

Sports

Will the real Husker defense please stand up?

By Larry Sparks

Nebraska's defense played two different types of football Saturday in the Huskers' 41-7 win against Auburn at Auburn, Ala., UNL football Coach Tom Osborne said at Monday's Extra Point Club luncheon.

Osborne said the defense played "just average" in the first half and that they were lucky to have only seven points scored against them. The second half, however, probably was the Blackshirts' best performance this season, he said.

"The thing I'm kind of concerned about right now is which one really is our defense," Osborne said. "We played very well at times against Iowa. We played pretty well against New Mexico State. You have to give Penn State a lot of credit . . . but there were some times when we were a little bit average on defense against them, and then the first half against Auburn we were just average."

The Blackshirts show potential of being a top-rate defense, but they still need experience, Osborne said. "I think having played two straight tough ball games on the road, and where noise was a factor, will probably serve us well," he said.

Few audibles

Osborne said the noise at Jordan-Hare Stadium Saturday was a factor. He said the Husker offense was able to

audible only two times against Auburn. Although one of the calls resulted in a 12-yard touchdown run by I-Back Mike Rozier, both plays had miscues because not all the players heard the audibles.

"Whenever we can't audible, it probably costs us seven to 10 points," he said. "It makes a lot of difference if you can't check."

The defense also has to change calls at the line of scrimmage, and that was difficult to do at Auburn, Osborne said.

The coach said a good week of practice usually indicates a good performance the following Saturday. He said the Huskers did practice well last week, but he was worried about the pre-game and halftime atmosphere at Auburn.

"We didn't seem very emotional before the game. We were kind of flat. At half time, everyone seemed tired and kind of flat. I was really worried at half as to whether we would be able to win the game or not," he said.

Osborne said the Huskers will face another emotional defense Saturday when they open the Big Eight season at Colorado.

CU playing harder

"They're playing harder, with more emotion and more intensity than any Colorado team I've seen in a long time," Osborne said.

Herbie Husker has California roots

By Pat Higgins

Matt Rye is a walking, talking testimonial to UNL. Most days he is occupied as a graduate student in finance and competing on the swim team. However, on football Saturdays, Rye turns into his alter ego — Herbie Husker.

"A lot of people call me Herbie now instead of Matt. When I start to wear the costume to bed then I may have to see a shrink," Rye said.

A native of Benicia, Calif., Rye spent his freshman year at UCLA. He sat out his sophomore year to train for the Olympic trials. Some recruiting work by UNL swimming Coach Cal Bentz lured Rye away from the sunny climate.

"My dad happened to visit here and told me I'd be crazy not to come and at least check it out. I ended up coming here the one warm weekend of the winter," Rye said. "You can tell the guys from California on the team because they start to wear long johns when it gets below 50 degrees."

Rye competes in the 100- and 200- meter breast-stroke and the 200- meter individual medley. Thanks to a new NCAA rule, he is able to compete on the swim team even though he is a graduate student. The old rule forced the athletes to spend an extra year as an undergraduate. Rye prefers UNL to UCLA in both academics and athletics.

Sports complex 'the best'

"I couldn't believe how nice the sports complex was when I first came here. It's the best training facility in the country. I think credit should go to Bob Devaney for making everything available to minor sports," Rye said.

UCLA-Southern California football was considered big time back in California. Rye said that he was stunned by the difference in Nebraska.

"The first time I saw a home game in Lincoln, it really blew me away to see all those people in red walking down the street. It definitely beats UCLA-USC," Rye said.

Women runners strive for top

By Kevin Warneke

With three meets under its belt, the UNL women's cross country team is on its way to bigger and better things, according to Coach Linda Zech.

The squad opened its season on Sept. 18 by competing in a meet at Drake, finishing third behind Drake and Iowa State. A first place finish followed Sept. 25 at the Ozark Invitational in Springfield, Mo. In their most recent outing, the Huskers finished eighth at the Iowa State Invitational Saturday.

"I wasn't at all pleased with our performance at the Iowa State Invitational," Zech said.

According to Zech, despite the fact that the squad was not full force because of the absence of a few team members who were sick, she did not feel that her runners performed as well as they could have.

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As a result of that enthusiasm, Rye became caught up in the whole atmosphere. A key person in getting him involved was gymnast Steve Elliot.

"Steve Elliot is a good friend of mine and he was running the cheerleading camp. He suggested that I become Herbie Husker. At first I thought he was crazy; now I am Herbie," Rye said.

One of the more enjoyable aspects of being Herbie Husker is working with the cheerleaders, he said. Rye also enjoys playing up to the crowd during the games.

"The cheerleaders have a set format but I get to ad-lib around them. After a touchdown or an interception I like to key on the crowd's expressions and accentuate them," Rye said.

Some crowds hostile

One drawback for Herbie is that some crowds at road games are hostile to the mascot. Rye said Nebraska shows much more class.

"They were really abusive at Missouri last year. They were throwing oranges at me — stuff like that. The difference is that if Nebraska gets beat, they do it with class," Rye said.

A big contrast between UCLA and Nebraska is the rapport among the athletes. Rye said that at UCLA he wouldn't have been able to pick all-American Kenny Easley out of a crowd.

"For instance, a guy like Dave Rimington keeps up with how the swim team is doing. We all eat at the same training table. It's not like we're just a bunch of numbers," Rye said.

Rye helps to recruit other athletes. He said it is easy to sell a class program and school.

"To tell you the truth, I couldn't have found Nebraska on a map before I came here. Now I think that it's the best place you could want to go to college," Rye said.

Despite his enthusiasm for UNL, Rye plans to move to the San Francisco area after completing graduate school because of the superior business opportunities.

"Twenty years from now I plan on being a Californian for Nebraska coming back to the Oklahoma game," Rye said.

Nebraska will participate in its own invitational on Saturday, and Zech has set high goals for the squad.

"We're hoping that we'll be in the top four at our meet," Zech said. "Three of the top four teams at the Iowa State meet will be here and also Colorado, and they're consistently a strong cross country team."

"In order for us to do well in the Big Eight meet that is coming up later this season, which is our goal, we need to do well in this meet," she said.

Nebraska has one junior and three sophomores on the squad, with the rest being freshmen.

"We need to recruit one or two more super runners to compete at the national level. We can easily compete at the conference level," she said. "Or these girls need to develop. They have the potential to be a strong, nationally competitive team."

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Nebraska assistant coach Craig Bohl scouted the Buffaloes' 34-6 loss to UCLA last week. He said the linebackers seem to be the strongest part of the CU defense.

Bohl said CU quarterback Randy Essington is back after being out with a bruised arm, and he usually connects with tight end Dave Hestra on several short passes each game.

"They do protect the passer well," Osborne said. "They have a number of junior college offensive linemen that give them a little bit more size."

"Their backs and receivers are a little quicker than what they've had other years," he said.

Osborne said the Huskers' play early in the game will be important in setting the tempo of the game.

"If we can play real well early and get on top of them, then that will be very helpful," he said. "On the other hand, if we give them some turnovers, if we allow them to get a big play or two on offense, if we keep them in the game, they will get more emotional, they will play harder and harder and the fans will get behind them."

Nebraska's injury situation is much improved from last week, Osborne said. Fullback Roger Craig, who sat out the Auburn game with a deep thigh bruise, is expected to play this week and wingback Irving Fryar, who suffered an ankle injury at Auburn, also should be ready to play, Osborne said.



Staff Photo by Craig Andresen

Matt Rye displays the head from the "Herbie Husker" outfit he wears at Cornhusker football games and other UNL athletic events. Rye, a graduate student, also competes on the Nebraska swimming and diving team.

Weekend in Kansas leaves tennis team with split matches

The Nebraska men's tennis team split a pair of matches during the weekend in Manhattan, Kan. The Huskers lost to Kansas University 5-4, but defeated Kansas State 8-1.

In singles matches against the Jayhawks, Craig Johnson defeated Brett Blair 6-4, 6-1; Jim Carson lost to Scott Alexander 6-4, 3-6, 7-5; Ridge Smidt lost to Michael Center 7-6, 6-2; Brian Edwards lost to Charles Stearns 6-4, 5-7, 6-2; Doug Elsass lost to Franco Cacioppolini 7-5, 7-6; Ashwin Vasan lost to Jim Syrett 6-4, 6-1 and Tony Sloboth defeated David Mills 6-3, 4-6, 7-5.

In doubles competition, Carson-Johnson defeated Blair-Center 6-3, 6-4; Smidt-Vasan defeated Alexander-Syrett 6-4, 6-1; and Edwards-Elsass defeated Stearns-Cacioppolini 7-5, 6-3.

Against Kansas State, Johnson defeated Jeff Jackard 6-2, 6-3; Carson defeated Curt Thompson 6-0, 6-4; Smidt defeated Gary Hassenflu 6-3, 6-3; Edwards defeated Kris James 6-2, 4-6, 6-2; Elsass defeated Mark Hassenflu 6-0, 6-4; and Vasan defeated Dexter Bohl 6-1, 6-1.

In doubles play, Carson-Johnson defeated Thompson-G. Hassenflu 6-3, 2-6, 6-4; Smidt-Vasan lost to Jackard-James 6-1, 7-5; and Edwards-Sloboth defeated M. Hassenflu-Brady Tinker 6-4, 6-4.