



University of Nebraska Athletics/AVCA

Crushing the Competition

BY JENNIE HANNA

New format keeps volleyball tournament exciting and fresh for players and fans

One of the challenges facing organizers of sports events, especially longstanding events, is making them exciting to both participants and spectators and incorporating interesting elements to help their events stand out from the rest. That's just what organizers of the Runza/American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) Showcase had in mind when planning this year's collegiate women's volleyball showcase.

Held since 1995 and hosted by AVCA since 2005, the collegiate volleyball showcase will feature a new tournament format

this year. It's just one way of keeping the event fresh and the competition high for the players and fans of collegiate volleyball, according to Kathy DeBoer, AVCA executive director. "This is the event that really helps kick off the volleyball season and lets everyone, from the team members to the fans, get a chance to see how the season should unfold."

In the past, the AVCA Showcase has featured four collegiate teams, pitting inter-conference teams against each other. This year's showcase—scheduled for Aug. 29-30 at the Qwest Center in Omaha, Neb.—will feature four teams playing in a conference challenge format, DeBoer said. The new format gives teams the opportunity to play outside of their conference and see how the competition stacks up.

Will Engle, public relations and events manager at AVCA, said the new format is just as exciting for fans of collegiate volleyball. "Fans will be able to see their

favorite team face off against a team from a rival conference, as well as the return of nine All-Americans," he said. "This should be a great event for any volleyball fan."

The conference challenge format will feature the Big 12 Conference's University of Nebraska and University of Texas and the Pac 10 Conference's University of Southern California and Stanford University. Planning the annual showcase can take two or more years, so selecting the teams that far in advance can be a guessing game in terms of competition, DeBoer said. "We got lucky this year. All of the teams we picked are ranked within the top five. This should help make this year's event even more exciting."

Once the teams have been selected, the next step is to select a host city. "Not every city can bid on an event like this," said Mark McCloskey, AVCA senior director of recruitment and events. "A host city has to be capable of handling an event of this type and size, ►

