

# Huskers celebrate 25 years

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later. But there some of those first NU team members were Saturday – at center court during intermission of the 1999 NU squad's match with Baylor. They were honored with more than 35 other Husker volleyball alumnae from every era since the mid-1970s in a ceremony commemorating 25 years of Nebraska volleyball.

The match between the 12th-ranked Huskers and 22nd-ranked Bears was moved from NU's normal home venue – the Nebraska Coliseum – to the Devaney Center to showcase the silver anniversary celebration.

"It was a very special night," said Christy Johnson, the setter for the '95 championship team and now an assistant coach for Wisconsin.

"It was special because I got to reunite with some of my former teammates and meet a lot of the people I saw growing up. It makes me feel good that so many fans came out and applauded something you'd love to do anyway."

After NU trounced Baylor in three sets, the players, alumni and fans stuck around for a presentation and announcement of the Lincoln Journal-Star newspaper's seven-member All-Century Nebraska volleyball team, as voted by fans and readers. The induction followed a five-minute highlight video that chronicled the program's history on the arena's HuskerVision screens.

Of the seven players named to the team, six were in attendance to receive the award plaques and congratulations from Head Coach Terry Pettit.

The seven players were: setter Cathy Noth (1981-84), setter Lori Endicott (1985-88), middle blocker Stephanie Thater (1989-92), Johnson (1991-95), outside hitter Lisa Reitsma (1994-97) and current junior outside hitter Nancy Meendering.

The pinnacle of the event came when current U.S. National Team captain Allison Weston was named and awarded Most Valuable Player of the team.

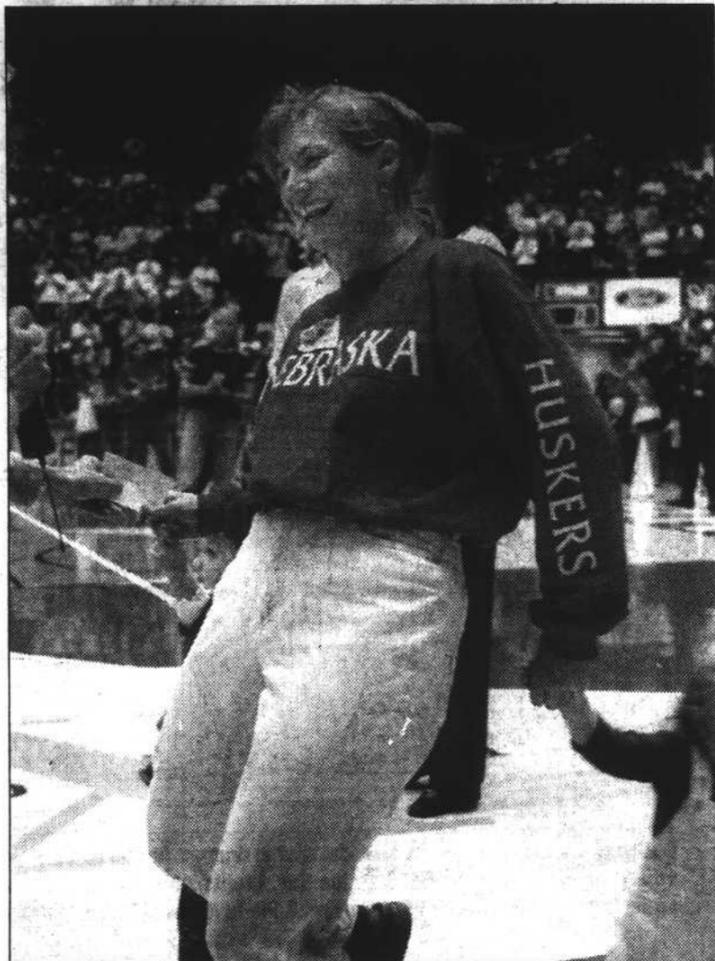
Weston ranks in the top 10 on nearly every school season and career record list and was the middle blocker on the national championship team. She said she was thrilled to come back to her alma mater and got "goose bumps" when watching the highlight reel and accepting the award.

"It's an honor to be put in a group of players of that high of caliber," Weston said. "I never imagined something like this happening when I signed my letter of intent. A lot has happened since then. It's been a long ride, and it's fun being on it."

All of the players credited Pettit as being the main reason for the program's success and tradition. Nebraska has won 689 of 847 matches, won 21 of 23 Big Eight/Big 12 Conference Championships and made six NCAA Final Four appearances with Pettit at the helm.

Pettit ended the celebration with a short speech.

"There are two things that really



HEATHER GLENBOSKI/DN  
**FORMER NEBRASKA VOLLEYBALL player Becky Leuhr, with her daughters Matty and Samantha, receives her 25th anniversary plaque Saturday night at the Devaney Center.**

separate this program from all the others," Pettit said. "The first is the players like all the ones you've seen tonight. The second is all of you in the stands. The Coliseum is a very special place for a volleyball match. I have deep appreciation for the support the fans have given me and these remarkable women."

After the match, Pettit had more to say about the program he turned into a dynasty and the women he coached. Thirty-four of Pettit's players have earned All-American honors and 18 have earned Academic All-American honors. Eleven players have been named conference player of the year.

"I wanted these former players to see that we still have a great team and have the same type of players they were," Pettit said. "The players here communicate well and play as a team. It's a very special ballclub to be on, and I think they saw that tonight."

"Those (former players) are top-flight people. They are great parents, great citizens, great professionals in

life. You can tell that just by looking at them, when seeing some of them carry their kid in one arm when they were honored at the presentation. They are confident young women."

Members of the current team celebrated wildly when Meendering – who in her third year is the fastest player in NU history to reach the 1,000 kills mark – was announced to the team and showered her with hugs.

"That was awesome," Meendering said. "Wow, what an honor. I was surprised. History has a lot to do with Nebraska having such a rich tradition in volleyball, so it was neat to be up there with some of its greatest players."

Another current player, Nebraska senior Tonia Tauke – who ranks right up there with Weston in some NU career and season blocking records – said she was overwhelmed by the emotion and meaning of the festivities.

"It was very exciting," Tauke said. "I'm definitely going to be back for the 50th Anniversary."

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