

In-state rival Creighton set to battle Huskers

■ The two Nebraska volleyball teams are close on the state map but are far apart in history, tradition and success.

FROM STAFF REPORTS

When Nebraska and Creighton square off tonight at Nebraska Coliseum in Lincoln, Husker fans will see the renewal of an in-state rivalry.

Fans will also see two programs that are polar opposites. Separated by only an hour's drive down I-80, the Huskers and Bluejays are much further apart when it comes to tradition.

CU comes into Tuesday's match at 7-4, gunning for the best volleyball season in school history. The Jays have had only one winning record since the inception of their current program in 1994.

Creighton outside hitter Melissa Walsh, the only Bluejay to ever receive all-Missouri Valley Conference honors, will lead the visitors in their upset attempt.

If history holds true, it won't be easy. Nebraska owns a 3-0 all-time record against Creighton, with the last of those wins coming in 1998 when NU pounded CU 15-2, 15-1, 15-3 in the season opener.

The 2000 Jays' only other match against a Top 5 team also didn't go well for

the Jays. Now-No. 2 Hawaii dismantled CU 15-1, 15-6, 15-3, earlier in the year.

The rare Tuesday match will be a reunion of many of Nebraska's best prep volleyball players. The Huskers have eight, while five Nebraskans will suit up for Creighton.

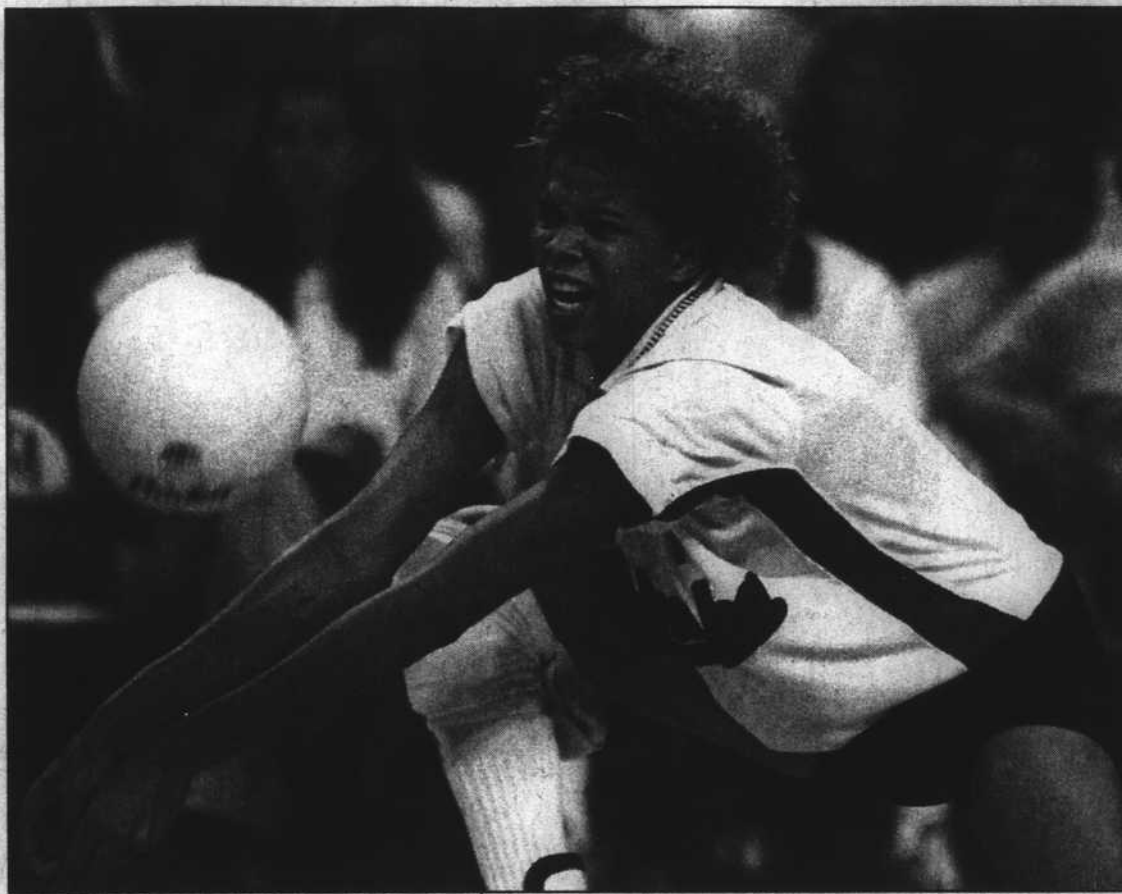
Husker notes:
NU sophomore setter Greichaly Cepero was chosen as the Big 12's volleyball player of the week following the Huskers' sweeps of Colorado and Texas A&M last week.

For the week, Cepero totaled 76 assists while leading the Huskers with a .304 hitting efficiency. She also ranked second on the team in digs and blocks during the week.

Cepero had seven kills on .375 hitting against the Buffaloes. She also had nine digs, seven blocks and 36 assists in the match.

The setter also produced another all-around performance against A&M, with three kills, 40 assists, nine digs and four blocks.

For the season, Cepero has helped the Huskers post a .336 hitting percentage, tops in the Big 12. The team also ranks third nationally as of Sept. 24. She joins sophomore outside hitter Laura Pilakowski as Huskers who have captured the player of the week award this season.



Josh Wolfe/DN

Sophomore setter Greichaly Cepero, named the Big 12's player of the week Monday, will lead the Cornhuskers against in-state rival Creighton tonight at the Coliseum.

Saunders returns to soccer team

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fighter, so I knew she'd work hard."

Even after Saunders rejected the redshirt, it was unclear when she would first take the field. The day before the Missouri game, Walker said, he didn't believe Saunders would return until this Friday's game against Texas.

"I didn't decide she'd play until the day of the game," Walker said. "I watched her practice that day and knew she had done the work."

Saunders said she felt fine after playing for 40 minutes during NU's 2-0 win over Missouri.

Walker said he didn't notice any hesitancy in Saunders' play.

"She made a bunch of tough tackles against Missouri," Walker said. "She definitely hasn't lost any of her tenacity or courage."

In her second game back, Saunders was knocked to the ground after she collided with a Kansas player.

"It scared me for a second," Saunders said. "I got hit in the side and had a shooting pain. It was hard to breathe, but I realized I just got the wind knocked out of me."

But that was the only time Saunders said she thought about the injury.

After Saunders was medically cleared to play, it was back to full throttle, the 3½-inch scar on her back the only reminder of an

injury that nearly cost the Overland Park, Kan., native her Husker career.

"I have to be 100 percent to play my game," Saunders said. "If I can't play that hard, I shouldn't play."

Saunders said she didn't have the patience to let her skills come back to her and shake the rust off.

"I keep feeling I don't have the time to work," Saunders said. "I need to do it now."

More than anything, Saunders said she wanted to win a championship.

"That was definitely a big factor," Saunders said. "The team is incredibly talented, and we have a good chance to win it all. It's a dream."

High rankings add to rivalry

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game and may again on Saturday, though Applewhite has logged most of the snaps after an opening game win over Louisiana-Lafayette. Simms may have a whip arm, but it's been the smaller, gimpy-kneed Applewhite who has thrown for more than 1,000 yards this season after a strong performance in a 42-7 win over Oklahoma State last week.

Brown promised more of the same against OU. "We have been a little concerned with Major's knee," Brown said. "He looked a little tired. Some people forget it's only been six or seven months since his knee operation."

"With Chris, we know he's going to be to great football player. He just needs more snaps."

OU has Josh Heupel at quarterback, who operates the Sooners' passing offense with a steely consistency.

A "coach's kid," as Brown calls him, Heupel directed the Sooners to a 17-0 lead in last year's con-

test before UT put on a scoring blitz of its own, shutting down the Oklahoma attack enough in the second half to roll out a 38-28 win.

Over the summer, Stoops said, he felt some pressure to beat Texas this year, especially as it comes at the front end of critical stretch of games that will likely define OU's season. Kansas State is Oklahoma's next opponent; Nebraska visits two weeks later.

Stoops said he's received more pressure from boosters to beat Texas than Nebraska, a longtime holdover rival from the Big Eight Conference.

In Texas it's much the same but an even higher scale. Former UT Coach Darrell Royal used to say beating OU came first, then beating Texas A&M, then winning the national championship.

Brown seems to have adopted the philosophy. "You don't win, and there's a lot of people very angry with that coach," Brown said. "You win, there's a lot of people that are very happy." In a rivalry, it's that simple.

Iowa State prepares for NU

NOTEBOOK from 10

stretched the Cyclone lead to 31-3 at the half.

Baylor was able to mount a late surge under new quarterback Guy Tomcheck, who took over for injured program-savior Greg Cicero in the Bear's second game. But Tomcheck was unable to overcome three first-half turnovers.

Iowa State (4-0; beat Baylor 31-17; will play Nebraska)

The Cyclones were led by Big 12 Offensive Player of the Week Ennis Haywood, who ran for 241 yards and two touchdowns.

ISU enters its matchup with the Huskers having reached the 400-yard mark in total offense every contest thus far.

Texas (3-1; beat Oklahoma State 42-7; will play Oklahoma)

The Longhorns continued their success when Major Applewhite is under center, but UT coach Mack Brown stressed that Chris Simms will continue to see action in upcoming

games.

Texas's anemic rushing attack came alive against the Cowboys, with sophomore Kenny Hayter leading the way with 122 yards on 20 carries.

Colorado (0-4; lost 44-21 to Kansas State; will play Texas A&M)

Bufs Coach Gary Barnett said his team has lacked confidence the past two games after playing its heart out against Colorado State and Washington.

The Buffaloes then proceeded to lose to USC and to the Wildcats, further dropping their spirits and morale.

CU freshman Craig Ochs' debut was a successful one, as he completed 15 of 24 passes for 208 yards in just over two quarters of play. Ochs threw and ran for a touchdown against the No. 1 defense in the nation.

Nebraska (4-0; beat Missouri 42-24; will play Iowa State)

NU's defense continued to show vulnerability against the

Tigers, giving up the most points to Mizzou in Lincoln since 1978.

Improvement was seen on special teams play as Bobby Newcombe received the Big 12 Special Teams award for the week after his 94-yard punt return on Saturday.

As far as dropping from No. 1 to No. 2 in the AP poll, the team seems indifferent to the matter—they're more concerned with staying undefeated.

"We are still in the ballpark to reach our goals," NU Coach Frank Solich said.

Compiled by Joshua Camenzind

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Softball team opens with solid showing

BY KRISTEN WATERS

The Nebraska softball team opened its fall season this week-end with a 4-1 record at the nine-team Augustana Tournament in Sioux Falls, S.D.

"It was a great start for us," Assistant Coach Terry Schweikert said. "It gave the freshmen a chance to get their feet wet and allow them to find some comfort for the spring season."

The Huskers captured their first victory on Saturday morning at Bowden Field with a 4-0 shutout of Morningside.

NU would experience its first loss in the second game of the tournament. Last season's NCAA Division II National Champion North Dakota State knocked off the Cornhuskers 4-3.

"We just needed to adjust in the batter's box a little bit earlier," Schweikert said.

The Huskers bounced back in

its third and final game of the day grabbing a 6-2 win over tournament host Augustana.

NU would have more success on the last day of tournament play.

The Huskers checked out with a 2-0 record for Sunday after beating South Dakota and Minnesota.

"There was a great improvement from the first day of play to the second day," Schweikert said.

NU breezed by South Dakota 8-0 by controlling the game from the start.

The Huskers' bats fell asleep in the second game as Nebraska slipped by the Golden Gophers 2-1.

"Overall, the team did very well," Schweikert said. "It's a good base for us to build on for the spring."

The Huskers will see action this weekend as the team travels to Salt Lake City for the Utah Tournament.

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