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## **2008 NCAA Championships**

### **NCAA National Semifinals:**

#### **No. 3 Texas (29-3) vs. No. 2 Stanford (30-3)**

Thursday, Dec. 18 • Qwest Center Omaha • 6 p.m. • TV: ESPNU

#### **No. 4 Nebraska (31-2) vs. No. 1 Penn State (36-0)**

Thursday, Dec. 18 • Qwest Center Omaha • 8 p.m. •

Radio: Husker Sports Network and on Huskers.com • TV: Live on ESPN2, ESPNU and ESPN360.com

The Nebraska volleyball team looks for its fourth national title in school history, as the Huskers travel to Qwest Center Omaha for the 2008 NCAA Championship. The fourth-ranked Huskers are making their 11th trip to the National Semifinals and third in the last four seasons. One of the largest crowds in NCAA history is expected, as nearly 17,000 tickets have been sold for this weekend's matches.

Thursday's first semifinal features No. 2 Stanford (30-3) and third-ranked Texas (29-3) with first serve coming at 6 p.m. The Huskers (31-2) will be in the evening's second semifinal match, as they take on top-ranked and undefeated Penn State (36-0). That match will begin at 8 p.m. or 30 minutes following the first semifinal. Thursday's winners will square off Saturday

night at 7 p.m. in the national title match. All three matches this weekend will be televised by either ESPN2 or ESPNU with Beth Mowins and Karch Kiraly calling all the action.

All of Nebraska's matches this weekend in Omaha will be carried across the state on the IMG Husker Sports Network with John Baylor, Diane Mendenhall and Dani Busboom calling all of the action. Fans can listen on flagship stations B107.3 FM in Lincoln, Twister 93.3 FM in Omaha and KRVN 880 AM in Lexington.

The Huskers have followed a similar script to their most recent national title two years ago. NU went four sets in its opener, swept its next two matches and then fell behind 2-0 in the regional title match, only to see the Huskers regroup and win the last three sets. Regional Most Outstanding Player Tara Mueller led the Huskers against fifth-ranked Washington with a career-high 24 kills and 16 digs, while Jordan Larson added 21 kills, 18 digs, four blocks and a pair of aces, including a service ace on match point to return Nebraska to Omaha.

Nebraska leads the all-time series with Penn State, 11-5, with seven of the meetings coming in the NCAA Tournament. NU has won the last two matchups, including a 3-0 sweep of Penn State in 2007. The Huskers will be looking to knock off a No. 1 team for the first time since defeating UCLA on Sept. 6, 1990.

## **Worth Noting**

- The 2008 season marks only the second time since the bracket went to 64 teams that the top four seeds all advanced to the national semifinals. The other time it occurred was in 2006, the previous time the championship was in Omaha.

- Since 1986, every four-year senior class at Nebraska except one (1994) has been to at least one national semifinal during their Husker career.

- NU is making its 11th NCAA National Semifinal appearance (1986, 1989, 1990, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2006 and 2008). The Huskers are 6-4 in their previous nine national semifinals, including a 3-1 mark under John Cook.

- Nebraska's 11 National Semifinal appearances tie UCLA for second all-time. Only Stanford, which is making

its 18th National Semifinal appearance, has been there more times than the Huskers. Nebraska's 77 NCAA Tournament wins is also the second-highest total in NCAA history.

- Nebraska is 13-1 against the NCAA Tournament field, trailing only Penn State among teams with more than 10 matches against NCAA Tournament qualifiers.

- The Huskers' streak of 15 straight NCAA Regionals is the longest active in the country. Only three programs (NU, UCLA and Penn State) have advanced to an NCAA Regional in each of the past six seasons. In addition, the Huskers are the only team in the country to play in the last five NCAA Regional finals.

- The Huskers are 8-1 in matches with ranked foes this season, including wins against fellow national semifinalists Stanford and Texas. NU is 94-14 (.870) versus ranked opponents under John Cook. The Huskers are 18-7 (.720) against top-five teams under Cook, including a 14-3 mark over the last four years.

- The Big 12 has turned in its most impressive showing in the NCAA Tournament, going 10-2 and placing two teams in the national semifinals for the first

time in league history. The Big 12's two national semifinalists comprise half of this weekend's field, as no other conference had more than one. The 2008 season marked the first time that three Big 12 teams (Iowa State, Nebraska and Texas) have advanced to the regional finals.

- NU reached the 30-win plateau for the fifth consecutive year and the 20th time in school history on Dec. 12. The Huskers are the only program in the nation to win 30-or-more matches in each of the last five years. Among Big 12 schools, NU has won 30 or more matches 10 times in the last 13 years, while the other 10 teams in the league have accomplished the feat once - Kansas State in 2003.

- NU will be facing a No. 1 team for the first time since 1999 in the national semifinals. Ironically, that team was also Penn State, which defeated the Huskers in four sets at the NACWAA Showcase in Lincoln. NU has not defeated a No. 1 team since 1990.

- The Huskers are 2-0 against higher ranked teams this season, knocking off No. 2 Stanford and No. 4 USC at the AVCA Showcase.

- Of Nebraska's 13 wins in the Qwest Center, eight

have come against top-five teams. NU is 3-0 in the building against Stanford (2005 and 2006 and 2008) and 1-0 against Penn State (2007).

- The Huskers have swept 21 of their 33 opponents during the 2008 season and are now 2-0 in five-set matches following Saturday's win at Washington.

- NU finished 14-0 at the NU Coliseum in 2007, which marked the 18th time - and sixth time in nine years - that NU has had a perfect home record.

- The Huskers lead the Big 12 in kills (14.60/set), assists (13.44/set) and opponent hitting percentage (.143) and also rank second in hitting percentage (.271), blocks (2.62/set) and service aces (1.34/set).

- Two-time All-American Jordan Larson is on pace to become the first Husker to average more than three kills and digs per set in a career. She enters the NCAA National Semifinals averaging 3.60 kills and 3.16 digs per set in 133 career matches.

- The Huskers have won at least 20 matches every year in program history (a total of 34 years). The second-longest active streak in the Big 12 is five by Texas.

- Nebraska has reached the NCAA Tournament in each of the last 27 years. Missouri owned the second-longest active streak with eight, but did not qualify in 2008.

- Prior to Saturday's match against Washington, the last time two Huskers had at least 20 kills in a match was in the 2006 NCAA Gainesville Regional Final (Larson, 21; Sarah Pavan, 20)

- Nebraska's senior class of Amanda Gates, Jordan Larson and Rachel Schwartz will go for their 128th career win Thursday against Penn State. The class is an impressive 127-7 at Nebraska over the last four years. The NU seniors - along with the seniors from both Stanford and Penn State - began their college careers at the 2005 AVCA Showcase in the Qwest Center.