



sports special

Nebraska
vs.

Texas A&M

pull out and save
for the game

Power-I starts race for No. 1

by Jim Johnston

Major accomplishments, like the success of a football team, result from seemingly insignificant suggestions. A coach gets an idea, he tells the other coaches, the pros and cons are discussed and finally the idea develops into reality.

Even in the world of major college football, where operations appear to run like clockwork, the actual planning

meetings are nothing more than informal "give-and-take" sessions between coaches.

It was in the spring of 1968 that the Nebraska football coaching staff first discussed and experimented with the Power-I offense.

"It was starting to become a popular formation," remembers Nebraska backfield coach Mike Corgan. "Other teams like Oklahoma, Missouri

and Alabama were using different variations of the I formation and having success with it. We talked about it and decided to experiment with it during spring practice."

So during the 1968 season the Cornhuskers worked the Power-I into their offense. The pro set, a passing formation, remained as the basic offense and the Huskers suffered another 6-4 season and a fifth place finish in the Big Eight.

"We could move the ball from one 20-yard-line to the other, but we had a hard time scoring," said Corgan. "The closer you get to the goal line the more squashed your operating room gets and you have to run more."

But a good running attack was something Nebraska lacked.

"Hell, we didn't have enough running power to move the ball 20 yards after our passing put us in scoring position," continued Corgan. "We just had to find a way to score."

So during the spring of 1969 it was decided to use the power I as the basic offense during the next season.

"Our personnel had something to do with our decision to use the Power-I," said Corgan. "You need a good runner and a quarterback who can fake and handoff well."

Coming up from the freshmen team were two talented quarterbacks Van Brownson and Jerry Tagge. Veteran running back Joe Orduna was the scheduled starter at I-back, the player that carries the football the

most.

But Orduna injured his knee during fall camp and required knee surgery which forced him to sit out the 1969 season. That's when a sophomore from McCook—Jeff Kinney—entered the picture.

Kinney, a high school quarterback, was listed as a wide receiver for the Huskers in 1969. But following Orduna's injury, Kinney was shifted to I-back shortly before Nebraska opened the season against mighty Southern California.

Nebraska's late rally fell short and the Huskers lost the opener against USC, but it was obvious to the Nebraska coaching staff that Kinney would become one of the most punishing runners in Cornhusker history. Nebraska's first victory using the I formation was against Texas A & M, Saturday's opponent at Memorial Stadium. The Huskers stopped the Aggies 14-0 in the 1969 game.

Kinney then raced to Big Eight sophomore back of the year honors and Tagge and Brownson quarterbacked the way to a tie for the conference with Missouri. Nebraska fans don't need reminding about the following season, the year Kinney and Orduna shared the I-back position and the Huskers won the national championship.

Now again in 1971, the Huskers are rated No. 1. That's where the I formation has taken Nebraska football. Since starting the formation in 1969, Nebraska has recorded a 22-2-1 record.

Why has Nebraska had such success with the I formation? Why haven't powerful defensive teams, like Louisiana State, been able to stop the formation?

"It's tough to say why we've had so much success with the formation," said Corgan. "We don't surprise anybody with our plays and it's not difficult to scout."

The thing, perhaps, that has made the formation work for Nebraska is great individual efforts. The I offense pits one individual against another... one tackle against another tackle, the center against the middle guard and a runner against a defender.

It's a blood and guts offense. There's nothing fancy about it. The I-back is the main runner, the fullback serves mainly as a lead blocker and the quarterback has an option to pitch or keep the ball.

"We always used to have three backs and run a straight I formation at Wyoming," said Corgan, "but it was difficult to find enough talented backs to enable us to be very deep. With the I formation we look for a fullback that can first of all block and second of all run. We look for an I-back that can first of all run and catch passes and second of all block. Players are more specialized and this is what makes it so effective."

Corgan says that the quarterback doesn't have to be a good runner to operate the I formation.

"The I formation isn't predicated on a running

Turn to page 6.

