

OSU game means good news, bad news for Iba

By Jeff Goodwin

For Nebraska basketball Coach Moe Iba, there's good news and bad news on line for this weekend. The good news is the Huskers can move into a tie for the Big Eight lead with a win against Oklahoma State Saturday night.

Van Zandt accepts New Orleans post

Lance Van Zandt, Nebraska football's defensive coordinator the last four years, has announced his resignation to accept a similar position with the New Orleans Saints.

Van Zandt has held previous coaching positions at Kansas, Oklahoma State, Rice, Texas A & M, and New Mexico Highlands as well as several Texas high schools. While Van Zandt was at Oklahoma State, he coached with Bum Phillips, who is the new head coach at New Orleans.

Van Zandt came to Nebraska from Kansas in 1977 following the resignation of Monte Kiffen.

"I've worked under the best college coach in the country," he said, referring to Coach Tom Osborne at a press conference Thursday. He said he thought he would now be working under the best pro coach in the country.

No plans have been announced by the athletic department for a search for Van Zandt's replacement. There has been speculation the post may be filled by Rex Norris, former Oklahoma defensive coordinator, or Frank Solich, UNL freshman coach.

The bad news is that Oklahoma State, currently the Big Eight leader, trounced the Huskers 81-70 when the teams met in Stillwater last month.

Iba said Nebraska's main task will be stopping guard Matt Clark, the conference's leading scorer, who is averaging more than 19 points per game.

"He was a big factor in the last game," Iba said. "We've got to hold him down this time."

Clark scored 25 points in that game. Iba added that Ray Collins would once again draw the assignment of covering Clark.

Iba said the last time the two teams played the Huskers tried to play the Cowboys' style of game.

"We got in a track meet with them and let them spread us out over the court. To beat them this time we're going to have to play a very controlled game. That's our type of game," he said.

Iba discounted the possibility of an emotional let-down by Oklahoma State after their triple overtime win against Kansas.

"They're going to come in here with their heads up. They realize this is a big game for both teams," he said.

Iba said he doesn't expect the Cowboys to try anything different from the last game.

"They might try to zone us a little," he said, "but I doubt it since they'll want to keep the tempo fast."

Iba discounted the fact that Oklahoma State has lost eight straight games to Nebraska in Lincoln.

"I don't think that matters at all. This is a brand new Oklahoma State team."

Oklahoma State is 16-3 overall and 6-1 in the conference. The Huskers are 11-8 overall and 5-2 in the conference.



Photo by Jon Natvig

Nebraska center Andre Smith (40) drives around Kansas' Victor Mitchell (55) in UNL's 57-54 upset of the Jayhawks.

Iba deserves 'head coach' title; Does Ferragamo need money?

You can criticize his style of basketball if you want. You can say he is too defense-oriented, but you really can't criticize the results Moe Iba has squeezed out of his Cornhusker basketball teams the last two years, especially in Big Eight competition.

He has taken teams with second-division talent and made them into contenders. Last year the Huskers finished second in the Big Eight regular season, though

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they were picked to end up somewhere near the bottom. This year, Iba's band of over-achievers has ignored similar prognostication, and, with a win Saturday night, would be tied for first place in the league. Iba has earned the title of "head coach."

Iba assumed head coaching responsibilities under some delicate and trying circumstances. He showed concern for the ailing Joe Cipriano, and class in the way he handled the trilateral arrangement among the team, Cip and himself. Still, the uncertainty of it had to hurt recruiting.

Recruiting probably is the most important ingredient in the success of a college team. If you don't get good players, you won't win. Should Iba get the Husker head coaching job, it will be interesting to see what kind of a job he and his staff do in this area.

Here is my answer to those who say keeping Iba as head coach will do nothing but ensure mediocrity for the

Nebraska basketball program. If Iba cannot put together the kind of team that will satisfy you in the next two or three years, then you have a legitimate argument. Give the man a chance to recruit without a handicap, to get his own program established, and then judge him.

Let's be realistic. Telling All-America-class athletes Nebraska is the best place for their basketball skills is not an easy statement to back up. Neither is telling a future Earl Campbell or George Cumby he could try to help Kentucky football become as successful as its basketball program. This is not to say the Huskers should be satisfied to lose big recruiting battles, but merely to suggest Nebraska fans will have to be content with less than A-No. 1 talent for some time to come.

Iba has shown he can win with less talent to work with than other coaches have. Bob Devaney, the selection committee and the regents should give Iba the head coaching job he has earned.

Random Shots: Teams are too evenly matched in NCAA basketball to allow a school to go through the season undefeated. Top-ranked Virginia and No. 2 Oregon State both will fall at least once this year, and probably neither will make the final four.

I can't believe Vince Ferragamo is seriously considering playing in the Canadian Football League, unless he's in dire financial need. He said the CFL offered him a "big opportunity" and that playing in Canada is "not a come-down" because Canadian football is a professional sport too. I wonder if former Olympic gold medal wrestler Dan Gable, now coach at Iowa, would have considered All-Star wrestling if the price had been right.



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