



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Yankton head volleyball coach Tiffany Beste hits a ball during a drill in practice on Thursday. With several experienced players returning in the front row, the Gazelles have spent plenty of practice time fine-tuning the defense. The Gazelles open the 2015 season at Brandon Valley on Tuesday.

## Veteran Gazelles Focus On Defense As They Prepare For Tuesday's Opener

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK  
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With a veteran front row at their disposal, the Yankton Gazelles volleyball team spent Thursday afternoon making sure their hitters had something to hit.

"In the past week, we've learned that our offense can do some nice things, both setting and hitting," said Yankton head coach Tiffany Beste. "Serve-serve and defense is where we've been lacking consistency."

To that end, Beste has mixed in some different defensive workouts to keep her team on their toes.

"Beste has us doing a lot of new drills," said senior outside hitter Becky Frick. "We can't just be good at the same drills."

The focus of the drills was the same: even if a player can't make a perfect pass to the setter, get the ball in the air so that it can be played by a teammate.

"We've worked a lot on

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■ Video From Thursday's YHS Booster Club Fall Sports Kickoff. [yankton.net](http://yankton.net)

and hit, we know we're a pretty good team. We need to work on our passing."

Senior middle hitter Sophie Drotzmann, who along with Frick is a fourth-year varsity player, agreed.

"Defense has definitely been a focus. We're fairly strong offensively. We need to step up and play defense," she said. "If a team can pass and serve-serve, they have one-up on their opponent."

Seniors Danielle Salvatori (DS/OH), Ellie Fedders (S) and Hannah Bockholt (OH/MH) also return with front-row experience, as do juniors Josie Saylor (MH/OH) and Lindsey Hale (DS/OH).

"We have a lot of offense returning, and not just from

last year," Beste said.

Frick is hoping the Gazelles' solid front line can help build confidence in the back as well.

"We don't know what the back row will be like, but we trust our teammates. When game time comes, we're all going to be focused on the same goal," she said. "We are confident in the front row. Hopefully that gives us some confidence in the back, and the whole team can be confident."

The Gazelles open with two road tests at District 2AA and Eastern South Dakota Conference rival Brandon Valley on Tuesday, and ESD rival Watertown on Aug. 27. Watertown eliminated the Gazelles from the post-season in 2014.

Yankton opens the home portion of the season Sept. 1 against District 2AA rival Sioux Falls Lincoln.

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JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Yankton seniors Sophie Drotzmann, left, and Becky Frick go up for a block during a drill in volleyball practice on Thursday.

### Football | Nebraska Preview

## Riley Knows Nine Wins, Bad Losses Not Good Enough

BY ERIC OLSON  
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LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Mike Riley would appear to have a tough act to follow at Nebraska, replacing a coach who never won fewer than nine games.

A deeper look at the numbers indicate there's plenty of room for improvement in a program that once prided itself on being in the annual national championship conversation but now has gone 15 years without a conference title.

The Cornhuskers have become known more for wilting in the biggest games. They've lost six of their last seven against Top 25 opponents, lost two straight to an unranked Minnesota team and allowed 129 points in their last two against Wisconsin.

When they met the Badgers in Madison last year, they gave up a then-FBS-record 408 yards to Melvin Gordon, and they surrendered an average of 521 yards while going 0-3 against ranked teams.

In seven years under Bo Pelini, Nebraska was higher than No. 20 in the final Associated Press poll just once.

Athletic director Shawn Eichorst's hiring of the 62-year-old Riley caught the nation by surprise. Riley had coached 14 years at Oregon State and planned to retire in Corvallis. But with a nudge from a friend and former assistant, new Wisconsin coach Paul Chryst, Riley and his wife Dee looked at the Nebraska job

as "one last adventure."

"I felt it was a good fit," said Riley, whose five-year contract pays him \$2.7 million this year. "I had the inside scoop on Shawn from Paul Chryst. Paul and Shawn worked together at Wisconsin, and Paul had told me a few years back that if you ever want to do anything different than you're doing, this would be a great guy to do it with. All of that has really been confirmed. I really appreciate this place."

Riley takes over a team that finished 9-4, and he'll have a three-year starter in quarterback Tommy Armstrong Jr. and a Malik Collins-led defensive line that should be the best in the Big Ten West.

He demurred when asked what the Huskers must accomplish for him to consider his first year in Lincoln a success.

"That's really a hard one for me because all I think about is winning the first game and then winning the one after that," he said. "I want to win them all, and then that will translate real well. But I also know you can't win them all if you don't win the first one. BYU is a really tough first opponent."

Some things to know about Nebraska:

**THE NEXT AMEER?** The Huskers have had a 1,000-yard rusher each of the last six seasons. Ameer Abdullah is gone, and next in line is Terrell Newby. He was No. 3 on the depth chart last year, but a strong spring pushed him ahead of Imani Cross. Also watch out for

Mikale Wilbon, who has raised eyebrows in early practices.

**PASSING STRUGGLES:** Riley's offense requires the quarterback to be able to make every kind of throw, and Armstrong has struggled so far in practices. Riley's not overly concerned, saying that his best Oregon State QBs got better as the season progressed. The receiving corps took a hit Wednesday with the announcement that De'Mornay Pierson-El, also one of the nation's top punt returners, would be out until October with a foot injury.

**NEW MOOD ON DEFENSE:** DT Vincent Valentine said he and his mates are playing with free minds under new coordinator Mark Banker. Last year, Valentine said, "we felt like we were playing with everybody against us. ... I feel like now we have the type of feeling where we're going to go out there and lay it on the line every week and whatever happens happens."

**STRONG KICKING GAME:** PK Drew Brown set a freshman scoring record with 101 points and was perfect on PATs, and P Sam Foltz averaged 42.2 yards and had 26 punts downed inside the 20-yard line.

**NO REST TILL NOVEMBER:** The Huskers will play 11 straight weeks before having an open date before the Nov. 27 game against Iowa. It'll be the longest stretch since they played 11 without a break in 2007. Nebraska never went further than six games into the season without a bye under Pelini.

## Nebraska Won't Rush Pierson-El Back From Injury

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — It might take longer than originally expected for Nebraska return specialist De'Mornay Pierson-El to return from his broken right foot, coach Mike Riley said Thursday.

Pierson-El broke the foot while making a cut during practice this week, and Riley announced Wednesday he would be out six to eight weeks. That would have set up a possible return for the Big Ten opener at Illinois or the key Oct. 10 home game against Wisconsin.

After Thursday's practice, Riley backed off on that timetable.

"Our goal is for him to return and play this year. How soon, I hesitate to say because I don't want to put anything on him," Riley said. "Nobody knows. They initially said six to eight. It's all biology. It's one thing about being healed. It's another being ready to play."

If Pierson-El progresses

well, Riley said, he should play "a good portion of this season."

The loss of the sophomore from Alexandria, Virginia, is a major blow on two fronts.

He is among eight receivers who have missed time on the practice field because of injuries. Pierson-El was the team's third-leading receiver in 2014, with 23 catches for 321 yards and four touchdowns. He also is a threat on jet sweep plays.

His biggest contributions came as a punt returner. His 17.5-yard average on 34 returns ranked third in the nation, and his three returns for touchdowns were tied for the national lead.

Jordan Westerkamp, who was the primary punt returner two seasons ago, will move back into that role in Pierson-El's absence.

"He's solid, real good. I'm very happy with him," special

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### Cedar Fifth, Crofton Sixth At O'Neill

O'NEILL, Neb. — O'Neill beat Battle Creek in a playoff for top honors at Thursday's O'Neill Girls' Golf Invitational. O'Neill and Battle Creek both carded a 401 on the day.

Norfolk Catholic was third at 409, while area schools Hartington Cedar Catholic took fifth (437) and Crofton finished sixth (473).

The O'Neill tandem of Hailee Harmon (90) and Paige Gaughenbaugh (92) went 1-2,

respectively, while Valentine's Ashton Bancroft was one shot back in third. Cedar Catholic's Cassidy Ulrich finished 10<sup>th</sup> at 103.

TEAM SCORES: O'Neill 401, Battle Creek 401, Norfolk Catholic 409, Valentine 432, Hartington Cedar Catholic 437, Crofton 473, Plainview 518  
TOP 15: Hailee Harmon, O'Neill 90; Paige Gaughenbaugh, O'Neill 92; Ashton Bancroft, Valentine 93; Taylor Finkle, Battle Creek 94; McKenzie Jensen, Battle Creek 96; Tori Osterman, Valentine 99; Mady Doggett, Norfolk Catholic 100; Chelsey Reifert, Norfolk Catholic 101; Abby Westerman, Battle Creek 101; Cassidy Ulrich, Cedar Catholic 103; Blair Benda, Norfolk Catholic 103; Libby Tielke, Norfolk Catholic 105; Nicole Zavadi, Crofton 107; Nikki Gotschall, O'Neill 108; Brandy Wibelhaus, Cedar Catholic 109

### Rain Washes Out Opening Day Of Little League World Series

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. (AP) — All four games at the Little League World Series were washed out Thursday, setting up a delayed start with all 16 teams in the tournament playing on Friday.

Officials made the decision to call off the opening schedule as storms rolled in shortly after noon, with up to an inch of rain expected. Opening ceremonies were canceled and won't be re-

scheduled.

Eight games are now set for Friday. Little League officials believe that is the most played in one day at the world series. The series used to be a single-elimination event with eight teams needing just eight games total over a few days to declare a champion. The tournament introduced pool play in 1992 and expanded to its current 16 teams in 2001. Little

League has used a modified double-elimination format since 2010.

Williamsport's National Weather Service forecast for Friday called for a slight chance of showers before 2 p.m. EDT, then clouds, sun and high temperatures around 80 degrees through the middle of next week.

The revised schedule for Friday: Uganda vs. Dominican Republic at 10 a.m., Pearlard,

Texas, vs. Portland, Oregon at 11 a.m.; Venezuela, vs. Australia at 1 p.m.; Bowling Green, Kentucky vs. Bonita, California at 2 p.m.; Surrey, British Columbia vs. Mexico, Mexico, 4 p.m.; Taylors, South Carolina vs. Cranston, Rhode Island at 5 p.m.; Taiwan vs. Japan at 7 p.m.; and Lewisberry, Pennsylvania vs. Webb City, Missouri at 8 p.m.

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