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Husker lineman has title hopes for former Irish teammates

By Mark Derowitsch
Senior Reporter

Nebraska offensive guard Mark Antonietti has national championship hopes -- not for the Cornhuskers, but for Notre Dame.

It's not that Antonietti has given up hope for the Huskers, but he said he wants to stick by the Fighting Irish the way they stuck by him. Top-ranked Notre Dame will play West Virginia Jan. 2 in the Fiesta Bowl in a game that most people agree will decide the mythical national championship. "I owe them some loyalty," said Antonietti, who played for the Irish in 1984 and 1985. "It has to do with some of my friends that still play there. It's nice to see people you went to school with perform well."

Antonietti transferred to Nebraska in the fall of 1986 and sat out a year. When he became a Husker, he was reunited with Nate Turner and Mike Murray -- his former teammates at Mt. Carmel High School in Chicago.

Antonietti said he didn't regret his decision to leave Notre Dame.

"I was given an opportunity to play in one of the best programs in the country," Antonietti said. "I can't complain about anything. The kids on this team are really good people."

But Antonietti said he would rather play Notre Dame for the national title in the Orange Bowl than watch the Fighting Irish on television.

"It'd be nice to play (Notre Dame) for the national championship," he said. "I had always hoped that I'd get a chance to play them."

Although he would rather play the Irish, Antonietti said he's glad the Huskers are playing Miami in the Orange Bowl. The game will be held Jan. 2.

'I have (Notre Dame) some loyalty. It has to do with some of my friends that still play there.'

-- Antonietti

"The Orange Bowl is the place for Nebraska," he said. "It's the only place we can go if we hope to be a national contender. We have to beat Miami to be a contender, and that would be a great achievement for us. They're definitely one of the best teams in the country."

But Antonietti would also like to defeat Miami and end its national title hopes because of something that happened in 1985.

During Antonietti's sophomore year at Notre Dame, the Irish were defeated by Miami 58-7 in Miami. It was the last game for Notre Dame

coach Gerry Faust, who was replaced by current-coach Lou Holtz. Many people thought Hurricane coach Jimmy Johnson ran up the score on the Irish.

"Coaches do what they have to do," said Antonietti, referring to Johnson. "I have no real reason to hate them other than the fact that they stand in our way of something we want."

Antonietti said he thinks Faust wasn't respected during his tenure at Notre Dame.

"I know it's really hard to be objective about something when you live there," he said. "I know he was a good person. He might have been in a situation over his head. I think he handled the situation well, though."

Antonietti said he left Notre Dame "for personal reasons." But, he said, that's now behind him.

"I got an opportunity to come here," he said. "At the time I came here, they were really looking for linemen. It was a perfect spot for me. And the transition was pretty easy."

But for now, Antonietti would like the Huskers to go through another transition -- of being national champions for the first time since 1971.

"I'd like to see us win the national championship," Antonietti said. "It's the foremost thought in my mind. To do it, we must first beat Miami. It would give me tremendous pride if that would happen."

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Missouri names Stull; replaces Widenhofer

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) - Bob Stull, credited with turning around Texas-El Paso's dismal football program in three seasons, was hired Wednesday to pull Missouri from a string of five straight losing seasons.

Stull, 43, was awarded a five-year contract at a base salary of \$85,000 a year.

"We feel fortunate to have the opportunity to hire an outstanding football coach like Bob Stull," Athletic Director Dick Tamburo said at an afternoon news conference in Columbia.

"His background and credentials more than qualify him for this position. When he was here in Columbia for his interview, everyone who met him was most impressed with his presentation and enthusiastic about making him our top candidate," Tamburo said.

Stull replaces Woody Widenhofer, who was pressured into resigning last month after failing to post a winning record in four seasons. Missouri last had a winning record, 7-5, in 1983 and was 12-31-1 under Widenhofer.

Stull's name surfaced even before Widenhofer's departure, but he apparently did not settle on Missouri until after he interviewed Sunday for the opening at Stanford.

Stull was named to the Missouri post just hours after workmen removed Widenhofer's nameplate from the football office door and his portrait from the press lounge in the athletic department.

Stull took over at UTEP in 1985 following a 1-10 season under Bill Young. After posting 4-8 and 7-4 records his first two years at El Paso, Stull led his team to a 10-2 record, the best in the school's history, and a berth in the Independence Bowl against Southern Mississippi this year. The UTEP team also set a school scoring mark of 35 points per game in 1988.

Stull, a native of Davenport, Iowa, has previous experience in the Big Eight Conference, where he played offensive center at Kansas State in the mid-1960s. He previously coached two years at Massachusetts, where he was 10-12. Before becoming a head coach, he was an assistant for more than a dozen years with Don

James at Kent State and Washington, a graduate assistant at Kansas State from 1969-70 and a defensive coordinator at Dubuque (Iowa) High in 1968-69.

Stull received a base salary of about \$58,000 at UTEP and about \$52,000 in broadcast income for a total package of about \$110,000 this year. Previous published reports said the Missouri package, with broadcast and other income, was worth between \$200,000 and \$250,000 a year.

El Paso community leaders trying to keep Stull at UTEP offered him an investment package that eventually would have been worth as much as \$400,000, but Stull said money was not a factor in his decision.

Jonathan Rogers, the El Paso mayor who helped put together the investment package, joined community and university leaders in expressing disappointment that Stull was leaving UTEP.

"He's done an outstanding job here in El Paso. I think he wants to move up to a bigger challenge," Rogers said.

"We regret the loss of Bob Stull as our head football coach," UTEP Athletic Director Brad Hovious said in a prepared statement from the Western Athletic Conference meetings in Denver. "It goes without saying that he did a great job for UTEP. We know we will feel his loss in our football program for some time."

Stull was hired at UTEP in 1985 by then-President Haskell Monroe, now the chancellor at the Missouri-Columbia campus. Tamburo, the Missouri athletic director, knows Stull from their days together at Kent State.

Tamburo said earlier that Stull, who visited the Missouri campus the first weekend in December, was the best of five or six candidates that the school considered.

"I know Bob is an excellent, outstanding coach," Tamburo said. "He impressed everyone he was in contact with during his visit to the university."

Earlier published reports said other coaches considered for the Missouri coaching job included Oregon's Rich Brooks, Marshall's George Chaump and Appalachian State's Sparky Woods.