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NU pounds Badgers with sweep

Meendering takes charge in third game

By JOHN GASKINS
Staff writer

Wednesday night's rematch of last year's NCAA Pacific Regional Final between Nebraska and Wisconsin didn't quite live up to the five-game thriller from a year ago.

But it did provide enough excitement to trigger flashbacks.

The fifth-ranked Cornhuskers (8-2) cruised through the first two games, then clawed their way back from a seven-point deficit for the second straight match to give them a sweep of the No. 13 Badgers (4-3), 15-5, 15-9, 18-16, before 3,111 fans at the Nebraska Coliseum.

The victory, which ended NU's non-conference schedule, was the Huskers' eighth straight and third straight over a top-15 opponent after starting the season 0-2.

For the third straight time against a top-15 foe, NU found itself down by at least six points in a game and found a way to win both the game and match. For the second straight time against Wisconsin, Nebraska dug itself out of a five-or-more-point hole.

"We didn't panic," said Nebraska Coach Terry Pettit. "We just stayed with it. I was impressed that Wisconsin didn't check out. They continued to fight. They made some nice adjustments."

Just like last year, junior outside hitter Nancy Meendering took charge of the match in the final game and provided the match-winning kill that sent the Coliseum crowd into a frenzy.

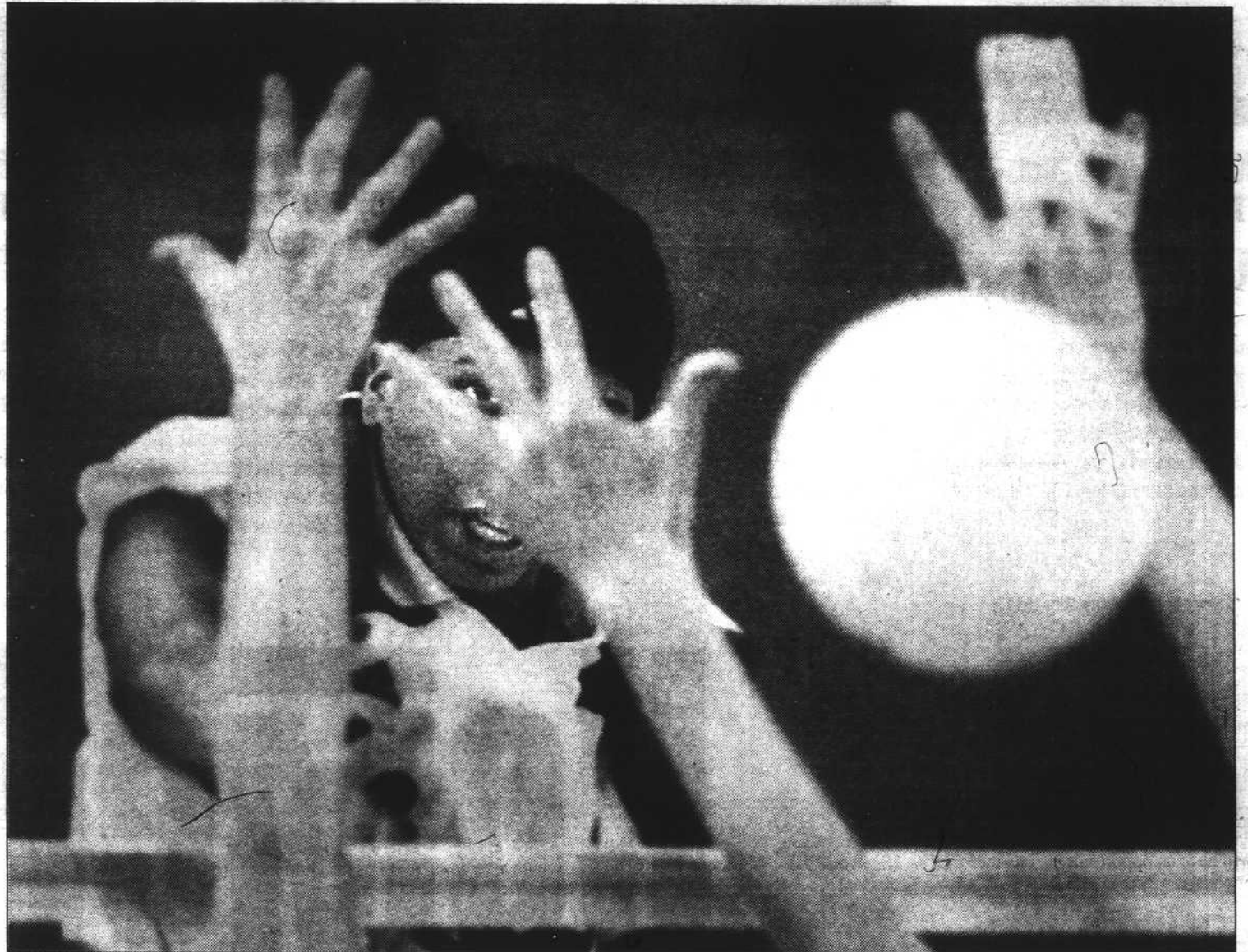
The All-American hammered nine of her game-high 17 kills, and all nine of her kills in the third game, after the Huskers found themselves down 12-5 and running out of substitutions.

That's when Pettit switched his dominating right-side hitter to the middle blocker position. Meendering responded with a vengeance.

"I guess I just feel like when I'm on the floor, I want to make a difference in any way I can to help our team," Meendering said of the switch. "And when we got down by that much and they were getting close to closing up that third game, I think our team just kicked it in and said 'Hey, we've got to do this.'"

Most people would never have guessed that Wisconsin would even sniff closing out a game after their performance in the first two games.

The Badgers, who boast possibly the best blocking unit in the nation behind 6-foot-4 All-American Kelly Kennedy and U.S. National Team member Sherisa Livingston, were out-



MATT MILLER/DN
GREICHALY CEPERO SMASHES the ball between two Wisconsin defenders Wednesday night at the Coliseum. After cruising through the first two games, the Huskers fought back from a seven-point deficit to win the third game 18-16.

blocked by the Huskers 12-7 after two games. NU was led in those two games by backup middle blocker Jenny Kropp, who provided a career-high eight blocks.

"I don't think we competed in the first game," said Livingston. "We were out there, but we weren't on the court. But after a while, we were just like, 'Let's start playing now.'"

UW did, and raged back to block NU seven times in the final game, behind three of Livingston's game-high 10 blocks.

But just when the Badgers were three points away from mounting a comeback, Pettit made adjustments that gave the Huskers the defensive savvy that held their sixth opponent in seven matches to under .093 hitting percentage (.044).

Down 12-5, Pettit sent in defensive specialist Nikki Henk from off the bench to provide the spark the Huskers needed. Henk, whose fifth-

game ace serve against UW turned last year's dramatic match around, came through again with four point-stopping digs. By the time she went back out, the scoreboard read 12-10.

"I just come in there and do what needs to be done," Henk said. "I'm giving people a break who have been in there a couple of hours, mentally and physically. When (Pettit) calls my name, I just go and don't think about it."

However, Henk's boost wasn't the most memory-provoking aspect of the rematch. No one had the legendary 1998 match in the back of his mind more than NU Associate Head Coach John Cook.

Cook was Wisconsin's head coach in that match and almost guided the Badgers to the biggest win in program history. But UW lost a heartbreaker, and a few months later, Cook left the program he had built for NU.

Volleyball			
Nebraska	15	15	18
Wisconsin	5	9	16

Wednesday night's match brought in so much emotion for Cook that he refused to comment to the media in the days leading up to it. After the match, Cook finally opened up and expressed the difficulty in coaching the match and watching the players he had recruited.

"It was very tough," Cook said. "I'm very happy we won, but I feel bad for those Wisconsin players, because I was having flashbacks to last year, and I know how they feel over there."

"They competed really, really well tonight. I was proud of their effort, especially after the first game when they could have thrown in the towel."

Solich, Evans speak

By JOSHUA CAMENZIND
Staff writer

Contact has been established between former Nebraska running back DeAngelo Evans and Head Coach Frank Solich, but Solich said he would not elaborate on the situation until the two speak again.

"We talked a little bit (Tuesday)," Solich said. "We are going to have to certainly visit again. It was good to have a conversation."

"We still need to talk some, so we will get together again."

When asked if Evans was still in town, Solich replied, "yes."

Solich said when something "worthwhile" happens, the media will be informed.

Evans has yet to release a statement about why he has quit the team.

His mother, Earnestine Evans, told the Daily Nebraskan that when the statement is released, "it will be TV-wide."

Solich was asked if players' negative comments toward Evans would affect the team if Evans were to return.

"I try to stay away from doing a lot of what if," Solich said. "I know that is done an awful lot in the game by a lot of people, but if you do that as a coach you've got problems."

Solich said he has taken the situation into consideration, though.

"We take things as they come, and we will deal with that issue if that issue arises," Solich said.

No score predictions for USM

■ Southern Mississippi players take a no-fear attitude for Saturday's game in Lincoln.

By SAMUEL MCKEWON
Senior staff writer

Southern Mississippi is no stranger to slaying college football's giants.

In 1989, it knocked off Florida State. Georgia, Alabama and Virginia Tech are among the Golden Eagles' higher profile victims in previous seasons.

But USM defensive lineman Adalius Thomas, an All-American last season, isn't into pregame predictions for Saturday's 12:30 p.m. matchup at No. 4 Nebraska.

"Ask me Sunday morning," Thomas said. "I'll give you a prediction then."

Thomas and other Golden Eagles preach a hearty respect — not fear — for the Cornhuskers. They don't promise victory or plot out an exact gameplan for winning.

"We predict only one thing, that we'll play hard and we'll play hard for 60 minutes," said sophomore USM running back Derrick Nix, who rushed for 1,180 yards last season. "We don't care about ranking. We're ready for all of them."

Southern Miss (2-0) hasn't broken much of a sweat yet with a 48-14 victory over Tulane and a 40-6 win over Northwestern Louisiana. But NU (2-0) exists in a different category, and the Golden Eagles know it.

Still, there's reason for optimism. Southern Miss boasts the best receiver

"We predict only one thing, that we'll play hard and we'll play hard for 60 minutes."

DERRICK NIX
USM running back

in Conference USA in Sherrod Gideon and the conference's finest defensive lineman in Thomas. In fact, the entire defensive line returns, as do two of the three linebackers.

USM's defense also mixes in the

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