

NU cagers eye end to Houston domination

Probable Starters

HOUSTON	Pos.	NEBRASKA
O. Taylor (6-7)	F	Bob Grattopp (6-5)
D. Davis (6-7)	F	Chuck Jura (6-10)
Malvin Bell (6-7)	C	Leroy Chalk (6-7)
Poo Welch (6-3)	G	T. Scantlebury (6-3)
J. Hickman (6-4)	G	Al Nissen (6-3)

by Randy York
Nebraskan Sports Editor

Tradition is one thing Nebraska's basketball team won't have on its side when it tackles nationally-ranked Houston in the first round of the Astro-Bluebonnet Classic Friday night at Houston's new Hofheinz Pavilion.

The host Cougars, who flourished under the 3-year dynasty of Elvin Hayes and Co., has won the Classic seven times in its 9-year history. Oklahoma in 1960 and Michigan in 1962 are the only teams to bag a championship other than Houston, which owns the Classic's last six titles.

But the unbeaten Huskers, armed with the season's biggest major college basketball upset, takes the theoretical favored role into the 4-team Classic field after upsetting

fifth-ranked Duquesne, 82-77 in Lincoln Tuesday.

Nebraska's chances of cracking the Houston domination apparently rests on the availability of 6-10 sophomore forward Chuck Jura, who suffered a sprained ankle in the second half of the Duquesne game.

Jura, however, is expected to start Friday night's 7 p.m. engagement, although Thursday he was still limping.

Jura holds the key to the Husker bid. If his effectiveness is hampered by the ankle injury, Nebraska coach Joe Cipriano may be forced to shift guard Tom Scantlebury underneath and move Marv Stewart, who sparked the Duquesne upset, to the vacant guard slot.

Although the Huskers will not face as big a front line in Houston as they did in Duquesne, the Cougars are considered a rugged rebounding club.

Included in the Houston front line of Dwight Davis and Melvin Bell, each of whom stands 6-7, is 6-2 guard Ollie Taylor, who averaged 21.7 points per game in his team's first three wins over Southwestern Louisiana (89-72), Texas-Arlington (88-70) and Centenary (70-64).

Guard Poo Welch, a junior college transfer who averaged 29.8 points per game last season, has furnished 15.7 points per game this season for Houston.

Bell (9.0), Davis (8.7) and forward Jeff Hickman (11.7) complete the balanced scoring attack of the Cougars' starters. Guard Tom Gribben, who

started last year in Houston's 16-10 season, has contributed five points per game.

Taylor, despite being only 6-2, is considered the best rebounder in the country for his size. Playing alongside two 6-7 players and one 6-9 player, he managed to pace the rebounding department with 12 per game.

The Cougars have been getting a lot of mileage from 6-9 sophomore frontliner Robert Hall, who has collected 18 rebounds and 16 points in three games.

Nebraska (4-0) also features balanced scoring, paced by center Leroy Chalk (12.5), guard Stewart (12.2), guard Tom Scantlebury (11.4), Jura

(10.0) and forward Bob Grattopp (9.2).

The Nebraska-Houston match will be followed by the Texas A&M-Kent State game at 9 p.m. Consolation and championship games are on tap Saturday night in the 12,000 seat capacity Hofheinz facility.

Thumbnail sketches of the Huskers' possible Saturday foe:

Kent State — The outlook is encouraging, although the Golden Flashes lost their all-time leading scorer. Coach Frank Truitt's club, after a 6-6 finish in the Mid-American Conference, has been established a co-favorite with Miami to capture the league title. The team is built around 6-7 Tom Lagodich, a top re-

bounder who averaged 16 points per game last season.

Texas A & M — The Southwest Conference favorite present a tough rebounding challenge. The Aggies return 7-foot starter Steve Niles. Rick Duplantis, 6-9, adds to the height surplus. Mike Heitman, 6-4, also is a returning Aggie starter.

Michigan at Missouri's, Nebraska in Bluebonnet Classic.

Huskers on TV twice

The University of Nebraska basketball team will appear twice on the Big Eight Conference television series, comprised of 31 affiliate stations in nine states.

The nine-game series will feature the Huskers against Missouri in Lincoln Feb. 14 and Iowa State at Nebraska March 7.

Two veteran Big Eight sportscasters, Max Falkenstein and Paul DeWeese, will handle the coverage for TV Sports Inc., which includes Nebraska stations in Grano Island (KGIN), in Lincoln (KOLN) and in Omaha (KMTV).

The Big Eight basketball series, in its fourth season, will feature one doubleheader: Jan. 31 (Missouri at Kansas State and Colorado at Kansas).

Jan. 24—Oklahoma State at Colorado; Jan. 31—Missouri at Kansas State and Colorado at Kansas; Feb. 7—Oklahoma State at Oklahoma; Feb. 14—Missouri at Nebraska; Feb. 21—Oklahoma at Iowa State; Feb. 28—Colorado at Kansas State; Feb. 28—Kansas at Oklahoma State; Mar. 7—Iowa State at Nebraska.

Huskers head Big 8 classic

Nebraska's participation in the Astro-Bluebonnet Classic at Houston headlines this weekend's Big Eight Conference basketball slate.

The Huskers, Oklahoma State and Missouri are the only league teams to survive the first two weeks of the season without a loss.

Conference teams who own a 26-5 record against non-conference opposition, again met talented clubs this weekend.

Iowa State gets the stiffest tests among Big 8 teams. The Cyclones tackle Western Athletic Conference favorite Arizona Friday night before meeting nationally-ranked Southern California Saturday night.

Kansas State meets Wichita State twice this weekend on an alternate site basis (at Manhattan Friday and at Wichita Saturday).

The weekend slate:

FRIDAY — Iowa State at Arizona; Wichita State at Kansas State; Nebraska vs. Houston in Astro Bluebonnet Classic; Oklahoma at South Alabama.

SATURDAY — Iowa State at Southern California; Kansas State at Wichita State; Kansas at Chicago Loyola; Northern

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WIDE WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT

National media assign NU football team to obscurity

by Joe Baldwin Sports Columnist

Obscurity '69. That's the best way to describe this year's Nebraska football team, at least as far as the national sports media are concerned.

Coach Bob Devaney and his staff turned in the finest coaching job of their careers, guiding a team picked to finish no better than fifth in the conference to a share of the Big Eight title and a Sun Bowl bid.

The young Husker offense and the seasoned Black Shirts scrapped their way to a fine 8-2 record, earned against (1) the No. 4 and No. 5 teams in the nation (USC and Missouri), (2) two conference champions (USC and Missouri), (3) three bowl teams (USC, Missouri and Colorado), (4) six teams with a .500 record or better (USC,

Missouri, Colorado, Oklahoma State, Kansas State and Oklahoma) while (5) playing three of the four toughest opponents (Missouri, Kansas State and Oklahoma) on the road.

Okay, I'm overdoing it. But no one disputes the fact that Nebraska played one of the roughest schedules in the nation. Harry DeVold, The Football News' noted college analyst, says that NU played the fourth toughest non-conference slate in the country and the fifth most difficult overall.

But the key to the Huskers' lack of recognition was not who they played, but when they played them.

The publicity spotlight shone on Nebraska twice in the USC and Missouri games. We lost both, but what's worse, we lost

them early in the season when the writers', pollsters' and bowl scouts' minds are most impressionable. Then, because of a weird schedule that postponed the other key games, Kansas State and Oklahoma, to the tailend of the season, plus a lucky escape from an awful Kansas team, NU faded from the national scene.

Only after the impressive efforts against the Wildcats and the Sooners did the Huskers climb back into the Top Twenty and the bowl picture. As NU Sports Information Director Don Bryant observed rather bitterly, "We did in November what all the rated teams did in October. That's why we're going to El Paso instead of Jacksonville."

The other handicap to Husker recognition was, strangely enough, the magnificent Black Shirt defense. In a year when bowl scouts wanted offense, offense and still more offense, Nebraska was a defensive giant and thus presumed unmarketable. Almost 400,700 rabid fans who packed Memorial Stadium (the third largest home attendance in the nation) thought differently of course, but that didn't matter. The major bowls without previous commitments went with the John Reeves, the Archie Mannings, the Pat Sullivan and the Elmo Wrights, leaving the Huskers and other "team" teams like LSU, Air Force and Arizona out in the cold.

Nebraska did get some individual recognition in 1969. Dana Stephenson and Jim McFarland were second-team All-Americans and Ken Geddes, Sherwin Jarmon and Jerry Murtaugh were honorable mentions. The same five made one All-Big Eight team or another and Jeff Kinney was the Associated Press' Sophomore of the Year (UPI picked Oklahoma's Jack Mildren last June.)

But Devaney lost Coach of the Year honors to Oklahoma State coach Floyd Gass, who guided the Cowboys to a stunning 5-5 record, a whopping one-game improvement over 1968.

Nebraska achieved its Centennial Year success

without All-American candidate Joe Orduña. The Huskers defied the odds and won six straight conference games after the narrow Missouri loss. And Big Red atoned for one of its worst defeats in history, that 47-0 debacle at Norman in 1968, with one of its greatest victories, the 44-14 demolishing of Oklahoma and Heisman Trophy winner Steve Owens. That November 22 afternoon the inspired Big Red buried the Snakepit Jinx for all time.

Gripping can get out of hand, but one wonders if there wasn't some conspiracy afoot to ignore Nebraska in 1969. Maybe we should have let Ralphie into Memorial Stadium, after all.



Stephenson is named most valuable player

Nebraska co-captain Dana Stephenson Wednesday night was named the most valuable player on the 1969 Cornhusker football team at the Extra Point Club's annual banquet at the Lincoln Hotel.

Stephenson, defensive cornerback from Lincoln Plus X High School, also was named the outstanding senior defensive back besides being named recipient of the Guy

Chamberlain Trophy.

Halfback Larry Frost, middle guard Ken Geddes and tight end Jim McFarland also were cited at the awards banquet, which featured guest speaker Duffy Daugherty, head football coach at Michigan State University.

Frost was named the outstanding senior offensive back. Geddes was named the outstanding senior defensive lineman and McFarland the outstanding senior offensive lineman.

The Nebraska team, co-Big Eight Conference champions, posted 17 records en route to an 8-2 seasonal record.

Soccer team meets Tuesday

The University of Nebraska Soccer team will meet Tuesday at 8 p.m. in the Nebraska Union. Officers will be elected and a report of the Dec. 6 Big Eight soccer meeting at Kansas State will be given. All students who are interested are encouraged to attend.

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