

SPORTS

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Nebraska volleyball goes West

■ The Huskers feel no fear in traveling to Stanford for a chance at the final four.

By JOHN GASKINS
Staff writer

Despite having to go on the road to potentially beat two top seven teams to make it to another final four, nobody involved with the Nebraska volleyball team seems intimidated about this

week's Pacific Regional semifinals and finals in Palo Alto, Calif.

Not after everything the 10th-ranked Cornhuskers have gone through this season — like getting off to the first 0-2 start in school history and having their 65-match NU Coliseum winning streak snapped. Or getting off to a 2-2 start in the Big 12 Conference and losing its first match ever to Kansas State.

And especially not after playing three freshmen in the regular lineup, in a complicated 6-2 offense no team had used in five years and finally putting it

all together to win its last 12 matches.

NU has seen it all in 1999 and is ready for tonight's regional semifinal, its 16th in the last 17 years, against seventh-ranked UC-Santa Barbara — especially after winning the Big 12, which is what UCSB coach Kathy Gregory called "the toughest conference in the country."

"We've gone through a lot of stuff this year," outside hitter and co-captain Mandy Monson said. "We've played really well on the road, so I don't think that will be a factor."

If the Huskers win, they'll either

face No. 2 Stanford or No. 18 Arizona Friday on Stanford's court in the regional final that will send the winner to Honolulu for the NCAA semifinals and final next week.

"We haven't played our best volleyball yet," Monson said. "I think when we get to California and hopefully the final four, that's when we'll hit our pique. That's what's exciting — we always have something new to look forward to."

This time, it's UCSB, the region's

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NCAA Tourney

Today, Palo Alto, Calif.

7 p.m.

No. 10 Nebraska vs.
No. 7 UC Santa Barbara

Thirty minutes after
No. 2 Stanford vs.
No. 18 Arizona

NU, Jays prepare for in-state battle

Cochran: Sears, Walker key to CU offense

By JOSHUA CAMENZIND
Staff writer

Nebraska and Creighton will square off in Omaha tonight at 7 for bragging rights in the Cornhusker state.

The Huskers enter the contest at 3-3, while the Bluejays sport a perfect 5-0 record. NU won last year's meeting 76-60 in Lincoln when CU was 6-0 but split two games in the Americas Classic and are struggling to find themselves.

Nebraska guard Cary Cochran said many have misperceptions about the intrastate rivalry.

"No offense to Creighton," Cochran said, "but some of our guys have never heard of it. We know this is a huge rivalry, but a lot of people build it up that Creighton looks at it as a rivalry and us just trying to fend it off."

"I see this as a bigger rivalry than Kansas. Everything is at stake; bragging rights for a year. We run into these guys all the time. I see these guys all summer long."

NU has made it evident that CU guards Ryan Sears and Ben Walker are key road blocks to its success. Wednesday's practice included drills where scout team players wore yellow jerseys to signify the two guards on the court.

"We want to simulate Sears and Walker out there," Cochran said. "They are obviously focal points for us. If we are to win the game, we have to control those two."

Sears and Walker are combining for 27.2 points and 13.8 rebounds per game. The two are eerily similar to Husker guards Cochran and Danny Walker, who are combining for 17.3 points per game.

Cochran is familiar with both players, especially Sears.

"He is from Iowa too," Cochran said.

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Altman cautions team against letting down

By DAVID DIEHL
Staff writer

The Creighton basketball team has been a giant killer of sorts during the past two-plus seasons.

In the 1999 Missouri Valley Conference tournament championships, the Bluejays beat Oklahoma State at home and Iowa on the road last year, and downed the Hawkeyes earlier this season. They also upset Nebraska 84-73 the last time the Cornhuskers visited Omaha.

Despite falling to Creighton two years ago, Nebraska leads the all-time series with its in-state rival 21-10 and has won eight of the last nine contests.

Sixth-year Creighton Coach Dana Altman said although the wins over Iowa and OSU are impressive, every opponent is different from the last and the two teams are different now.

"We have had a couple big wins here at home," Altman said. "And we have had some disappointing losses. We're just going to have to come out against Nebraska and play as well as we can as hard as we can."

Nebraska's backcourt shows signs of inexperience with two junior college transfers and a sophomore, but Creighton features a tandem of juniors that has experience and proven talent. Point guard Ryan Sears was the Missouri Valley's Freshman of the year in 1997 and shooting guard Ben Walker was the 1999 MVC Tournament Most Valuable Player. Both are averaging in double figures so far this season.

Altman pointed out that while NU has a lot of talent in its lineup, its lack of time playing Division I-style basketball, at times, has hurt it.

"At times, their inexperience has hurt them in a few ball games," Altman said. "But with Cookie (Belcher) playing, that gives them a big plus because that's a lot of experience coming onto the floor."

Belcher will play in Thursday night's 7:05 p.m. game. He has been plagued by a wrist injury and will likely apply for a medical redshirt after he plays in six games.

Altman said he is a little concerned with the lift NU will receive with the decision to play Belcher and the experience and talent he brings.

"Defensively, he's very good," Altman said. "I'm sure he'll get them some boards, and he'll find a way to make a basket or two. He can do a lot of things. He's a very versatile player."

"I don't think it changes our outlook on the game any, but I think it changes it tremendously for Nebraska."



SHARON KOLBET/DN

DIANDRA HYMAN is a member of both the UNL women's bowling team and the prestigious Team USA. Hyman recently returned from a tournament in Abu-Dhabi where she placed 20th in the world.

Queenpin

Dedicated Hyman looks for big finish at NU

By MATTHEW HANSEN
Staff writer

As far as stories on athletes go, Diandra Hyman's is not thematically different from most.

Yet her story is original.

Diandra Hyman is a bowler, and the themes present in her story, so contrived in most cases, ring true in hers. A Hollywood executive looking to make millions seemingly couldn't have scripted it any better.

Except to cast a baseball,

basketball or football player in the leading role.

Bowlers sweat, too

Let's get one thing straight. Diandra Hyman is good — really good. Her bowling accomplishments, when compiled, read more like a novel than a resume.

The Nebraska sophomore bowler seems to have won every bowling award imaginable. Among the highlights are the 1997 "Star of Tomorrow" Award given annually to the nation's

top junior bowler, being chosen as an Honorable Mention All-American as a freshman following the Husker's 1998-99 National Championship, and winning a large number of junior and amateur tournaments.

The high point of her career so far was representing the United States in the recently-completed World Championships, where she fin-

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