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WILLIAM LAUER/Lincoln Journal Star

NU's Dani Busboom, No. 18, Jordan Larson, 10, Rachel Schwartz, 5, Sarah Pavan, 9, and Tracy Stalls, 11, celebrate their national championship on Saturday in Omaha.

## Abbas calls for early elections

Palestinian leader seeks to end escalating struggle with Hamas.

BY KARIN LAUB  
The Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called Saturday for elections to end his violent standoff with Hamas — a gamble that Palestinians will back him as he seeks to weaken the Islamic militants, avoid civil war and keep momentum for peace overtures with Israel.

Hamas accused Abbas of trying to topple its government, promised to block the elections and urged supporters to take to the streets. "This is a real coup," said Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahar, a Hamas hard-liner.

Hours later, dozens of Hamas gunmen attacked a training base of Abbas' presidential guard near his home and office in Gaza City. One guard was killed and three were wounded in the battle that ensued early Sunday, a guard statement said.

On Saturday, 18 Palestinians were wounded in clashes between the two political camps in Gaza.

Hamas' landslide election in January parliamentary elections split the Palestinian leadership into two camps. One, led by Abbas, seeks peace with Israel; the other, led by Islamic Hamas militants, is sworn to the Jewish state's destruction. The infighting often has degenerated into convulsions of violence, and this week, tensions reached their highest peak in years.

Abbas tried to end the struggle by bringing Hamas into a more moderate coalition with his Fatah Party, but the Islamic group refused to do what he demanded — recognizing Israel and renouncing violence.

"We have a crisis. We have an authority with two heads. So what do we do? Bullets or ballots?" asked Saeb Erekat, an aide to Abbas. "Abu Mazen said ballots," he said, using Abbas' nickname.

Across the West Bank and Gaza, streets largely were deserted as everyone watched Abbas' 90-minute address, peppered with criticism of Hamas.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair urged the international community to support Abbas, while State Department spokesman Edgar Vasquez said it was "an issue for the Palestinian people to decide through a peaceful political process."

Abbas said a unity government still was the best option but he had despaired of persuading Hamas to enter into a coalition with Fatah. The Hamas government has drawn international sanctions over its militantly anti-Israel stand but has refused to recognize Israel, the West's condition for resuming aid.

"I... decided to call for early presidential and parliament elections," Abbas said from his West Bank headquarters, after outlining months of failed coalition talks. "Let us return to the people, to hear their

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## Sweet victory for Huskers

Husker volleyball team wins third national title in dramatic fashion

MORE IN HUSKER EXTRA/PAGE 1C

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON  
Lincoln Journal Star

OMAHA — New eardrums, please. The old ones called it quits at 9:45 Saturday night. And it's all your fault, Sarah Pavan.

It was at that exact time — cell phone clocks do not lie — when a volleyball met a floor and the noise of a red nation threatened to blow a roof off.

It was Memorial Stadium-on-a-big-fourth-down-in-November loud. The Pavan bomb had just given Nebraska Game 3 in Saturday's national championship match against Stanford

at Qwest Center Omaha.

It couldn't get any louder, right?

Sure, it could, and did — at exactly 10:18. That's when a Larson thunder shot put away Game 4 and Nebraska called itself volleyball's national champions.

Guess we'll forgive Pavan and Jordan Larson for the hearing loss. As Lincoln man Tom Chapman said before the match: "Hearing loss is kind of part of the deal."

And what a deal it was.

Saturday was everything about sports that is grand. It was goose-

bumps on arms, Maalox in hand and little girls holding up a sign and a dream: "Future Huskers."

It was 17,209 fans — a new single-match record for women's volleyball.

It was Husker senior Dani Busboom, pride of Cortland, trying her best to breathe so that she could look at Pavan and rightly tell her: "One more point. One point."

It was Christina Houghttelling, pride of Cambridge, sidelined for the year with injury but still counting down the points to a championship with tears running down her cheeks.

"It was hard," she said. "Reality was setting in, just knowing I'm not out there. I couldn't keep the tears back. I

was shaking, nervous. I didn't know what to do."

It was Rachel Schwartz, pride of Lincoln, emotionally spent at her locker, though not so spent that she couldn't check her text messages.

"Cool," she announced. "Our neighbors are going to throw us a party."

It was Amanda Gates, pride of Columbus, coming off the bench and making the biggest block of her life to tie Game 3 at 27. She had everyone checking programs to see exactly who it was that had just changed a championship's momentum.

It was Larson, pride of Hooper,

See VOLLEYBALL, Page 2A

### SUNDAY SPECIAL

Lincoln's Rick Stempson on his childhood dream: 'If you had told us we would have a movie made ... absolutely no way.'

## Two guys & a 'goofy idea' that changed their lives

BY JEFF KORBELIK  
Lincoln Journal Star

Rick Stempson signed his name Bruce Willis.

It wasn't the right thing to do, nor was it the nice thing.

But he didn't want to disappoint the group of high school girls who thought he was the famous actor.

Plus, it gave him a funny story to tell his friends, family and a newspaper reporter.

It's funny because Stempson is rail thin and about 20 years younger than Willis and has a full head of hair.

Granted, he had a baseball cap pulled down low, but still ...

"I look nothing like Bruce Willis, but when they asked I said 'Yeah, I'm Bruce Willis.'"

It happened a few weeks ago in

Austin, Texas, where the award-winning screenplay Stempson co-wrote with his childhood friend Andrew Stock is being turned into a major motion picture.

Stempson and Stock are from Lincoln, and Stempson still lives here and is the assistant men's tennis coach at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"Gary the Tennis Coach" is a dark comedy starring Seann William Scott — Stifler from "American Pie" movies — as a down-on-his-luck janitor who coaches a Nebraska high school tennis team to the state championship.

The movie is directed by Danny Leiner ("Harold and Kumar Go To White Castle") and co-stars Randy Quaid. Shooting wrapped up last week, and the movie is scheduled for

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VAN REDEN/Courtesy photo

Andrew Stock, director Danny Leiner and Rick Stempson watch footage of "Gary the Tennis Coach" on the film site in Austin, Texas. The comedy is set in Lincoln, but filming took place in the warmer Texas city.

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