

Devaney cautions fans about national title repeat

by JIM JOHNSTON
Sports Editor

National ratings are nothing new to Nebraska head football coach Bob Devaney. His teams have been in the national college picture ever since he took over the Cornhusker command in 1962.

But a national championship in 1970 was a first for Devaney and a first for Nebraska. The state of Nebraska reacted to the national title as expected.

Advertising firms adopted the No. 1 slogan. Businesses capitalized on the market of No. 1 souvenirs. Sports Illustrated said: "It was the biggest thing to happen to the state of Nebraska since the Union Pacific first started laying track outside of Omaha."



Devaney... No. 1 again?

But how has the No. 1 image affected Devaney, his assistant coaches and the players? The Daily Nebraskan talked to coach Devaney about the problems and advantages of trying to defend a national championship.

Nebraskan: What are the Cornhuskers' chances of repeating as national champions?

Devaney: At this time I'd have to say it's a shot in the dark. It's a real shot in the dark. There's not a team on our schedule or in the nation that we don't feel we can beat, but there's more to a game than just thinking you can win.

Nebraskan: What is needed for the Cornhuskers to repeat

their national title?

Devaney: We can never be overconfident. The morale of the team must remain high all season and it takes a part of common sense by both the coaches and the players. Those ratings and point spreads don't mean a thing.

Nebraskan: How would you compare the change in attitude of a team which is defending a national title compared to other years?

Devaney: The pressure of being No. 1 definitely affects everybody. Everybody is over-anxious and not quite as loose as in other years. Everybody's anxious to do well and this may cause some nervous tendency, but I think it's good. We've developed a pride in Nebraska football and this outweighs the additional pressures.

Nebraskan: Is it a disadvantage to be favored in all your games?

Devaney: I'm sure that we'll be favored to win our first four games, but there's no favorite established in the Big Eight until a couple of games have been played. We have to realize that we can't relax at any time. If we have any degree of poor play against Oregon (Nebraska's opener) we're gonna get beat.

Nebraskan: How would you rate the 1971 non-conference schedule which includes Oregon, Minnesota, Texas A & M and Utah State?

Devaney: The tough part about that schedule is that these non-conference teams are tougher than most people appreciate. Most people know that Oregon is a national power that has a chance to win the Pacific Eight conference, but most people don't figure Minnesota, Texas A & M and Utah State to be too tough. These teams have excellent potential.

Nebraskan: It seems that everybody lives in a No. 1 world around the campus. What would happen to the attitude if the Cornhuskers were upset?

Devaney: Let's just say that it wouldn't be a very happy day around here. We live with the realization that this could happen and I don't think it would create a downward trend in the success of our season.

Nebraskan: Are you more conscious of national ratings this season than you've been in past years?

Devaney: I've always felt that the only important rating is the one at the end of the year. We'll definitely be watching the national ratings, but we're not going to think we're a poorer team if our ratings dip early in the season.

Nebraskan: Do you feel a national rating system is an accurate way to select a national champion?

Devaney: It's the only way we have right now. People say we backed into the national championship last year, but Texas and Ohio State had the same opportunity and didn't produce.

Nebraskan: What would your feeling be if Nebraska went through the season undefeated, but still didn't win the national championship as the case would have been last year if either Texas or Ohio State had won their bowl games?

Devaney: I would definitely be disappointed, but I don't think that will happen. If any of the contenders go through their schedule undefeated and don't win the national championship I would be rather surprised.

Nebraskan: In terms of performance on the field, what does Nebraska still have to develop in order to win another national title?

Devaney: We have to improve the consistency in our passing game and develop another fine I-back to help Jeff Kinney. We don't have another receiver like Guy Ingles at splitend, but Woody Cox, Jeff Hughes and Glen Garson have all showed big improvements.

Nebraskan: Are there any questions marks on defense?

Devaney: It's tough to replace a linebacker like Jerry Murtaugh, but our linebackers have been pleasing this fall. Bob Terrio, Bill Sloey and Pat Morell could develop into an outstanding group for us.

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