Krondak and senior middle blocker Megan Korver, the three have played in a combined 38 tournament matches.

Both Nepo and Krondak were members of

the regionals after upsetting No. 4-seed Michigan State in the first round last weekend.

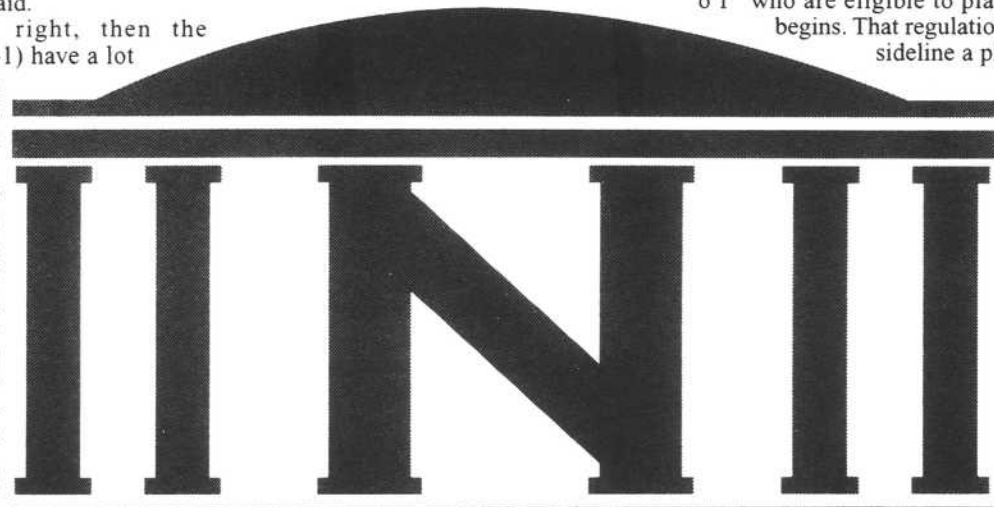
Pettit was impressed with the quality of Pepperdine's starting personnel, which he said doesn't have a weak link.

Pettit will have personnel problems of his own, as the NCAA dictates the number of players who can participate.

All teams must designate the 12 players who are eligible to play before the match begins. That regulation will force Pettit to sideline a player or two who he would normally want to play.

"I've never had this situation before where I have to sit several players," Pettit said. "These women work so hard all year long, and some of them won't get to play."

The Huskers have what many consider one of the deepest teams in school history, and Pettit said he hopes the NCAA looks



Nebraska (30-1)

Seed: 1

Ranking: 3

Conference Record: 19-1

Tourney Record: 37-15

How they got there: Beat Morgan St. 3-0 in 1st round, beat Utah in 2nd round

NU's 1995 national championship team, and Krondak said the mindset of the players determines who plays in the Final Four and who doesn't.

"It's all attitude," Krondak said. "What team has the mentality will dominate."

In the way of a possible third trip to the Final Four in the last four years is unseeded Pepperdine (19-10).

The Waves are making their first trip to

into expanding the tournament rosters.

"I think this is something the NCAA needs to address," Pettit said. "This is not one of the more pleasurable things I get to do."

However, even with a roster limited to 12, the Huskers are still heavy favorites given that they will be playing in front of a sold-out NU Coliseum, where they have won 62 consecutive matches.

## PEPPERDINE WAVES

*Waves not intimidated despite unseeded status*

BY JAMES NICAS  
Staff writer

As the only unseeded team to advance to the Regional Semi-Finals, it would be easy to label the Pepperdine Waves as the "Cinderella" of the NCAA volleyball tournament.

The way Pepperdine Head Coach Nina Matthies sees it, the Waves aren't wearing any glass slippers.

Either way, after defeating No. 14 Michigan State on MSU's home court last Friday and North Carolina on Saturday, the unranked Waves, 19-10, will be looking to extend their pumpkin ride tonight against Nebraska at 7:30 in the NU Coliseum.

"Cinderella or not, we're just not happy to be here," Matthies said. "I mean we're happy to be here, but that is not the end of our goals."

The season has been an up and down year for the Waves. Pepperdine began the year 7-6. Since then, they have gone 12-4, including winning seven of their last eight.

Along with recent victories over No. 16 San Diego and No. 25 Loyola Marymount, the Waves lost

to No. 6 Hawaii and No. 15 UCLA. Pepperdine's late-season

injuries and playing with six freshmen a few times," Matthies said. "As you can see, I don't have any gray hairs, so we've survived."

The cream of the Waves' crop is first team All-West Coast Conference outside hitter Lindsay Phillips. Phillips leads the team in kills per game (4.75), aces (43) and digs (377).

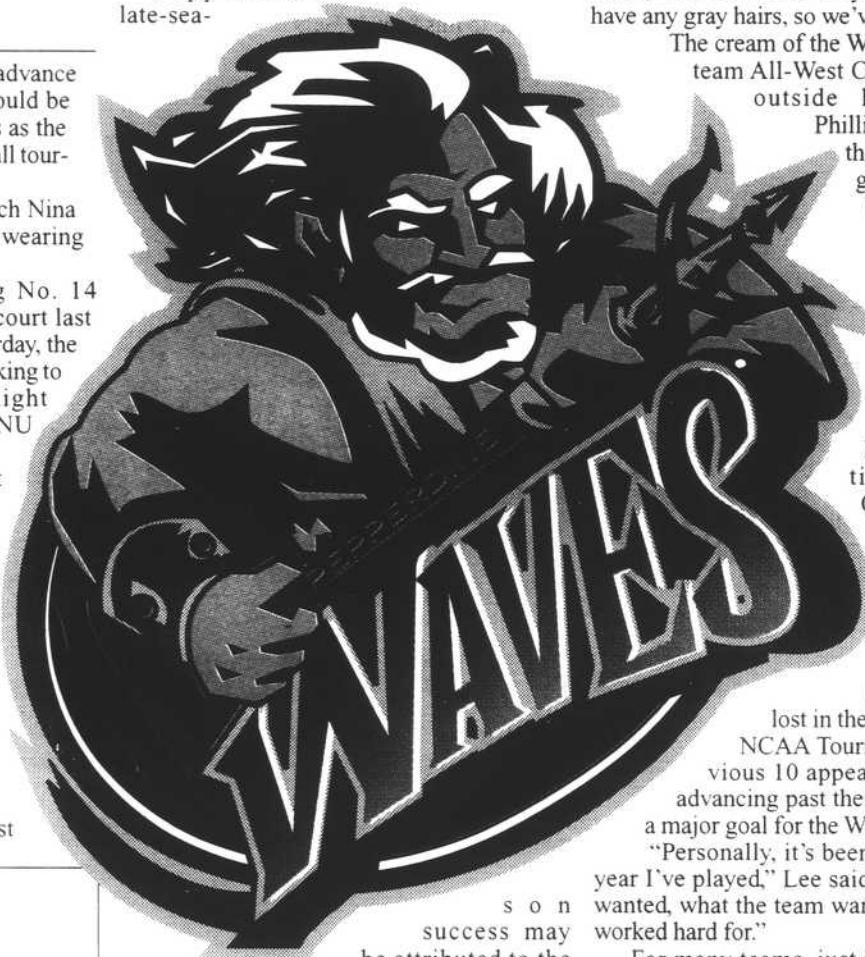
Senior outside hitter Kristin Lee has helped pace the Waves this season. The honorable mention All-West Coast Conference selection posted personal single-season bests in kills, service aces and digs.

Pepperdine has lost in the first round of the NCAA Tournament in its previous 10 appearances. Lee said advancing past their first match was a major goal for the Waves this season.

"Personally, it's been my focus every year I've played," Lee said. "That is what I wanted, what the team wanted and what we worked hard for."

For many teams, just facing Nebraska places a team at a psychological disadvantage. However, Matthies said she knows her team will be ready to play.

"I'm not cocky in thinking that we can walk in here by any means on top," Matthies said. "But yet, I don't feel we're intimidated."



Pepperdine (19-10)

Seed: none

Ranking: 28

Conference Record: 11-3

Tourney Record: 2-10

How they got there: Beat Michigan St. 3-2 at MSU in 1st round, beat North Carolina 3-0 in 2nd round

son success may be attributed to the influx of freshmen new to the team.

The Waves entered the year with six freshmen, including four who play frequently.

"We've had a rocky road with some

# ROAD TO THE FINAL

# 4

One's the favorite.  
One's a Cinderella.  
One's trying to get home.  
One's looking for two upsets.  
They're all looking for a national title.

## OUTLOOK

The Cornhuskers are being powered by a sophomore outside hitter who is averaging 6.40 kills a game and hitting .380 through the last five matches. As a team, the Huskers lead the nation in blocks per game (4.01). With a 63-match NU Coliseum winning streak, look for the Huskers to advance to their sixth Final Four.

The Waves are certainly the surprise story in this year's tournament after upsetting Michigan State in East Lansing. Pepperdine became the first West Coast Conference team to ever make it to the Sweet 16. All-WCC selection freshman outside hitter Lindsay Phillips leads the Waves with 4.75 kills per game. Despite leading the all-time series vs. Nebraska 3-1, the Waves will have trouble washing out the Huskers.

The Badgers are no strangers to the NU Coliseum, having played a regional match against Penn State in 1996. Coach John Cook and Assistant Coach Christy Johnson have strong ties to Nebraska, and Cook hopes the Husker faithful will pull for the Badgers against UC-Santa Barbara. The Badgers feature 1998 Big 10 newcomer of the year freshman middle blocker Sherisa Livingston, who averages 3.17 kills per game and is hitting .363 for the season.

The Gauchos are one of four schools that has been to every NCAA tournament, but is the only school that hasn't won a national championship. UCSB has never met the Badgers and hasn't played in Lincoln since 1982.