



sports special

Nebraska
vs.

Minnesota

*pull out and save
for the game*

Minnesota hopeful despite polls

by Jim Johnston

The Minnesota Gophers were upset with the pre-season publicity they received.

Most national publications picked the Gophers to finish in the low-rent section of the Big Ten. Playboy Magazine, which has the distinction of being the most accurate college football forecaster, said the Gophers would finish in last with a 2-9 record.

"I don't care what those national magazines think," said Minnesota quarterback Craig Curry. "I think we're good enough to win the Big Ten. We're going to surprise some people this year."

Gopher head coach Murray Warmath, starting his 18th year at Minnesota, was cautious when he talked about the upcoming season.

"I hope we develop over the summer," said Warmath. "If our younger develop we're going to be all right."

The biggest problem facing Warmath was a lack of veteran linemen. The Gophers, long known for their big linemen, dropped into the second division of the Big Ten last season for the first time since 1963.

The reason was a leaky defensive line and the inability of the offensive line to move a solid running game.

But both of those aspects of the Gopher attack had Warmath smiling after the opening game against Indiana last Saturday. The Minnesota defense forced five Indiana turnovers—three of which turned into Minnesota touchdowns—and held the Hoosiers scoreless in taking a 28-0 win.

The Gopher offensive line cleared the way for 144 yards rushing and gave Curry protection to throw for 100 yards. Although Indiana didn't provide a true test, the game still showed that the Gophers are an improved football team.

And it will take some improvement over last year if the Gophers hope to stay in the game with Nebraska at Memorial Stadium Saturday. The Cornhuskers have outclassed Minnesota the last two seasons, taking a 42-14 win in 1969 and a 35-10 decision last year.

The Gophers' hopes are riding on the running and passing of Curry and the running of fullback Ernie Cook.

Curry, the total offense leader in the Big Ten last year, passed for 1,315 yards and rushed for 295 during his junior season. He threw three touchdown passes against Indiana last week.

Curry's favorite target is tight end Doug Kingsriter. Kingsriter, who stands 6-2, caught 26 passes for 362 yards last season despite sitting on the bench during most of the first four games.

Curry presents a different problem in defending than what the Huskers faced against Oregon's Dan Fouts. Fouts was a drop-back quarterback, but Curry is capable of throwing from the sprint and is a more dangerous runner.

Curry has a habit of coming up with the big game against the Gophers' top opponents. Against nationally rated Ohio State last season, for example, Curry set a new Big Ten single-game record of 28 completions.

The Gopher running game is lead by fullback Ernie Cook who led all Minnesota backs last season with 495 yards and an average of 4.6 yards each carry. Cook caught the Huskers flat-footed last year with a 45-yard scoring play from scrimmage.

The dominant figure in the Gopher defensive unit is all Big Ten linebacker Bill Light. Light, the Gophers' captain, led the conference in tackles last season.

The Gopher defensive line includes three sophomore linemen, but the trio brings solid credentials from the Indiana game.

Nebraska, like Minnesota, has few changes in its starting lineup from last week. The only changes in the Husker starting lineup were forced because of injuries.

Junior Doug Jamail replaces injured Doug Dumler at center and Jim Branch will take over for Bill Sloey at linebacker. Jerry List, injured in the Oregon game, is still expected to start at tight end.

Devaney said Nebraska's opener against the Ducks was the best opening game of any of his Nebraska teams.

Minnesota doesn't present the same threat that Oregon brought to Lincoln. The Huskers biggest problem this week is to not suffer from over-confidence.