

Osborne says defense improving

By Mark Derowitsch
Senior Reporter

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said Tuesday the main thing the Cornhuskers' have to improve on is defense.

Osborne, speaking at his weekly press conference at South Stadium, said he wants Nebraska's defense to maintain a higher level of intensity during Saturday's game against Kansas State than it did in its 63-42 win against Oklahoma State last Saturday. Kickoff is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. at Manhattan, Kan.

"We have some areas where we need some improvements," Osborne said. "Obviously, the 42 points that Oklahoma State scored and (455) yards they had wasn't too pleasing. I

think in fairness to our defense, we played a very good offensive team. All those factors aside, we need to tackle better and we had some mistakes in alignments."

'I feel that we're kind of on the verge of playing some pretty good defense.'

—Osborne

But, Osborne said Nebraska's defense is improving week to week.

"I feel that we're kind of on the verge of playing some pretty good defense," Osborne said.

Kent Wells, a junior from Lincoln East High School, will start at right tackle against the Wildcats in place of Paul Brungardt. Wells has been in on 15 tackles this season.

But Osborne said the area of the defense that's playing best is the secondary. He said safety Mark Blazek holds the defensive backfield together. Blazek, a senior from Valparaiso, has made 23 tackles this season for the 6-1 Huskers.

"The big key to the secondary is Blazek," Osborne said. "He reinjured that hamstring Saturday, and I don't know whether he'll play this week or not. If we can ever get him over the

hump to where he was really healthy, then we'd be pretty well set in the secondary. I don't think we're too bad without him, but if (free safety Tim) Jackson or (strong safety Reggie) Cooper goes down, we'd be hurting a little bit."

Because of Blazek's injury, Osborne said freshman Steve Carmer will practice with the varsity this week and may travel to Manhattan for the game against the Wildcats.

Carmer, a Wahoo native, was an All-State selection last season at Wahoo High School. He recorded 65 tackles as a senior.

"We may take him to Kansas State and see if we can get him some playing time," Osborne said. "We're not real sure on what's going to happen there."

Clark earns offensive honor

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Linebacker Mike Shane of Iowa State and Nebraska running back Ken Clark were unanimous choices as Big Eight defensive and offensive players of the week.

Shane, a two-time winner of the award, recovered three fumbles in Iowa State's victory against Missouri. Shane also caused a fumble, broke up a pass and got credit for 19 tackles.

Clark rushed for 256 yards in Nebraska's victory over Oklahoma State. He had a 73-yard touchdown run on the first play for the Huskers and went on to post the second-best rushing game in Nebraska history.

Song 'bounces' Huskers onto the court

By Jeff Apel
Senior Reporter

A theme that failed miserably for the United States men's and women's gymnastics teams at the 1988 Olympics will motivate the Nebraska women's basketball team this season.

Nebraska women's basketball coach Angela Beck said the Cornhuskers have chosen the song titled "When You Put Your Heart in It" as their theme this season. She said she isn't worried about the theme even though the U.S. gymnastics teams faltered at the recent Olympic competition in Seoul, South Korea.

The U.S. men, behind a disappointing performance from former Nebraska gymnast Scott Johnson, finished 11th while the U.S. women were 4th.

"We've chosen that as our theme song because we want to drill things into their minds," Beck said. "I realize it didn't work well in the Olympics, but I want to show them that we have to do more than shoot the basketball. We have to be mentally tough."

Beck, who guided Nebraska to its first Big Eight crown last season, said the Huskers will mix their theme with several motivational statements in an attempt to repeat as conference champions. Those statements include "The speed of the leader determines the pack," "All things are difficult before they are easy" and ITHWTRAC, which stands for "It takes hard work to repeat as champions."

Beck said ITHWTRAC is a spin off from last year's statement ITHWTBAC, which stood for "It takes hard work to be a champion." She said Nebraska has tabbed repeating as Big Eight champions as a high priority this season.

"We've said the nasty 'R' word," Beck said. "We want to prove it wasn't a fluke that we won the championship last year."

Beck said Nebraska's remaining goals for the season are to become a top-20 team nationally while winning all of its home and at least half of its road games. She said the Huskers also want to place more emphasis on post-

season tournament action.

Beck said its critical that Nebraska places more emphasis on post-season tournaments because the women's NCAA Tournament has been expanded from 40 to 48 teams. The Huskers dropped an 87-84 decision to Kansas in the semifinals of last year's Big Eight Tournament in Salina, Kan., and also suffered a 100-82 setback to USC in the opening round of the 1987 NCAA Tournament.

Beck said she's confident Nebraska can achieve more post-season success this season. She said the Huskers return a strong nucleus from last year's team that finished 22-7 overall and 11-3 in the Big Eight.

"I don't think we have any superstars," Beck said. "We're just ordinary people doing ordinary things."

Beck said the strength of this year's team is the front line, which returns starting forward Ann Halsne and starting center Kim Harris. She said Harris is a deceiving player who is Nebraska's top defender, while Halsne has established herself as the strongest player in Husker history

with a 230-pound squat.

"I think Halsne will carry a lot of the load," Beck said. "She's explosive inside and she's been outstanding."

Beck said the Nebraska back court will also be strong as it returns guards Amy Stephens, Sabrina Brooks and Amy Bullock. She said Stephens will start at off guard after splitting time between the off and point-guard positions last season, while Brooks, Bullock and freshman Kim Yancey will vie for playing time at point guard.

"We have a veteran back court, which I think is extremely important," Beck said. "We have smart people and good passers."

Beck said Stephens is one of the most complete players in Nebraska history. She said the Huskers plan on building their offense around the pre-season All-America selection from Alliance.

"We're not going to have a lot of problems as long as that kid stays healthy," Beck said.

Stephens said she hasn't set any

personal goals for herself. She said the biggest team goal she would like to accomplish is help the Huskers repeat as Big Eight champions.

"I think it will be tough for us to do," Stephens said, "but something like that would just be outstanding."

Halsne and Harris said they are confident Nebraska can capture its second-consecutive Big Eight championship. They said their confidence stems from the faith the Huskers have in themselves and the players they have returning.

Halsne said she isn't concerned about Nebraska's theme song selection. She said the theme was chosen because it described the Huskers battle for last year's Big Eight title perfectly.

"It has to work for somebody, huh?" Halsne asked.

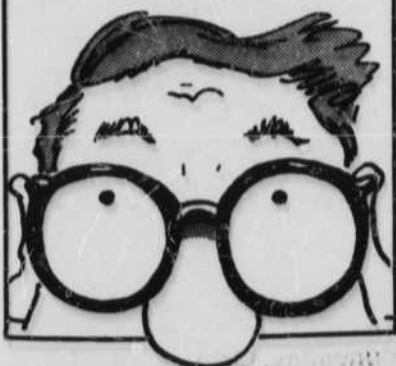
Nebraska opens its season on Nov. 15, when the Huskers face the Australian Junior National Team in an exhibition contest. The game begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

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