

sports

Skywriters part of annual media push to kickoff season

Forty-four of them filed into the lounge of UNL's South Stadium. They had just arrived from Ames, Iowa where they had critiqued Iowa State University's football squad.

Now it was time to look at the Cornhuskers.

The group was a strange mixture. One wore a tee-shirt reading "Super Cyclones", and another was wearing shorts, white socks and white tennis shoes. The man, who stood about 5 feet 5 inches and weighed 200 pounds, reminded one of Buddy Hackett.

Waiting for Osborne

All forty-four men, however, had one thing in common: all were carrying small notepads ready to jot down proverbs from Tom Osborne.

They were on the Big Eight Skywriter's tour which evaluates each Big Eight team and relays their findings to their readers.

The sportswriters from six states listened to the optimistic Osborne and twenty minutes later most of them either swarmed players I.M. Hipp, Tom Sorley or Rick Berns. As one writer put it they "were out to bring interesting stories to their readers."

Football mania everywhere

All across the nation, sports pages have been filled with college football propa-

ganda for the last two weeks. ABC Sports prepared its viewers for the season with a one hour special program, while Sports Illustrated will soon come out with its annual college football report.

kevin schnepf

College football mania, almost as American as fast food chains, sweeps the nation every fall. Magnifying the situation are sportswriters and broadcasters, bringing the same script with different actors every fall.

The hardest hit areas of this craze include Birmingham, Alabama; Columbus, Ohio; Ann Arbor, Michigan; South Bend, Indiana; Austin, Texas; Norman, Oklahoma; and Lincoln, Nebraska.

"Bear" is Bama idol

In Birmingham, thousands idolize a "Bear" (Bryant), while in Columbus, they follow a coach (Woody Hayes) who uses sideline markers for javelin practice.

In South Bend, those who cheer for Notre Dame's Fighting Irish believe that God's hair is green. In Norman, thousands

long for Longhorn blood while in Austin, Longhorn fans are out for Sooner blood—even though they may not know what a Sooner is.

And in Lincoln, diehard Husker fans will be glued to the tube for the Alabama-UNL game Saturday night, while others will make the trip to Birmingham for ABC Sports' grand opening of the college football season.

The Skywriters, who were in Lincoln last Saturday, were searching for a story of interest to their readers. Buck Turnbull, of the *Des Moines Register*, who has been on the Skywriter's tour for 16 years, told his Iowa readers about how badly UNL wants to beat Iowa State.

The headline to Turnbull's story read, "Husker's Number One Priority: Beat Iowa State."

Win 'Sorley' needed

Even though Osborne mentioned little about the Iowa State game, Turnbull based his story on Tom Sorley's quotes. Sorley told Turnbull that Eastern Nebraska fans would rather beat ISU than Oklahoma because of their friends and relatives across the Missouri River.

"We (Skywriters) try to get a story of interest to our readers," Turnbull said. "I'm sure they could care less who the third string fullback is."

Only first string backs seemed to get

the attention Saturday. Hipp, Berns, Sorley were answering questions until the reporter's bus left.

On the tour for nine years with the *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, Charlie Smith said he has learned that it is the same story every year.

Something every year

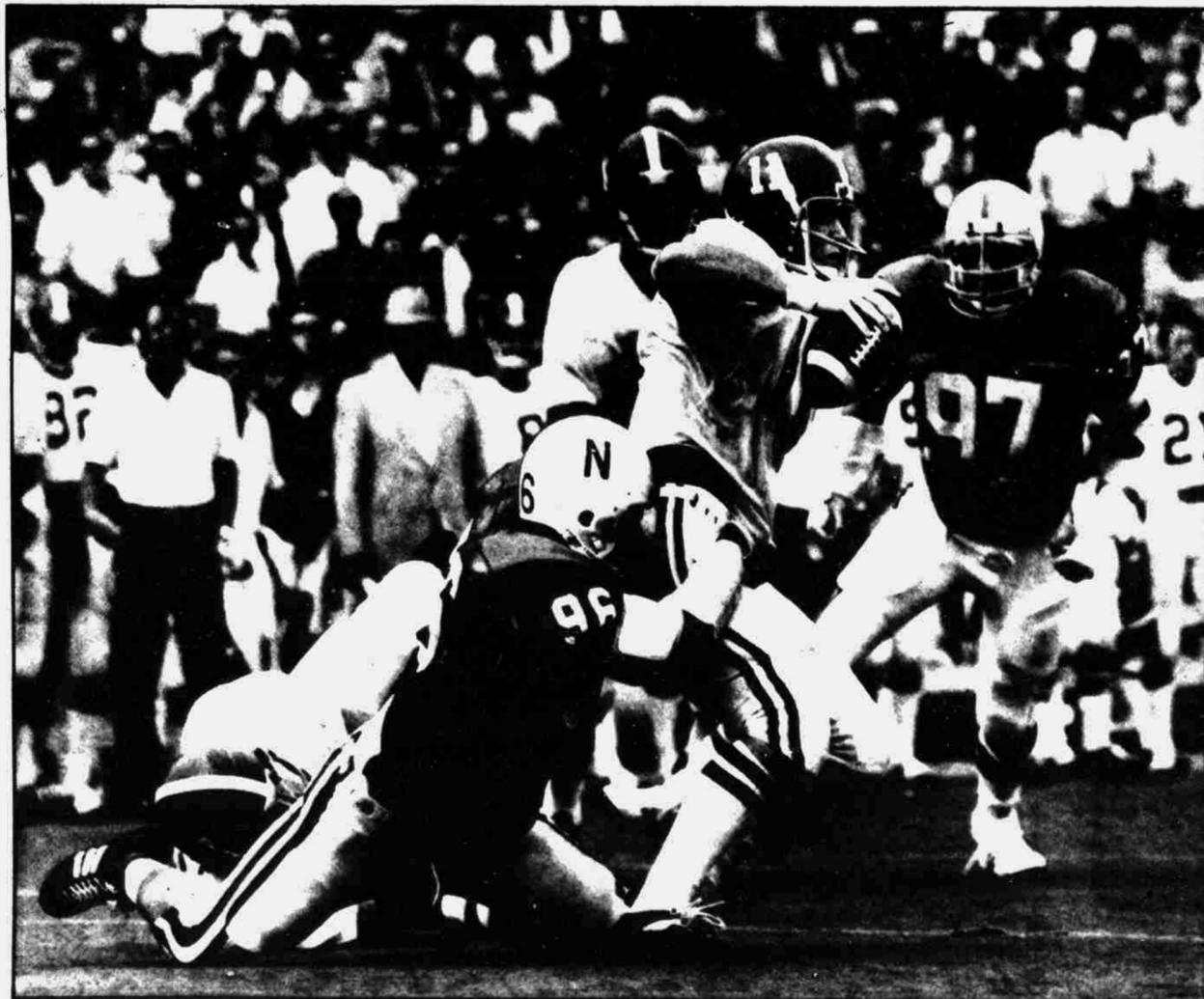
"That's why we asked Osborne all the Oklahoma questions, it's interesting to our readers," Smith said. "It's the same every year, just look at Oklahoma, and Nebraska as the top teams."

First year Skywriter Randy York, of the *Lincoln Journal-Star*, said the tour is a great way to publicize the conference and magnify it.

"Every fall when you fill up a stadium with 80,000 people, it deserves the publicity it gets," York said.

When Osborne was asked to compare UNL's physical strengths with Oklahoma's, Osborne made it sound as if the sportswriters should be coaches. "You guys probably know better than I do. You see them more than I do."

So the college football season is off and running until New Year's Day of 1979. There will be footballs kicked, thrown and fumbled and it will all be seen on television, heard on radio, and read in the sports pages.



UNL's football team opens their season Saturday night in a "Bear" of a football game. The Huskers will be in Birmingham to face the University of Alabama and its legendary head coach Paul "Bear" Bryant (right). The Crimson Tide, led by quarterback Jeff Rutledge (11), will be looking to avenge last year's 31-24 loss to Nebraska in Lincoln. UNL's defense returns six starters from a year ago, including end George Andrews (96) and tackle Bill Barnett (97).

The fifth game in history between the two schools, currently tied at two games apiece, will be televised by ABC-TV at 8 p.m. tomorrow night.

Photos by Ted Kirk

Home field may help Alabama to victory

September football fever is here again and while most colleges wait until next week to open the season, one of the top contenders for the national title opens the season tomorrow night.

opinion rick huls

Alabama's Crimson Tide, left out of last year's title picture when Notre Dame romped over Texas in the Cotton Bowl, is picked by many to move one step up for the 1978 crown.

Bear Bryant's 21st edition at Bama is the No. 1 pre-season pick by AP, UPI and a host of other top 20 polls. But tomorrow at 8 p.m. on national television, Alabama faces the Nebraska Cornhuskers, the team who kept

the Tide from a perfect season last year.

The Huskers, rated 10th in both polls, figure to be strong again under Tom Osborne.

Both offenses look strong with the likes of Jeff Rutledge and Tony Nathan for Alabama and I.M. Hipp, Rick Berns and Tom Sorley for UNL.

While Nebraska's defense may be suspect, Alabama's may be hurting because of a knee injury to tackle David Hannah.

Therefore, the game might be similar to the Husker's 31-24 win over Alabama last year. But that was in Lincoln.

Nebraska should feel lucky they're not playing in Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa where the Bear is 57-1 with 42 straight wins.

Instead the Huskers travel to Legion Field in Birmingham where Bryant is only 54-10-4, including 11 in a row. So Alabama 24, Nebraska 17.

sports shorts

The women's basketball team will have tryouts this weekend for anyone interested who has had a physical examination. Tryouts begin tonight at 6 in room 313 at Mabel Lee Hall, and will continue through next Monday. For more information contact head coach Lorrie Gallagher at 472-1148.

The women's field hockey club will have practices from 3:45 to 5:45 p.m. weekdays on the playing field behind Mabel Lee Hall. Head coach Harriet Gould is encouraging anyone interested in playing to attend.

Dave Harshman, assistant basketball coach at UNL last season, has left to accept a similar position at Michigan State University. Graduate assistant Tom Baack has been promoted to take Harshman's place.