

National champion: tough act to follow

by Jim Johnston

Nebraska's football team picked a tough act to follow. What do you do for an encore following a national championship?

The best answer, of course, is to win another national title. Not so easy, however.

At least Nebraska head coach Bob Devaney didn't think it was too easy.

"I'd call our chances of winning another national championship a shot in the dark at this time," Devaney said at the start of the season, "... a real shot in the dark."

It wasn't that Devaney was pessimistic about the 1971 edition of the Cornhuskers. It was just that he was realistic.

None of the past five champions in the Associated Press poll had repeated.

"We've got another fine team," said Devaney, "but we're not tooting our horn until we prove ourself."

That was in August... five months ago. There was a 12-game schedule facing the Cornhuskers, including the always rugged Big Eight Conference.

Nebraska, however, was still favored by most pollsters to retain its national title. The Cornhuskers were rated No. 1 by United Press International and No. 2, behind Notre Dame, in the Associated Press poll.

The Cornhuskers have lived up to their pre-season billing. Nebraska owns a 12-0 mark and is rated No. 1 by every

major national poll (except, maybe, those computers in Oklahoma).

But when you listen to Devaney and the Nebraska players, it sounds as if things really haven't changed much since the start of the season. They no longer consider their national championship chances "a shot in the dark," but they're not tooting their horns yet, either.

No. 2 rated Alabama, one of the nation's biggest surprises this year, is waiting for a shot at Nebraska in the Orange Bowl New Year's night.

Nebraska already owns the UPI national championship for 1971, but the AP conducts its final poll after the bowl games. The Orange Bowl winner will decide the AP national title. And as far as the Cornhuskers are concerned, the only true national championship can be won New Year's night... an undisputed title.

What's been the success story for Nebraska? What has separated the Cornhuskers this year from other pre-season contenders Notre Dame, Texas, Ohio State and Southern California. Why did Nebraska survive in 1971?

To point at the Nebraska coaching staff and credit their success in preparing the Cornhuskers strategically is too simple.

Football is more than a

physical game. It's more than having strong physical athletes. It's a mental struggle. You have to be prepared mentally each Saturday afternoon... regardless of who you're playing.

That's where Nebraska was No. 1 in '71. Husker fans were talking about the Nebraska-Oklahoma game since the middle of October, but that showdown of the Big Eight powerhouses wasn't mentioned by the Nebraska players and coaches until it was a reality.

Nebraska fans laughed each weekend leading up to the Husker-Sooner showdown when Devaney said: "So and so has a fine football team. We'll have to be ready this weekend. This is the best team we've played yet this season."

But the Husker players weren't laughing. Devaney had the players believing him.

Listening to co-captains Jerry Tagge and Jim Anderson talk about next weekend's game was like listening to a recording of Devaney. "So and so has a fine football team."

It wasn't easy to think about next week's game with Oklahoma looming in the future, but Nebraska did it. And that, perhaps, is the Cornhusker success story.

Now Nebraska faces another psychological battle.

It's not often that a regular

season game receives as much national publicity as did the Nebraska-Oklahoma game this year. The Huskers were rated No. 1 and Oklahoma No. 2 going into the Thanksgiving Day battle. It was called the "Game of The Decade" for the national championship.

Nebraska won, 35-31, and claimed the UPI title. But that didn't mark the end of the season for the Huskers.

"It doesn't seem right," said Husker quarterback Jerry Tagge. "The Oklahoma game should have been the end of the season. It was like that game meant the whole season to us. It doesn't seem right that we have to do it again."

But that's exactly the case. The Huskers have to play their second national championship game within five weeks.

Added to the problems of preparing a team to perform such a feat, Nebraska's coaching staff has an additional problem. A five-day vacation in Hawaii (where Nebraska also played a football game) makes it even harder to come back to Nebraska and practice football in freezing temperatures.

How will the Huskers react? "I don't know why they should quit now," said Devaney. "They've come this far without having a mental letdown. Every game we've played this season has been for the national championship."

Orange Bowl history

'33-Miami (Fla.) 7 Manhattan 0	'46-Miami (Fla.) 13 Holy Cross 0	'59-Oklahoma 21 Syracuse 6
'34-Duquesne 33 Miami (Fla.) 0	'47-Rice 8 Tennessee 0	'60-Georgia 14 Missouri 0
'35-bucknell 26 Miami (Fla.) 0	'48-Georgia Tech 20 Kansas 14	'61-Missouri 21 Navy 14
'36-Catholic U 21 Mississippi 19	'49-Texas 41 Georgia 28	'62-LSU 25 Colorado 7
'37-Duquesne 13 Mississippi St. 12	'50-Santa Clara 21 Kentucky 13	'63-Alabama 17 Oklahoma 0
'38-Auburn 6 Michigan St. 0	'51-Clemson 15 Miami (Fla.) 14	'64-Nebraska 13 Auburn 7
'39-Tennessee 17 Oklahoma 0	'52-Georgia Tech 17 Baylor 14	'65-Texas 21 Alabama 17
'40-Georgia Tech 21 Missouri 7	'53-Alabama 61 Syracuse 6	'66-Alabama 29 Nebraska 28
'41-Mississippi St. 14 Georgetown 7	'54-Oklahoma 7 Maryland 0	'67-Florida 27 Georgia Tech 12
'42-Georgia 40 TCU 26	'55-Duke 34 Nebraska 7	'68-Oklahoma 26 Tennessee 24
'43-Alabama 37 Boston College 21	'56-Oklahoma 20 Maryland 6	'69-Penn State 15 Kansas 14
'44-LSU 19 Texas A & M 14	'57-Colorado 27 Clemson 21	'70-Penn State 10 Missouri 3
'45-Tulsa 26 Georgia Tech 12	'58-Oklahoma 48 Duke 21	'71-Nebraska 17 LSU 12

Schedules go Wednesday

Schedules for second semester classes will be sent Wednesday to students who pre-registered. According to the UNL administration office it is hoped all students will receive their schedules before they leave for vacation. All schedules will be mailed to the students' Lincoln address.

January 7 will be the last day to return signed and verified registration forms.

The free drop and add period will operate January 12, 13, and 14. After this time there will be a \$5 fee.

Second semester classes will begin Jan. 19.

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