

Sports

Sooners' plays no mystery to Huskers

By Steve Sipple
Staff Reporter

Nebraska defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said he will take preparing for one of the nation's best offenses over preparing for one of the worst any time.

McBride said that's because he knows Oklahoma is going to run the

same plays they run every year, while teams like Kansas and Kansas State force Nebraska to "prepare for anything."

"You know pretty much what Oklahoma's going to do," McBride said. "They're going to do the things that got them where they are, and we're going to do the things that got us

where we are."

What the Sooners will bring to Lincoln for their game against Nebraska is the same offense they've run for 18 consecutive years: the vaunted wishbone. Kickoff for the game, to be televised by CBS, is 2:30 p.m. Saturday.

McBride said the Cornhuskers

won't change their preparations for Oklahoma even though two-time All-Big Eight quarterback Jamelle Holieway and fullback Lydell Carr are expected to miss the game. Holieway and Carr suffered ligament damage during the Sooners' 29-10 victory over Oklahoma State earlier this year.

"We're not preparing any different than we ever would," McBride said. "I tell you what, Carr may play. We know Holieway supposedly had surgery, but after that we're not preparing any different than we ever had."

McBride said the key in preparing the defense for the wishbone is instilling discipline.

"That's the whole thing," McBride said. "If you don't carry out your responsibility, it could easily be a touchdown. If you have the pitch, you take the pitch, if you have the quarterback, that's who you have and no matter what's going on, you take him."

McBride said a missed assignment can lead to a play like Keith Jackson's 41-yard pass reception with nine seconds left last year. The reception enabled the Sooners' Tim Lashar to kick a 31-yard field goal that gave Oklahoma a 20-17 victory.

"You have to follow your responsibility every second," McBride said.

McBride said the Oklahoma wishbone has grown more complicated since 1971 — the last time the teams met while ranked No. 1 and 2.

The first option available to the quarterback is handing off to the fullback as he runs off tackle or taking the handoff and keeping the ball.

McBride said Nebraska will have to watch fullback Rotnei Anderson carefully. Anderson, who replaced Carr as the Sooners' starting fullback, has rushed 69 times for 467 yards this season.

The second option available in the triple-option scheme has the quarterback running the ball. Freshman quarterback Charles Thompson, who replaced Holieway, has rolled to 605 yards on 84 carries for a 7.2-yard average.

The third option has Thompson pitching to one of the trailing halfbacks. If the play goes right, Thompson will pitch to the left halfback, and if the play goes left the pitch goes to the right halfback.

Senior Patrick Collins and junior Anthony Stafford will receive Thompson's pitches. Collins has

rushed 69 times for 495 yards this season, an average of 7.2 yards per carry.

Stafford has rushed 72 times for 540 yards this season.

McBride said Thompson plays an important role in directing the Oklahoma offense.

"He's the leader of the whole thing," McBride said. "His ability to read defenses and make decisions is a big key, and that's where Holieway has the experience."

McBride said Thompson has proven he's as dangerous as Holieway.

"We don't look at Thompson any different than Holieway," McBride said. "He's probably faster than Holieway. He doesn't have the experience Holieway has. That's the difference."

McBride said pass plays add to the difficulty of defending against the wishbone. He said the Husker defense must be aware of All-America tight end Keith Jackson.

"It's all deceptive," McBride said. "The majority of the passes are run off their options and play-action passes. They'll also run half-back passes and things like that. So you have to be aware of everything."

"People have said (Thompson) is probably a little better thrower and Jamelle is a very good thrower. They say Thompson's got a very good arm, so I don't think they'll be off on that."

Thompson has completed 11 of 28 passes for 207 yards and two touchdowns this season.

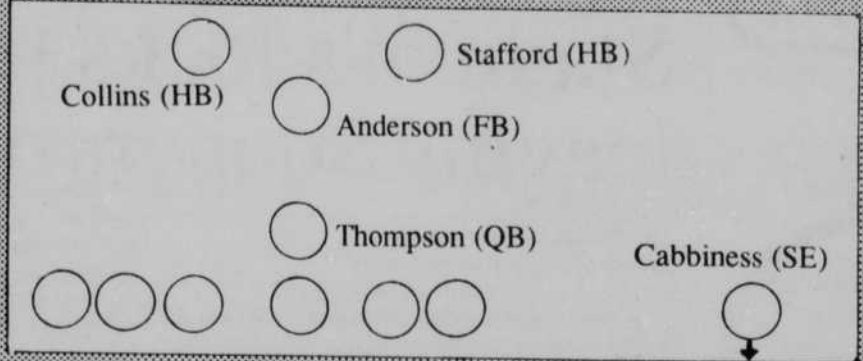
McBride said it isn't probable that Nebraska will be able to dismantle the Sooners' wishbone as they did Missouri's earlier this season. The Huskers held the Tigers to 75 yards rushing during their 42-7 defeat of Missouri on Oct. 31.

McBride said the Sooners' powerful offensive line will make it tough for the Husker defense to dominate Saturday's showdown. Oklahoma has averaged 503 yards per game for the season.

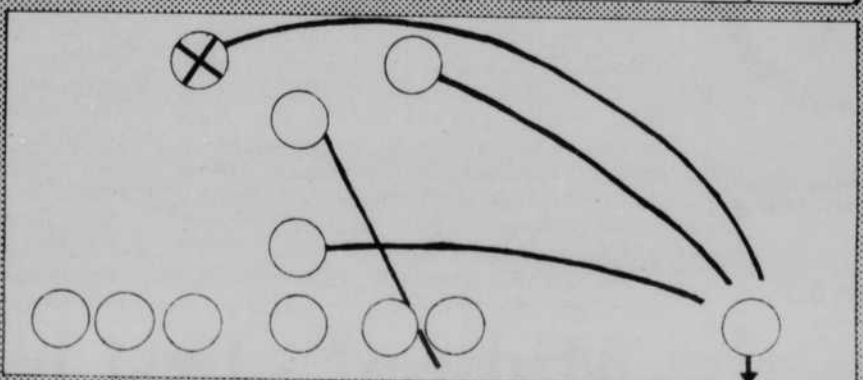
"The wishbone's a tough thing to shut down," McBride said. "I think the difference in our team is if we can hold up against their offensive line. Their offensive is the best it's ever been. Since I've been here it's the most physical one that's been here and the most experienced one. This is as good as group as they've ever had."

"I've seen Oklahoma run some plays where your grandmother could run through the holes."

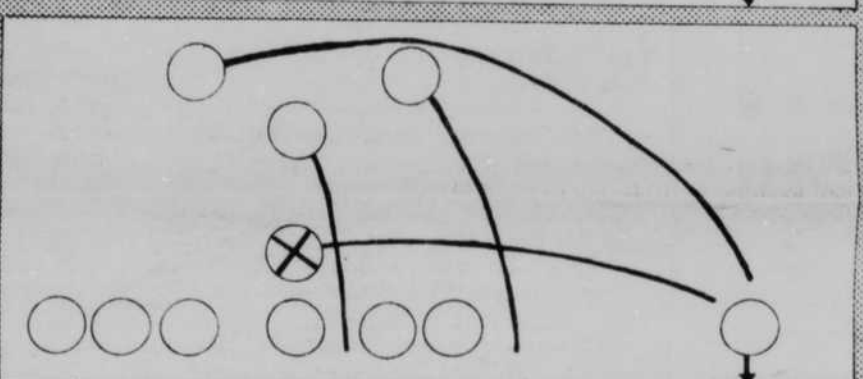
Wishbone-T formation. Split end Carl Cabbiness is split to his left. This is basically a running formation, however, if Cabbiness is not covered quarterback Charles Thompson is capable of throwing to him while rolling to his left.



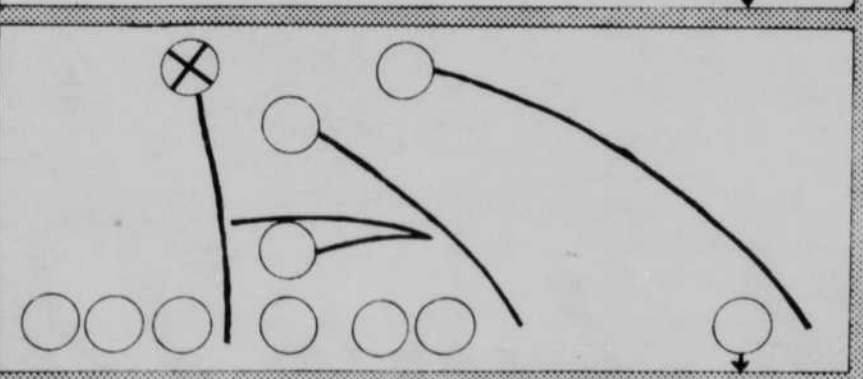
Halfback's long gain play. Quarterback Charles Thompson rolls to his left, fakes to fullback Rotnei Anderson and then pitches to right halfback Patrick Collins with left halfback Anthony Stafford leading the blocking. This is the play where Collins has gained most of his yards.



Quarterback's long-gain play. Thompson rolls to his left, fakes to Anderson and then runs around end with the halfbacks leading the blocking. This is where Thompson has gained most of his yardage.



Counter-dive. Thompson goes to his left and fakes to Anderson. Stafford also flows left. Thompson then changes direction and hands off to Stafford up the middle. Oklahoma hurt Nebraska with this play last year. Oklahoma tries to get the defense to flow with the play and then Thompson switches direction.



John Bruce/Daily Nebraskan

Fans wait for 'Game of Century II'

Coach Tom Osborne to have his first national championship — Sooner, or later?

Oklahoma coach Barry Switzer said Nebraska coach Tom Osborne should compensate for the Sooners' loss of quarterback Jamelle Holieway and fullback Lydell Carr by sitting Steve Taylor and Keith Jones out of Saturday's game.



Jeff Apel

But Switzer doesn't need to resort to such tactics to beat Nebraska — he simply needs to let the Cornhuskers beat themselves.

A quick check of the series history between the two teams will reveal that Nebraska has repeatedly thrown away chances at the Big Eight title by collapsing to the Sooners.

There was the 35-10 loss in 1975, the 20-17 loss in '76, the 17-14 loss in '79, the 21-17 loss in '80, the 17-7 loss in '84 and the great 27-7 loss in '85.

All of these losses — combined with Oklahoma's winning ways — have left

Osborne seeking his first national championship after 14 seasons.

The fortunate aspect about this year's game is it once again sends Osborne seeking that elusive national title. Regardless of whom the Sooners start in their backfield — whether it's Charles Thompson or Eric Mitchell at quarterback, or Carr or Rotnei Anderson at fullback — Oklahoma will beat Nebraska.

That may come as an ironic statement, considering that many Nebraska fans have pointed out the Sooners have played such a weak schedule this season they won't know how to handle a close game.

Granted, non-conference opponents North Carolina, Texas, North Texas State and Tulsa won't earn any national championships or even top-10 rankings, but they provide the Sooners with what will give them an edge — depth.

In the process of whipping North Carolina 28-0, Texas 44-9, Tulsa 65-0 and North Texas State 69-14, the Sooners have played their second and third teams enough that they have a feel for college football.

A prime example of this can be found in Anderson and Thompson, both of whom have come off the bench and done a splendid job

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The reason the Nebraska Cornhuskers will defeat the Oklahoma Sooners Saturday in Lincoln can be summed up in two words — Steve Taylor.

Taylor, a junior quarterback from Fresno, Calif., will take the Huskers from also-rans to the Big Eight champions. A consistent Taylor is the missing ingredient from Nebraska coach Tom Osborne's national championship recipe.

Oklahoma coach Barry Switzer has nothing but praise for the Nebraska quarterback.

"They have a very explosive team, and Steve Taylor is the key to their offense," Switzer said. "His ability of run, throw and make the big plays has been exceptional this year."

Leading the Huskers to a 9-0 record going into the game, Taylor has rushed for 551 yards on 94 carries and seven touchdowns.

Last year, Taylor was effective running but had trouble throwing as he completed 41.9 percent of his passes for 808 yards. This year, Taylor has proved he can move the ball through the air by completing 50 percent of his passes for 841 yards and 13 touchdown passes.

Earlier in the year, against UCLA, Taylor had one of his best passing days as a Husker when he completed 10 of 15 passes for 217 yards and a school-record five touchdowns

passes. Switzer said the Sooners must stop Taylor to be in the game.

"I hope it's (the game) dominated by de-



Mark Derowitsch

fense so we have a chance to be in the ball game," Switzer said.

Oklahoma quarterback Jamelle Holieway has gained 880 yards on the ground this season, but will not play against the Huskers because of a knee injury he suffered two weeks ago against Oklahoma State. Sooner fullback Lydell Carr strained a knee against the Cowboys but could play against Nebraska.

Too bad Holieway is hurt, because Husker fans across the state would have liked to see the

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