

jock shots

by Jim Johnston

Big 8 toughest conference

From out of the woods, the Big Eight has emerged as the premier college football conference in the nation.

This is a plaudit given the conference by several sports writers. Harry DeVold, who writes the Minneapolis Line column for Football News, said: "For the past two seasons, the upstart Big Eight Conference has been rated as the best in the country. The situation doesn't look to be any different for this season."

The Christian Science Monitor, although known better for its political views, also tagged the Big Eight "the best in the country."

Replaces Big Ten, Southeastern

This was a reputation long held by the Big Ten and in more recent years, The Southeastern Conference. The SEC may argue that its top teams match those of the Big Eight, but from top to bottom the Big Eight cannot be matched.

In the first month of the season, Big Eight teams had a 17-8-1 record against non-conference foes. This includes a 4-0 mark against Big Ten competition.

Iowa State, figured to finish in the basement of the Big Eight race, was 3-0 before entering conference action. Cyclone coach Johnny Majors, who is boasting a "new look" program at ISU, was delighted, but cautious.

"We're in the best football conference in the country," said Majors, "and every team is stronger. We can't count on winning a game for sure."

Majors noted that four different teams have shared the last two conference titles.

Other conferences agree

Of course it's natural, you say, for Big Eight coaches to boast their own league. But solid confirmation also comes from coaches all around the country.

According to an article by Nick Seitz in the Christian Science Monitor, a Pacific Coast coach stated: "Not for quotation, I'd have to say the Big Eight is the toughest, top to bottom. Ohio State wouldn't go unbeaten in that league. Neither would anybody else."

That's an interesting point. Oklahoma was the last Big Eight team to escape league play undefeated. That was achieved in 1967. Nebraska is undefeated in its first three loop games this season.

Ralph (Shug) Jordan, coach at Auburn, a member of the Southeastern Conference, stated in Seitz's article: "Overall, the Big Eight is the strongest league at the moment."

And that's a pretty conclusive testimony coming from a member of the Southeastern Conference.

No longer dwarfs

Until the 1960's the Big Eight was jokingly referred to the Midwest as "Oklahoma and the Seven Dwarfs." But the conference has come a long way since those days of the Sooners dominance.

What's made the difference? Some say red-shirting, others believe most conferences are too tight on eligibility requirements and still others think it was the Big Eight's ability to cope with the race problem which raged in the mid-60's.

A Big Eight executive provided the answer. "We have some of the brightest young coaches in the game, and they've handled a potentially difficult situation beautifully," he said. "Fellows like Dan Devine at Missouri, Bob Devaney at Nebraska and Eddie Crowder at Colorado are a step ahead of a lot of coaches in the psychology of dealing with players."

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Commando homecoming

They wear C's on their helmets, are undefeated and today (Thursday) is their day.

It's homecoming for the Nebraska Commandos. And that's not a misprint.

The Commandos are basically comprised of red-shirted Nebraska football players whose main duty it is to hold dummies for the varsity and scrimmage the freshman.

But today is their big day. They meet the Nebraska freshman on the AstroTurf at 4:00 p.m. for their homecoming game. It's the Commandos first and only game of the season and it's open to the public.

"This group has a good attitude for knowing that they never have any regular games," said Commando coach Paul Topliff. "Their attitude gets better when they know that they get a chance to play a game. And they're ready for the freshman."

The Commandos' offense, which sometimes surprises opponents with the Kansas City shift, is quarterbacked by Chuck Osberg. Ernie Britt holds down the fullback job while Charlie Harris or John Howell will get the call at I-back.

"We run basically the same offense as the varsity and freshman," said Topliff. "So once in a while we try to catch them off guard by using the Kansas City shift."

John Stinner will be at flanker and Ike Thomas should get the call at tight-end. The offensive tackles are Steve

Cook and Bob Sneider, the guards Doug Zanders and Bill Holmes and Bruce Boyer holds down the center spot.

Defensive halfbacks will be Greg Hacias, Pat Fischer and Greg Wildman. The monster man will be George Jones while Tom McGown and Don Phillips will help at linebacker.

Defensive line help will come from Ken Kontos and Lonnie Deorio. Dave Boyd will also see

action for the Commandos.

The team is coached by ex-Huskers Bill Bomberger and Paul Topliff. The Commandos several times this year and have scrimmaged the freshman have allowed only one touchdown.

Bomberger's four-month old daughter Katy has been selected queen for the game. And, oh yes, she'll be dressed in Red.

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