

# Volleyball



## Nebraska makes an early exit in tourney

By JOHN GASKINS  
Staff writer

The weekend provided plenty of golden opportunities for the Nebraska volleyball team. But the chance to knock off two top-8 opponents and avenge an NCAA Final Four loss from last year slipped from its hands.

Instead, the only things the Cornhusker players and coaches were able to take from a last-place finish at the State Farm Volleyball Classic were signs of improvement and optimism. With losses to No. 6 Pacific and top-ranked Penn State, NU began its season 0-2 for the first time in school history.

"We're not depressed about losing or being 0-2," said junior outside hitter Nancy Meendering, who led the Huskers with 29 kills. "We will learn from this weekend. Two months down the road, we'll be better because of it. But a loss is still a loss."

Pacific defeated Nebraska on Friday night in four sets for NU's first loss at the Coliseum since then-No. 1 Stanford knocked off the Huskers in the inaugural State Farm Classic on Aug. 26, 1995.

That was the first knockdown for the Huskers. The second knockout blow came from Penn State on Saturday night.

The Lions came roaring back from a first-set loss and an 11-8

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NANCY MEENDERING  
NU junior

fourth-set deficit to pound the Huskers 11-15, 15-12, 15-8, 16-14 in front of 4,288 — the 10th consecutive sellout at the Coliseum. It gave Nebraska its first back-to-back defeat in the arena since 1980.

The win was Penn State's third in a row over Nebraska, and first at the Coliseum since the 1994 Midwest Regional Tournament final. The Lions also staved off a Husker team looking for revenge from last season's four-set national semifinal.

But Nebraska had plenty of chances to win. Following a severe third-set beating, the Huskers put themselves in set-point position at 14-13 in the fourth set after senior Tonia Tauke and freshman Grechaly Cepero double-blocked Penn State All-American hitter Lauren Cacciamani's attack.

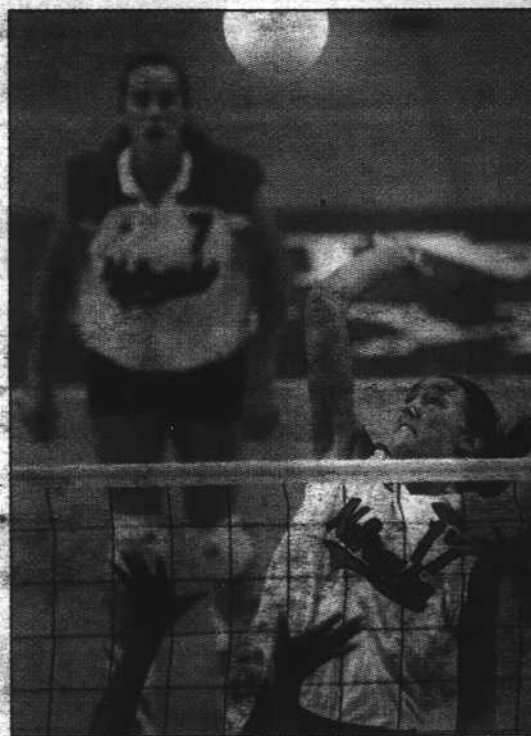
That's when Cacciamani, who hit .444 and hammered 29 kills, and fellow senior Carrie Schonveld took over. Schonveld provided a

smashing kill on set point, and Cacciamani tied the match with two kills before out-of-bounds attacks by Cepero and junior Kim Behrends gave PSU the win.

"You couldn't help but feel the adrenaline and emotion of that arena," Schonveld said about her set-saving point. "We used the energy to our advantage. It's better to have 4,000 people to feed off of — even if they're cheering against you — than nobody."

Despite the loss, NU Coach Terry Pettit said he wasn't discouraged by his team's performance or intensity, which he said was at a much higher level Saturday night. He said the rare home losses and the 0-2 start didn't put a damper on the Huskers' run at a national championship.

"If we're 0-18 and still singing the same song, then you need to be suspicious," Pettit said. "If we're this close to playing with this level of teams now — if we continue to work hard, I think we'll be fine."



Photos by Matt Miller/DN  
(clockwise from top left)

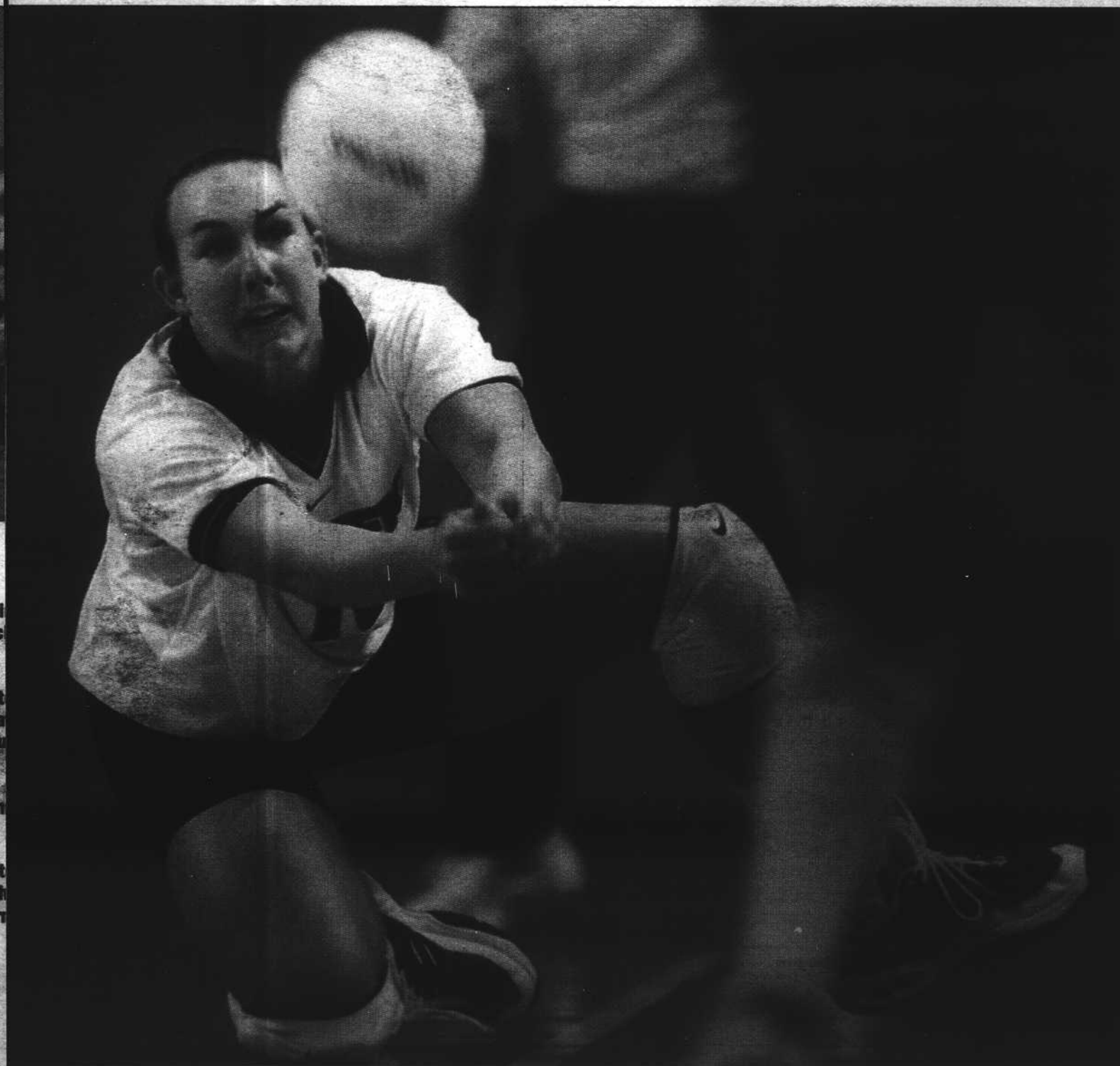
MANDY MONSON leads the Huskers in stretches in the basement of the Coliseum before their match Saturday night.

NU'S KIM BEHRENDTS prepares to serve the ball to Penn State in the State Farm Classic on Saturday night. The Huskers lost to Penn State in four games.

THE HUSKERS join hands after a point against Penn State.

PACIFIC'S ELSA STEGEMANN slides to the line to save the ball in Saturday's championship match. Stegemann was named the MVP of the State Farm Classic.

NU'S JENNY KROPP goes for a kill in the Huskers' loss to Penn State on Saturday night at the NU Coliseum.



## Pacific's Stegemann makes triumphant return to Nebraska

By ADAM J. KLINKER  
Staff writer

Elsa Stegemann has made two very different trips to the Nebraska Coliseum.

When she last entreated upon the volleyball court at NU in 1997, she departed on crutches with a career-threatening knee injury, leaving doubts about the future of her career.

But she did come back. And this weekend, Stegemann returned to the scene of her former torment and doled out some punishment of her own.

In two matches, the All-American outside hitter rained down 65 kills — including an NU Coliseum record 39 in the 8<sup>th</sup>-ranked Tigers' 5-3 championship victory over No. 6 Florida — in the State Farm Volleyball Classic on Saturday.

Following anterior cruciate ligament surgery in 1997, Stegemann, now a senior, went on to garner All-America honors in 1998 and lead Pacific to the NCAA Regional Tournament.

And thus far into the 1999 campaign, things are continuing down the sunny side of the path for Stegemann and the Tigers.

"I'm the kind of player that just rolls with the punches," Stegemann said. "But this weekend was amazing. I was set a lot of balls; I got a lot of help from my teammates. It really depends on the whole team, not just Elsa's 39 kills."

And though it was a team effort as Pacific put up 250 total team

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MARY WISE  
Florida coach

attacks and hit .300, the numbers in Stegemann's column tell their own story; along with the kill total: 74 total attacks, 405 hitting percentage, a serve ace, 13 digs and four blocks.

"The difference in the game was Elsa and 39 kills," Florida Coach Mary Wise said. "We had no answer. I'm really glad she's not in the SEC."

Tiger Coach John Dunning seconded Wise's praise. "It was a great individual performance," Dunning said. "She's fast. She's very, very explosive, and she showed us a lot of shots — she did it a lot of different ways."

Hitting .302 for the two-game series with the 65 kills, Stegemann was named the tournament MVP and was joined on the All-Tournament team by Pacific setter Tanja Dimitrijevic, who had 84 set assists in the Florida win.

For Stegemann, it was all in good time and more than enough of what she needed on her return visit.

"I'm happy just to be able to walk off the court this time."