

sports

NU leading offense to hit Cowboy defense

By Paul Huscher

The third-ranked Nebraska Cornhuskers have the leading offensive football team in the nation, averaging 509 yards per contest.

The Oklahoma State defense has one of the best linebacker corps in the nation, according to Cowboy Head Coach Jimmie Johnson.

These two forces clash this Saturday in Stillwater in the 20th meeting between the teams.

Johnson, who is in his first year at OSU after serving as defensive coordinator at Pittsburgh, last year, makes no bones about the strength of the Cowboy defense.

"They (the linebackers) will be the strongest part of our team this year without a doubt," he said.

OSU linebacker coach, Paul Jette, agrees that the Cowboy's linebackers are among the best in the nation.

"We have two excellent linebackers, Ricky Young at middle linebacker and John Corker at outside linebacker," said Jette, a former University of Texas player.

"Corker's already proved himself," Jette said about OSU's 6-5, 220-pound senior linebacker from Miami, Fla. Despite missing the last four games in 1978, Corker was named the UPI and AP Big Eight Defensive Player of the Year in addition to both All-Big Eight teams. The three-year letterman was also named to AP's All-American first team.

CORKER, who holds the record for most tackles at OSU, suffered a knee injury in the first quarter of last year's 22-14 loss to Nebraska in Lincoln.

He had surgery in November and, according to Jette, is now playing at full strength.

"Last week against Missouri (which OSU won 14-13) was the first time this year he's been at full speed and he did a great job for us," Jette said after beating the 15th-ranked Tigers in Columbia, Mo.

"Before Missouri he was thinking about his injury, but I think he's over the mental aspect of his injury now," he said.

Jette said Corker is good against both the run and the



pass although OSU hasn't faced a dropback-passing quarterback.

"Most of the teams we've played have had roll-out quarterbacks, so it's hard to tell now," he said. "John reads defense well, at 6-5 he clogs up a lot of area."

Jette said he thinks if Corker keeps improving and playing well this year he'll be a first-round draft pick in the upcoming NFL draft.

ALTHOUGH CORKER was injured early in last year's game, the Huskers still had trouble with the OSU defense.

Jette said the reason for that was because this year's staring middle linebacker Ricky Young, who was just a

freshman last year, did an excellent job filling in for Corker. Young led the Cowboy defense with 19 tackles in a game that OSU could have tied if quarterback Scott Burk hadn't overthrown an open receiver near the goal line with just over one minute left to go in the game.

Young, a 6-1, 220 pound sophomore from East Chicago Heights, Ill., is leading the OSU defense in tackles this year.

Jette said Young has good speed, outstanding strength and is regarded as one of the hardest hitters on the team.

"Ricky has been playing really good," he said. "He's smart, he runs well, he reads well and he works hard."

"He's not big but he makes up for that with his quickness and hard-hitting," Jette said.

Young said he was a little nervous in last year's Nebraska game being just a freshman, but with playing experience he'll be ready for the Cornhuskers this year.

"I'd rather go against a running team like Nebraska," Young said. "I think if our defense holds them to 20 points (almost 20 points below NU's average) we'll be able to beat them," he said.

YOUNG SAID it will be a big advantage to play the Huskers in Stillwater's Lewis Stadium which is known around the conference as "The Snakepit."

"The fans are great, when the defense has a good series, they give us a standing ovation and that really fires us up."

"Playing with Corker also is a great advantage, Young added.

"Playing with John really boosts my confidence. I know if I make a mistake he'll be there to help out."

He agrees with Jette that Corker will join the ranks of two other OSU players, Terry Miller and Phil Dokes, as a first-round draft pick.

Young said he feels that with more experience he should be as good as Corker when he's a senior. He also has All-Conference and All-American goals in his future.

Jette agrees. Young has the potential to be as good or better than Corker if he keeps improving like he has been."

Huskers say OSU plays tough game

It didn't matter who you talked to this week on the Nebraska football team, the consensus is the Oklahoma State game in Stillwater Saturday isn't going to be easy.

"Oklahoma State always plays us tough no matter where we play," said Husker quarterback Tim Hager. "They always play aggressive, physical football."

"They haven't won many games in the series, (NU leads series 16-2-1) so they're always fired up to play us. They get up for us like we get up for Oklahoma."

But Husker head coach Tom Osborne says the Cowboys play tough no matter who the opponent is.

"We're the only team they (OSU) haven't beat in the last five years," Osborne said. "Every year we play them, they've played us as tough as any team in the conference. I don't think it will be any different this year."

The Cowboys, 3-2 on the season, gave the Huskers fair warning of what to expect when they upset Missouri 14-13 in Columbia. The Cowboys pulled the upset without starting quarterback Harold Bailey and their top four running backs. Bailey leads the conference in total offense and passing yardage.

Although OSU coach Jimmy Johnson said Bailey will be able to play Saturday, the Cowboys top four backs, including leading rusher Worley Taylor, still will not be available.

"We've had a bad injury situation all year long, so this isn't anything new," Johnson said. "We've just got to go with the people that are healthy."

Osborne said the Huskers are coming into this game with the worst injury situation of the year. Starting linebacker Brent Williams will not make the trip because of a severely sprained ankle, while part-time starting cornerback Paul Letcher will stay home with his injured knee.

"We have six or seven players with little things bothering them," Osborne said. "We're in the worst shape we've been in all-year, but it could be worse. The ones who are healthy will have to play well."

Osborne admitted OSU was a little beat up too. "But they were beat up last week and still beat Missouri in Columbia."

Football season at halfway point

Cowboy spirit won't halt Huskers

Here we are at the halfway point of both the college and pro football seasons. And no group is better qualified to discuss the trials, troubles and tribulations of the first seven weeks than the players and coaches themselves.

The best quotes we've heard or read so far this season start with one from New York Giant quarterback Joe Pisarcik. A boxing ring set up in the Giant locker room prompted someone to suggest that Pisarcik could make more money boxing than playing football. Pisarcik said, "Yeah, and I'd probably get hit a lot less too."

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Pisarcik's protection from the offensive line has been so bad that someone sent him the book "Emergency Medicine" after their third game.

From Redskin lin-backer Pete Wysocki, on trying to hit Earl Campbell: "When you tackle him, it reduces your IQ."

From San Jose St. coach Jack Elway, after his team surrendered 364 yards passing to Utah St.: "We did a hell of a job taking the run away from them early."

From Vanderbilt coach George MacIntyre, who has had 26 freshmen and 25 sophomores on his travel roster: "Our biggest concern is diaper rash."

From New York Jet coach Walt Michaels: "Everyone has some fear. A man who has no fear belongs in a mental institution. Or on special teams."

From the Palomar (Calif.) College press guide on Craig Morris, a 5-9, 165-pound defensive tackle: "Craig is small for his position, but he shows a lot of desire."

And from columnist Red Smith, the final word on an old nemesis: "The Russians have a weapon that can wipe out 280,000,000 Americans. That puts them exactly 10 years behind Howard Cosell."

For the third week in a row, this column has gone 22-11-1 for 66.7 percent, which makes the season mark 132-54-5 for 71 percent.

NEBRASKA AT OKLAHOMA ST.—The Huskers hit

the road for the first time in four weeks to tangle with a club that has a history of making trouble for Nebraska. The Cowboys started a third-string quarterback and a converted defensive end in the backfield last week and came away with a 14-13 upset of Missouri. No doubt, the Okies will be sky high. But it's going to take more than emotion to stop the Huskers in 1979 . . . Nebraska 28, Oklahoma St. 10.

USC AT NOTRE DAME—LSU coach Charley McClendon said USC is not the best team in the country—the Dallas Cowboys and Pittsburgh Steelers are better. After last week, maybe we should add Stanford to that list. The Trojans can't be too pleased about having their national championship hopes dampened. Dan Devine and the Irish are going to need more than green jerseys and a speech about the Gipper to win this one. Too bad for Notre Dame this game couldn't have been played two weeks ago, so maybe the Pope could have refereed . . . USC 30, Notre Dame 14.

GEORGIA AT VANDERBILT—Georgia is 2-3 on the year, yet they could hold the key to a possible national championship for Nebraska. The Bulldogs are 2-0 in conference play and they don't play Alabama this year. If they win the rest of their conference games and tie Alabama for the SEC title, Georgia will go to the Sugar Bowl since the Tide went last year. If the picture stays the way it is now, that would make the Bear choose between an Orange Bowl or Cotton Bowl matchup for the title. But like we said, this crazy season is only half over . . . Georgia 39, Vanderbilt 12.

MISSOURI AT COLORADO—Will the real Missouri Tigers please stand up? Are they the team that beat Notre Dame and Nebraska last year or the fumbling, stumbling unit that lost to Oklahoma St. and was totally dismantled by Texas this season? Lucky Chuck Fairbanks gets to find out this week . . . Missouri 45, Colorado 18.

TEXAS AT ARKANSAS—If you are looking for an "Upset Special of the Week", don't look here. The Longhorns right now are the best in the country, and may want to claim part of the Big Eight title after beating Iowa St., Missouri and Oklahoma so far this season . . . Texas 27, Arkansas 9.