

WHAT NEBRASKA HAS DONE IN 1909

By
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CHALOUKKA, 1908
Ex-player who has done much for
1909 squad.

To assert that the Cornhuskers of 1909 should have been the champions of the Missouri Valley—that they had the material for such an eleven and that they were coached well enough to acquire the title—has a paradoxical tone; yet a careful review and analysis of the team, with a survey of its individual players, and a study of its records—how it lost and won games—will prove that such a declaration is anything but absurd.

A glance at the record for this fall, with no effort to investigate why more games were not won, or to see what conditions obtained at the time each game was lost, will give a wrong view of the season of 1909; justice will not be done to the team or the coaches. Nebraska deserved better than a 14 to 0 score against Minnesota; south Dakota, the team that held Cole's men 6 to 6 in the first game of the fall, is not in the same class with the Cornhusker eleven that completely outplayed the championship Denver aggregation last Saturday; weak Iowa should have suffered a trimming by three or four touchdowns instead of getting a 6 to 6 score, and the title-holders from Lawrence, Kan., were not six points better than Cole's men and should have been defeated by two touchdowns.

Nebraska, on the eve of the clash with the Haskell Indians, has an eleven that could have won from Kansas, Iowa, South Dakota, and could have held Minnesota to a lower score. The truth is, it has had this same strong eleven since the few days before it met the Gophers at Omaha. Why did it not accomplish these things then? This can be answered in two words: hard luck. And no man who has followed the Cornhuskers day after day this fall can gainsay that.

In following the Cornhuskers through two defeats, two ties, and three victories, the writer never has felt that the team was a failure, or that the season was not a success; and on the eve of the last battle of the fall, his opinion is that the Nebraska team of 1909 is superior to that of 1908, and that it deserves a higher niche in the football annals of the Cornhusker institution than its last predecessor.

Kansas, who has to defeat only Missouri to be hailed as the champions of the Missouri Valley for the second time within two years, has the right to those honors, because it won from Nebraska, 6 to 5; but it has not the right to proclaim that it has the best eleven in this section of the country. The way its victory was won from the Cornhuskers, and the way in which the Cornhuskers permitted it to get that victory, deny that Nebraska is weaker than the Jayhawkers.

For two seasons, now, Kansas has played in fortune's favor and Nebraska has fought hard as an unfavored son of the fickle dame. Not even in the game with Denver last Saturday, when the Cornhuskers won, was fortune on the side of the Scarlet and Cream. Denver had all the luck. Had Nebraska had its share the score would have been 20 to 5, instead of 6 to 5.

But plain apologies, without plain evidence, are not convincing proof to the great majority, and it is best to go back to the beginning of the present season and put a searchlight on the events that have occurred since "King" Cole landed in Lincoln on Sep-

tember 20 and began his third year of work with the Cornhuskers.

When Coach Cole journeyed out to the state farm on the first afternoon of the practice season he found about the poorest lot of eligible material that any coach has faced since the late nineties. There were just five letter men on hand. These were Captain Beltzer, Louis Harte, Toit Bentley, Leroy Temple and Johnny Johnson. Even with a tried bunch of new material, in addition to these five veterans, the situation would have been a mighty hard one for any coach to have bucked against.

But the new material with which to build up a machine around these five letter men was all green, and it looked very gloomy, indeed, for the Scarlet and Cream. On the squad there were Frank, Shonka, Magor, Chauner, Elliott and Rathbone. Later Wolcott returned to school and joined the bunch. These men were all new to the game, and a part of them were regarded as far too weak to play varsity football.

The season was scheduled to open on October 2 with the University of South Dakota, a school that boasted of a veteran eleven. Cole, starting in with the material on hand, put his men into the best shape possible and sent eleven players against South Dakota.

The northern representatives had been at practice for two weeks longer than the Cornhuskers, and they were in fit shape for a battle. The Cornhusker team, composed of six green players, were about as poor a lot that ever played for the Scarlet and Cream. Shonka was not at center, Magor was not in the game, nor had Wolcott and Ewing come to the aid of the team as yet.

The eleven that played South Dakota, then, did not have in its lineup three of the players who were later to be on the team and make it a winner. Shonka while not playing center was at right guard, playing his first game of the fall. Even he was replaced later in the game by Louis Harte, who had played at full back.

This Nebraska eleven, after being shut-out in the first half, came back in the second half and evened up the score by making a touchdown and kicking goal. South Dakota had scored in the opening session, and the final result of the game was a 6 to 6 tie.

This game would have been lost but for the excellent work of Temple and Harte, two Nebraska veterans. Frank played quarter part of the game, but did some costly fumbling and that kept Nebraska from scoring on two different occasions. It was a miserable bunch that held South Dakota to a tie. The team that represented Nebraska three weeks later could have defeated the northerners by six or seven touchdowns.

By the next Saturday, when Knox was met, the Cornhuskers, still having no additions to the squad, had come together under the strong coaching of "King" Cole and they put the Illinois team under the snow by a score of 34 to 0. Frank, Shonka, Rathbone and Chauner were beginning to show good form then, and they played fast ball.

There was, however, nothing in the play of the Cornhuskers that indicated they would be able to play Minnesota, their next opponent, any sort of an even game. Knox was weak—stronger than South Dakota—and the victory gained by Nebraska was nothing of which to boast.

During the week which followed the Knox game, and in which the team was to play Minnesota at Omaha, Ewing, Wolcott and Magor, three men destined to play star ball, came to the team. In the two early games the Nebraska line had been extremely weak, and it was feared that the Nebraska forwards would prove easy prey for the stout Gophers. The acquisition of Ewing and Wolcott, and the marvelous development of Shonka, though, gave Nebraska a line that outplayed Minnesota's.

The Gophers went into the game at Omaha expecting to tear through the Cornhusker forwards for long gains. The thing that happened was that the Nebraska forwards stopped all the dangerous Gopher players and made big holes in the opposing line. Shonka, Temple, Harte, Wolcott and Ewing made up the line from tackle to tackle and they played as brilliant ball as any Nebraska line ever has put up.

Magor, playing his first game for the Cornhuskers, was located at right end, and there he was a sensation, diagnosing play after play and protecting his wing like a veteran. Johnson, on the other end, did just as well.

In the back field, Frank, Bentley, Rathbone and Captain Beltzer held the four places. They did not play as fast ball as they did later in the season, and it was the weakness there that lost the game. Rathbone proved himself a mighty hard line hitter and earned a right to a permanent position on the team. Shonka and Wolcott, the two new line men, were invincible, and the former began to play the kind of football that has earned him a right

to be classed as the best center in the west.

During the first half of this game Nebraska held Minnesota even, neither side scoring. The second half told on the strength of Nebraska, and the Gophers won by scoring fourteen points. Their scores were made in rather a fluky manner, though.

The first touchdown came in the early minutes of the second half; an unguarded forward pass took the ball from the Cornhusker fifty-yard line to its ten-yard line. There it took three attempts to push the oval over the line. The next points were made after a kick of Captain Beltzer's had been blocked on his own fifteen-yard line. The three points from a drop kick were scored from Nebraska's twenty-five-yard line, Captain Beltzer fumbling one of Captain McGovern's long punts and allowing the ball to be recovered by a Gopher.

The game was a "great one," and the Cornhuskers established their place in western football. Their showing against Minnesota proved to be better than any other team made, with the exception of Michigan, the eleven that last Saturday defeated the powerful pupils of Coach Williams.

The Minnesota game settled the Nebraska lineup for the season, and gave "King" Cole eleven good players. His linemen were the best that could be desired, but he lacked a star for his back field, and this part of the eleven was weak. The defense was grand, but the offense was slow and not effective as a scoring machine. This weakness in the offense was prominent in the Iowa game, the Saturday following the Minnesota game. It was not so noticeable in the Kansas bat-



COACH "KING" COLE
Ex-Michigan

tle, and in the Denver game last week the only evidence that it still remained was the fumbling that the backs did.

In meeting Iowa, Nebraska was picked as the favorite, and should have won. There is no denying it had a better eleven. A quarterback, not of varsity material, gave Iowa its chances to score and kept Nebraska from winning. Both Nebraska's offense and defense were far superior to Iowa's. The only way in which the Jayhawkers could score was by the air line, Hyland booting two goals from the field. His inaccuracy was shown, though, in his failure to get more than that, for he attempted nine in all; two out of nine is not even a fair average.

There is no doubt that Nebraska would have defeated Iowa by two or three touchdowns had Frank or Bentley been in at quarter instead of Hascall. This latter boy played the best he could, and it is not fair to criticize him too much, for in placing the blame for the failure to win it is only just to the other members to speak the truth. Anybody who witnessed the Nebraska-Iowa game will, in giving a fair judgment, pronounce the Cornhuskers a superior eleven to the Jayhawkers. If it is denied, however, point to the comparative scores of the Kansas-Nebraska and the Iowa-Kansas games. The former stood 6 to 0, with Kansas exerting its full strength; the

second closed 20 to 7, with the Jayhawkers playing their substitutes.

After the Iowa game Nebraska met Doane college of Crete, a team that was hailed as the strongest of the Nebraska college eleven, but which has failed to establish a title to that honor. "King" Cole ordered his players to take things easy and the Crete lads were defeated only 12 to 0. The Cornhuskers had a substitute back field in the battle for the greater share of the time. The regulars were saved as much as possible for the next Saturday, when the real big game of the Nebraska schedule was to take place, Kansas being the foe.

During the days preceding the Jayhawker battle the Cornhuskers worked overtime to get into shape, and they went into the battle in tip top form. During the first half neither side scored and the advantage apparently was with Cole's men. They, at least, played the ball in Jayhawker territory most of the time and should have scored.

In the second session the battle was a see-saw, and in the last two minutes of play the Jayhawkers were given the game, when Quarterback Johnson ran from the Kansas forty-yard line for a touchdown. He caught a low punt from Captain Beltzer's boot and raced by Nebraska tacklers to a touchdown. He was tackled and should have been stopped easily.

Poor generalship and questionable penalties prevented the Cornhuskers scoring in the second half. They three times rushed the ball down to the Jayhawker twenty-yard line, and each time were brought back for alleged infractions of the rules. The decisions were very shady, to say the least. In the opening half the Cornhuskers were twice down to the Kansas fifteen-yard line, and a little better generalship would have brought scores.

In this game the Nebraska forwards outplayed their opponents man for man, and won the right to be placed on the All-Missouri Valley eleven. Shonka was a big advantage over the much touted Carlson, while the other linemen bowled over their opponents with ease.

As this was the crucial battle in the Missouri Valley league, and as Kansas won it, the championship honors were lost to the Cornhuskers. The merits of the two elevens were not, however, indicated by the 6 to 0 score. A tie ending would have been nearing the equitable thing, but even that would have done the Cornhuskers an injustice. This sounds a great deal like squealing, to many, but if one has followed the Cornhuskers and realizes how well they played against Kansas, he must come to the same conclusion.

The Jayhawker battle was followed by a rest of two weeks, and then Denver University was met on Saturday, November 20, at the Colorado capital. The Cornhuskers won the game by a score of 6 to 5, a result that in no way indicates the relative strength of the two elevens.

Nebraska had not played Denver University since 1907, when the westerners came to Lincoln and were smothered under a score of 62 to 0. The Ministers, as the Denver players are named, caused several strong players to immigrate the next season after meeting Nebraska, and settle at Denver University. The Ministers are hedged in by no freshman rule, and it was possible for them to rejuvenate their team in a single season, and that was the thing which they accomplished.

From a weak eleven that was held to a 12 to 0 score by a high school team in 1907, Denver came up in one year to an eleven that won the championship of Colorado and the Rocky mountain region and that held the famous Carlisle Indians to an 8 to 4 score.

It was last fall that the Ministers did this, and this season, with practically the same eleven, they have again won the championship of Colorado and when Nebraska met them were hailed as the best eleven in the west, although they had been defeated by the Haskell.

No one in Denver, however, will admit that the Haskell Indians have a better eleven than Denver, for the red men took the Ministers by surprise. Deacon Koehler, coach of the Ministers, had underestimated Haskell's strength. The result was that the Indians won, 8 to 6.

This game with the Indians preceded the Nebraska contest just one week, and immediately after it Deacon Koehler began to prepare to take out revenge on Nebraska for that which the Indians had given him. He worked Volk, a half back, into shape and put his strongest eleven in the Nebraska game.

But even with his best team, he failed to win. The Cornhuskers proved themselves superior in every department of play. The forward pass they worked often, while the Ministers did not once succeed with it. The Cornhusker line was invincible, and the



ASSISTANT COACH HARVEY
Captain 1908

back field had struck its gait. Magor and Rathbone tore through holes in the Denver line continually for great gains, and Frank swept around ends for long advances.

The Thanksgiving day game will see four Cornhuskers playing their last football for the Scarlet and Cream. These men are Harry Ewing, Louis Harte, Captain Beltzer, and "Johnny" Johnson. They have played football with the Cornhuskers for three years, and have showed up in grand form. Their loss to the team will be severe, but there are some new men on the squad who promise to get into the game in a way that will help keep the Cornhuskers in a high class in western football. It is doubtful, though, whether Nebraska will soon have as powerful a line as the present one.

In the back field this fall Nebraska has three players who certainly are "comers" in every sense of the word. They are Magor, right half; Rathbone, full back, and Frank, quarter. The way they played the game at Denver is an indication that they will be real stars of the first magnitude next fall. Magor did some work at Denver that, if continued next fall, will make him the best half back in the west.

In the line there will remain for next fall Wolcott, right guard; Shonka, center; Temple, right tackle, and Chauner, right end. Shonka has proved himself a wonder this fall, and it is hard to guess to what extreme his play will go next fall. Wolcott's work at guard marks him for one of the best guards in the west next fall. He has not met his match this season. Temple is one of the best defensive players in the west today, and next fall, which is his last season of football, he undoubtedly will be a terror. Chauner has made an excellent end this fall, and next season he should be one of the best flankers Nebraska has possessed in several seasons. Elliott, who played right guard at Denver, is sure to prove a tower of strength to the Nebraska line next fall. His play against Denver was of a high order.

Nebraska has another quarter, besides Frank, who will be eligible for another season of football, but who is leaving school after Thanksgiving. He is Toit Bentley, who played in but one big game, that being against Minnesota at Omaha. He was injured at that time and kept out of the Iowa game because of his physical condition.

He was not put in the Kansas and Denver games because Frank was considered a better player for quarter. The poor generalship in the Kansas game, which lost the Cornhuskers the game, probably would have been eliminated had Bentley been at quarter. Bentley has never been very fast in running the eleven, but he has used good judgment and would have done better than Frank in the crucial contest with the Jayhawkers. Frank is a "comer," though, and probably will do much better work next fall.

A team needs a heady individual like Toit Bentley, and if he fails to return to Nebraska next fall the Cornhuskers will feel the loss occasioned by his absence. He has shown real Nebraska spirit in sticking by the team after he has seen that Frank has been given his position. He has realized the shift was made for strengthening the team, and he has willingly surrendered his place. He has the kind of spirit that makes good football players and good men.