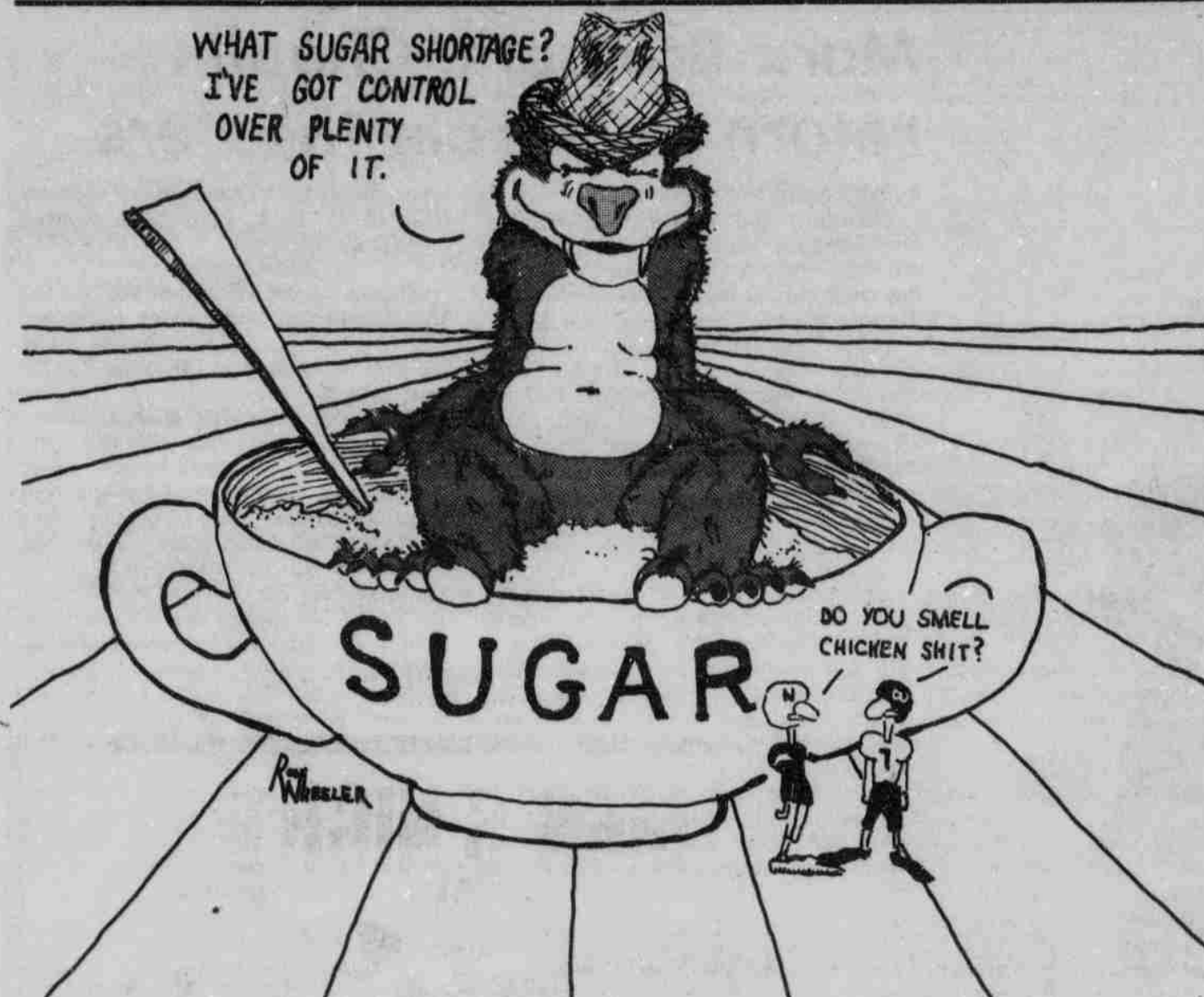


nebraskan sports



Osborne criticizes Sugar Bowl; cites momentum from ISU win

By Pete Wegman

Nebraska head football coach Tom Osborne Monday continued his criticism of the collegiate football bowl situation at an Extra Point Club meeting in the Elk's Club.

"Obviously we're out of the Cotton and Sugar Bowls," Osborne told the standing-room-only crowd. "The main thing now is not to be out of the Orange Bowl."

"We're obviously somewhat disappointed in the way things went."

Sunday the Sugar Bowl invited Penn State to play Alabama on New Year's Eve, killing any Big 8 hope of Saturday's Oklahoma-Nebraska loser playing in the bowl. (The winner plays in the Orange Bowl).

Osborne disturbed

Osborne said he was particularly disturbed at Alabama coach Paul "Bear" Bryant's "ability to choose his bowl opponent."

"I can't blame him for what the bowls allow him to do, though," he said.

Osborne indicated the Huskers would accept a Fiesta Bowl bid if they lost to the Sooners Saturday.

"I don't think anybody's above a bowl game," he said. "They (Nebraska player's) have to want to play a bowl game. If they want to go (to the Fiesta Bowl), assuming we lose Saturday, we'll go."

However, the team decided Monday after practice by a 47-13 vote to reject a bid offered by the Fiesta Bowl.

Osborne said he felt the Huskers gained the momentum and confidence needed for the Oklahoma game with their 52-0 win over Iowa State last Saturday.

Complete game

"That game was probably the best and most complete game we've played this year," he said. "I was really pleased with the way our defense played."

"To contain them and then shut them out took a real defensive effort," he added.

Osborne credited much of Nebraska's success this year to a lack of Husker turnovers.

"Maybe the best thing we've done all year offensively is to take care of the football," he said. Nebraska has had only 14 turnovers in 10 games.

Despite Oklahoma's 23-3 loss to Kansas two weeks ago, Osborne said he expects to be playing the same type of Oklahoma team Nebraska has played the last four years.

"It isn't going to be the Oklahoma team that played Kansas," he said. "It will be the Oklahoma team that always plays Nebraska. It will be our best against their's."

'Heckuva game'

Freshman coach Guy Ingles, who scouted Oklahoma's 28-27 win over Missouri Saturday, said Nebraska fans can expect "a heckuva game Saturday."

"Oklahoma is just like Oklahoma teams of past years," he said. "They're making more turnovers than in the past, but not in crucial situations."

Ingles cited quarterback Steve Davis, halfback Joe

Washington, split end Tinker Owens, defensive tackle Leroy Selmon and defensive end Jimbo Elrod as keys to Oklahoma's attack.

"Washington does some things that are darn near unbelievable," he said. "He gives them the one-play threat to go all the way."

Ingles said he has never seen a team with a better attitude than the Cornhuskers. Osborne agreed.

"This is the best group of players I've ever been around," Osborne said. "They've been willing to pay the price to win."

Bowl queries unanswered

By Larry Stunkel

Would someone please answer a question for UNL offensive football captain Terry Luck?

"I can't understand how in past years we've had people—some from bowls we never heard of—climbing all over us to come to their bowl," Luck said. "This year it boils down to nil. We're second-ranked and 10-0, and it's almost like we're begging. It's beyond my comprehension."

Luck is asking the same question that fans and sports writers (especially those who fried Sugar Bowl officials with questions Monday), have been asking lately.

The main problem was the Sugar Bowl, obviously hurting from a Big 8 decision to send its champion to the Orange Bowl. New Orleans officials knuckled under pressure from Alabama head coach Paul "Bear" Bryant not to pick a Big 8 team for their bowl.

Hand-picked

The fact Bryant hand-picked Penn State as his opponent is no longer speculation.

The cocky Bryant told an Alabama group Monday, "I recommended it, and I want those young coaches out there to know it. We have no apologies to make to anyone. . . . They're all fine people out there in the Big 8, but it would take those young guys (referring to Husker coach Tom Osborne and Oklahoma coach Barry Switzer) 15 to 20 years before they can wear their spurs regular."

At least Bryant admits what happened, which is better than the Sugar Bowl's rationale.

Lincoln Star sports editor Bob Owens quoted Sugar Bowl president Cliff Kern as saying, "We have the leading team in the East (Penn State). We would come up with the loser in the Big 8. Which is better to have—a winner or a runner-up?"

Well, Mr. Kern, when the winner's record is worse than the runner-up's (especially when that winner is ranked 11th in the nation and other choices rank second and seventh), I'd take the runner-up.

Bad-mouthed

Another factor which contributed to Nebraska's problem of finding a bowl was Oklahoma bad-mouthing the

Huskers refuse Fiesta Bowl bid

Although head coach Tom Osborne said it was nothing personal toward the Fiesta Bowl, UNL football players Monday voted 47-13 against accepting a bid to the Tempe, Ariz., classic on Dec. 26.

It means the Huskers could be excluded from playing in any postseason bowl if the team loses to Oklahoma this Saturday.

But the Huskers aren't planning to lose to Oklahoma, and that may be one reason for the team's action, according to Osborne.

"They don't want to talk about the possibility of losing," Osborne said. "In a way it's good, but then in a way it's not very realistic."

Main objective Oklahoma

"Our main objective is going down and beating Oklahoma Saturday," said senior offensive captain Terry Luck. "We can't worry about the Fiesta Bowl, Bear Bryant, the Sugar Bowl and all that B.S. We can't take our minds off Norman so we've got to clear the air of this whole thing now."

Defensive captain Bob Martin added that some players said they'd be so let down if they did lose, they wouldn't feel like playing in any bowl and would be unable to play up to full potential.

Osborne, Luck and Martin all expressed desire to go to the Fiesta Bowl, but Luck added, "We back up what the team has decided."

"We're probably doing the Fiesta Bowl a favor," Osborne said. "Why go there if the players don't want to?"

Luck said a number of seniors had said, that if the team lost to Oklahoma, they didn't want to finish on a losing note.

"We'd raise ourselves a couple of notches after a loss by winning in a bowl game," Martin said. Probable host team in the Fiesta Bowl is undefeated Arizona State.

"At least the Fiesta Bowl wanted us," Osborne said. "They have worked hard to make it a good bowl, but the players want to clear their minds of the matter and put their eggs into the same basket."

Fiesta Bowl representative John Reed told the Omaha-World-Herald Monday that it's still possible the Fiesta Bowl would hold the spot open until after the Oklahoma game in case the Huskers lost and changed their mind, but added, "We only heard about it five minutes ago, and we're in a meeting to discuss the possibilities."

The players voted twice on the matter, the first being on the field during practice. Osborne said the vote looked split, "so I gave them a chance to talk it over."

Osborne stood outside the meeting while players discussed the issue, because "it should be the players' decision." Osborne finally walked into the meeting as players chanted "Orange Bowl, Orange Bowl, Orange Bowl. . . ."

on record



Cotton Bowl and refusing to play in Dallas, which prevented the Cotton Bowl from saying it would take the NU-OU loser.

Probably the biggest problem has been caused because a bowl would have to take the loser of the Husker-Sooner game. Although the loser would have a 9-2 record (if things turn out the way they should), bowls must swallow some pride to say they'll take the loser of a particular game.

Osborne Monday revealed rumors of a three-bowl parlay that was discussed Sunday between the Cotton, Orange and Gator Bowls.

According to Osborne, the deal was that if Nebraska won, the Cotton Bowl would invite Colorado and the Gator Bowl would get Oklahoma. The Huskers naturally would go to Miami.

If the Huskers lost, Nebraska would go to the Cotton Bowl, Colorado would get a Gator Bowl invitation and Oklahoma would be in the Orange Bowl.

However, Osborne said the Gator Bowl dropped out of it, and the deal fell through.

The only problem caused by this controversy is the fear that it's taking the Huskers' minds off the Oklahoma game—which if (or should I say when) they win, would make the bowl situation Oklahoma's problem.

Luck assured reporters this won't be the case, but talk with other players still leaves some doubt. As a psych-out tactic, it couldn't work better if it had been planned.

When Husker coach Tom Osborne called Bryant a son-of-a-buck after Saturday's 52-0 win over Iowa State, that's exactly what he said.

The press was not trying to shield readers from the proper term for a female dog. However, the phrase looked bad in print. Anyone who knows Osborne will tell you the coach rarely uses words stronger than "gosh" or "golly gee."

It is a desirable characteristic compared to some coaches who go as far as telling their contemporaries to "go where they want to and to hell with 'em."