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Nebraska takes three to tame Tigers

Like the Huskers' last four opponents, Missouri falls fast without much fight

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON
Staff writer

Missouri's volleyball team left the NU Coliseum on Wednesday night with the same deer-in-the-headlights look that five straight Nebraska opponents have now had.

The twelfth-ranked Cornhusker volleyball team continued its winning ways with a 15-5, 15-11, 15-1 three-game sweep of the Tigers.

"I'm surprised that we didn't put them away in the second game, maybe," said NU Head Coach Terry Pettit, "but overall I was pleased."

The Huskers (15-4 overall and 7-2 in the Big 12 Conference) dominated the first game of the match and appeared well on their way to a second game rout when Missouri responded with an eight-point run to erase an 8-1 NU lead.

"To their credit, they played better," outside hitter Nancy Meendering said. "But the reason they came back is because we let down."

The Huskers went on a six-point spurt of their own to take a 14-9 lead and then finish off the game with a 15-11 win.

"There are good teams in this conference, and they are going to play well at times," Pettit said. "They played hard, and that was an intense second game."

After a hard-fought second game, Nebraska tamed the Tigers with five straight blocks, as the 3,763 fans in attendance were treated to the Amber Holmquist show.

The freshman middle blocker recorded six blocks in the final game on her way to a career-tying nine blocks for the match, which was coupled with eight kills.

The five straight blocks stuck out in setter Jill McWilliams' mind.

"I don't know that it has ever happened before, with five in a row," she said. "Amber did a great job of reading their setup and making the block."

Missouri (8-12 and 2-7) struggled all night against the NU blockers, as it hit at an ugly .035 hitting percentage for the match, far below NU's .258 clip.

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NANCY MEENDERING
NU outside hitter

The Tigers also had third-game troubles accounting for adjustments made by the Huskers involving outside hitter Angie Oxley.

"We put Oxley on the right side to stop their left-side attack," McWilliams said, "and she blocked a couple, and that was big for us."

Nebraska All-American Nancy Meendering put her standard mark on the game with 12 kills to lead all players. Freshman Greichaly Cepero also added a spark to the NU attack with her six kills.

Pettit was also pleased to see Mandy Monson come alive late in the match.

"Mandy was hitting the ball down into the block early, but she finally relaxed in that third game," he said.

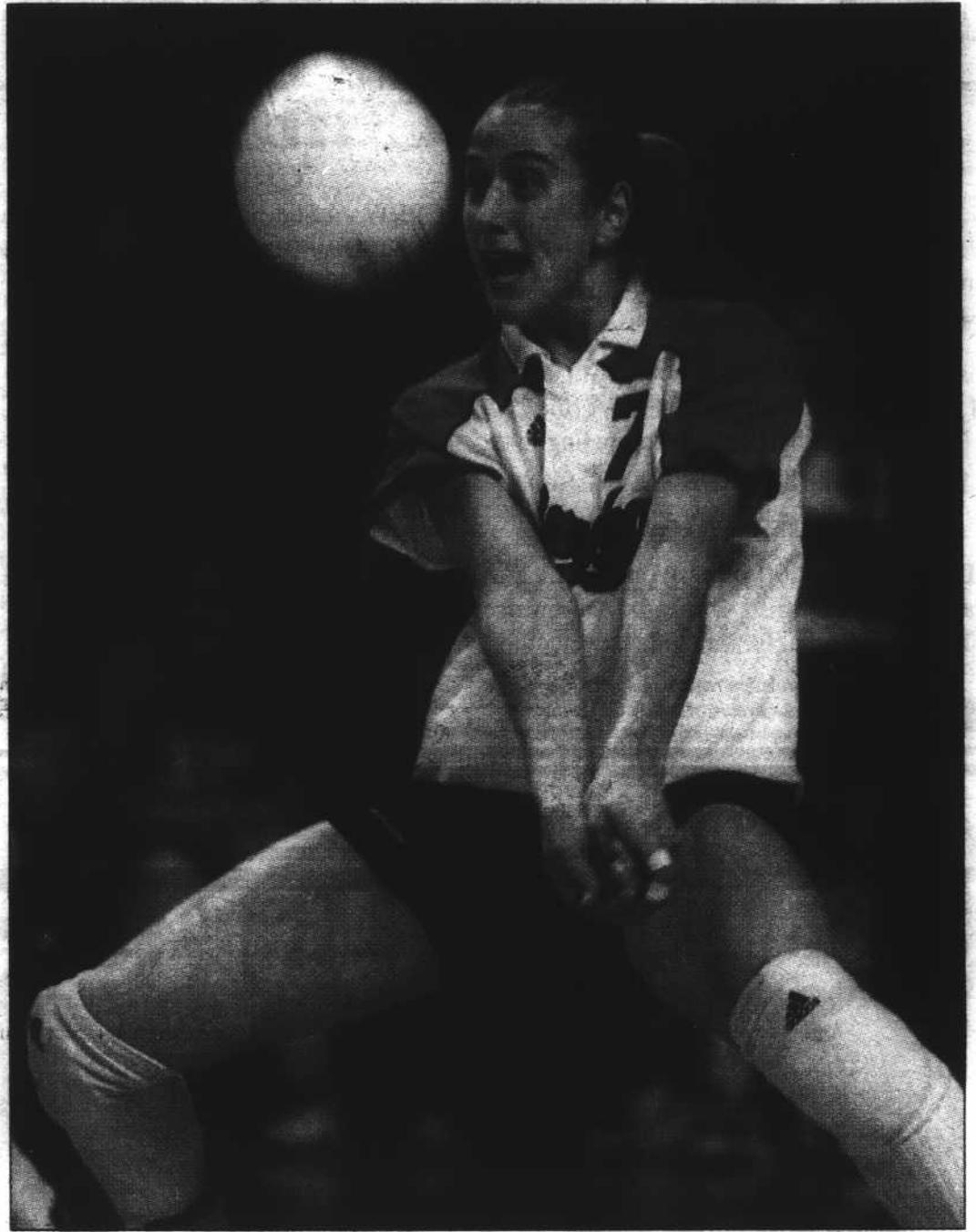
Pettit said the season has taken a positive spin for the Huskers over the past few weeks.

"Our passing over the last month has been really good, and our setters are getting the ball in system," Pettit said. "We're making progress."

Nebraska will need to play at a high level when it visits 10th-ranked Texas on Saturday evening in offense as the Huskers try to climb from their third-place spot in the conference standings.

"We're going to need to serve tougher than we did tonight at Texas," Pettit said. "I think this was a good match to prepare us for this weekend."

For more on the Huskers match with Missouri, turn to page 10.



MIKE WARREN/DN

NEBRASKA'S NANCY Meendering digs a serve from Missouri at the Coliseum on Wednesday night. Nebraska swept Missouri in three games and Meendering led all players in kills with 12.

Lone Star Huskers feel sting of Longhorn wins

BY DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

As Clint Finley talked about losses to Texas in 1996 and 1998, his blood started to boil.

The 37-27 loss in the 1996 Big 12 Championship game and 20-16 loss last year in Lincoln have caused the junior safety from Cuero, Texas, to almost regret going home.

Sure he likes to see his family, but the people in the town make it almost unbearable.

"I have to listen to it every day every time I go home," Finley said. "It gets old. It gets old really quick. Football is not just a game to me. I don't take this jokingly. To me they can joke about it all they want. When they are in it, and they are playing in the heat of battle, it is not just a game. To them it is just entertainment. I take it to heart, and it bothers me."

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CLINT FINLEY
NU safety

each time they go home.

After last year's upset that ended NU's 47-game home winning streak, Keyuo Craver didn't have to wait.

"A lot of people gave me a lot of crap back home," said Craver, a Harleton, Texas, native. "I had like 20 messages on my answering machine. Messages like, 'I bet you are holding your tongue now about picking Nebraska. I bet you regret

Please see TEXAS on 11

Don't hate UT for playing good football



Samuel McKewon

"Look at me. And look at you. And look at me. And look at you."

— Robert DeNiro, "Raging Bull"

We have been conditioned to hate Texas. Just like we were supposed to hate Oklahoma.

It's the curse of the Nebraska fan, which always reverts back to the curse of the farmer, to not be happy with what we have. To wallow in insecurity. To fear Texas, because, for a few moments, the Lone Star state might just be better than us.

It befell Kansas State a few weeks ago, when the president of the university said everybody likes beating Texas because Texans are rich and arrogant. K-State, long the downtrodden, mirrors the huddled masses of the proletariat quite well. But Nebraska has been living the football high life for a long time.

So what is it with us? Both NU/UT clashes have been fantastic entertainment, worth

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more than a hundred Nebraska-Baylor blowouts. But there's this inkling that says most Husker fans would rather watch a cakewalk this weekend than a real game.

It goes all the way to the top, when Athletic Director Bill Byrne vaguely hints at just how much he'd like to see Nebraska beat Texas. At least his notion extends to all sports, whereas most Husker fans stop with the pigskin.

Still, there's no consolation. Nebraska is to Texas as Colorado is to Nebraska. We have created a rival where there isn't one; UT already has plenty. Texas A&M, Oklahoma, every other team in Texas — the Longhorns' dance card is full.

And, alas, NU is going stag. OU is gone, CU never was and KSU is just too weird. And so, as always, fans revert back to the only rival they can know: those who happen to be better than us on a given day.

UT fits the bill. But there's more to love about the Longhorns than there is to hate. Good coach. Smart quarterback. Tradition like NU's. A command of the state's best talent and resources. Texas isn't like Nebraska, they are Nebraska. Look at us. And look at them.

They are proud of their state, just like we are. They are arrogant about their sports, just like we are. They love strong women's college programs, just like we do. They hire coaches

with promises of money and support. Their fans are rich, just like Nebraska's.

The only difference is, they puff their chests out about it, while the insecure Midwesterners hold it all in, preferring to horde all their pride for a rainy day that will never come or some Internet chat room.

So what if they say their school is better (it is) or that they have more money (they do). That's the charm of UT — they are definitely high crust, and they make no excuses. They like to throw their weight around at the Big 12 Conference (they are the few that dare challenge Byrne). They speak their mind. They are going to get the Big 12 Basketball Tournament switched to Dallas, away from the Kansas/Missouri crib of Kansas City, Mo.

That power is admirable. And, if Nebraska would just speak up, our people could have it, too.

So they beat Nebraska in the past. So what? Enjoy the Longhorns. Enjoy the games. Enjoy their fans, their atmosphere, their arrogance. Enjoy a game that deserves, for once, to be televised. Enjoy, for once, being nervous before kickoff. Enjoy it while it lasts through Saturday.

Because next year, instead of Texas, NU gets Baylor, a team, a people and a program that couldn't resemble the Cornhuskers in its wildest dreams. And that's too bad.

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