

# ISU short of players but coach has faith

By Chuck Green  
Senior Reporter

Jim Walden is stuck. He realizes it, but he can do little about it -- for now.



Walden, entering his third year as Iowa State's football coach, is still feeling the effects of NCAA sanctions against the Cyclone program, not the least of which limited Iowa State's allowed scholarships.

The Cyclones will have 78 players on scholarship this fall -- 17 below the NCAA limit of 95.

Because of the low numbers, Walden said, his chances to improve on last season's 5-6 record are slim. "We're ahead of schedule," he

said of his attempt to rebuild Iowa State's program, "but we're not going any farther. To take the next step, we need to beat people like Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Colorado.

"Going from zero to five wins in one season is not easy, but it's a lot easier than going from five to eight." But Walden does have faith in this year's team.

"We'll be better organized and better understanding of each other," he said. "We have some very strong points."

One of the strongest is quarterback Bret Oberg. Last season, Oberg completed 99 of 179 passes for 1,360 yards and six touchdowns. Against Iowa, he threw for 238 yards.

Oberg's favorite receivers from last year are gone and he'll now have to look for Steve Lester and Tyrone Williams in the open field. Freshmen Harold Champion and Matt Fauser also will compete for playing time.

Mike Busch returns to his tight end

spot after earning second-team All-Big Eight honors last season by catching 27 passes for 343 yards and one touchdown. Backing up Busch will be Craig Mahoney, a 6-foot-3, 228-pound junior.

Paul Thibodeaux will start the fall as the Cyclones' top tailback, and his main challenge will come from Edwin Jones.

At fullback, Ron Wilkinson and Sylvester Nickerson likely will split playing time, Walden said.

Three starters return to the offensive line. Tackle Gene Williams, center Keith Sims and guard Trent Van Hoosen will be joined by tackle Dave Benoid and guard Rick Wells to open holes for Thibodeaux, Wilkinson and Nickerson, as well as protect Oberg in the pocket.

The Cyclone defense is spearheaded by the linebackers, which Lindy's Big Eight football magazine rated as the best linebacking unit in the conference.

At least one player was good

enough for most everybody in the Big Eight last season. Mike Shane, a 6-2, 210-pound senior, earned All-Big Eight honors last season before suffering a knee injury against Nebraska. Walden said he expects Shane to return at full speed this fall.

On either side of Shane will be Randy Lendino, who started last year, and Charles Vondra. The backups will be Melvin Coleman and Larry Ratigan, as well as Tyrone Davis, who filled in for Shane after his injury.

At defensive end, Randy Bern and Mark Foley both return to give opposing running backs headaches as they try to turn the corners. Bern, a 6-4, 245-pound player is Iowa State's second-leading returning tackler behind Shane.

Don Edwards is back at one tackle spot, while juniors Phil Navarro and Travis Block will compete for the other position.

Cornerback Marcus Robinson is back after earning honorable mention

All-Big Eight last season, and free safety Tim Baker also returns. Baker finished fourth in tackles among Big Eight defensive backs last season.

Jeff Bauer, Dave Eder, Rodondo Johnson and Casey Martinez will be the top contenders for the remaining positions in the secondary.

Placekicker Jeff Shudak, a two-time All-Big Eight selection and All-America contender, returns this season along with punter Judge Johnson.

Walden said that as the roster size grows back to normal size, the program will improve.

"But there's always a stump in the road for everyone," he said. "Our stumps are Iowa, Oklahoma and Nebraska. Our main objective is to beat one of those teams, and eventually all of them. But with 20 fewer players than everybody else, I don't know if we can."

"We just have to keep believing that we can overcome that obstacle," he said.

Until then, the Cyclones are stuck.

# Game revealed Husker talents, weaknesses

Ho hum. And so it began. Nebraska's 100th season of football began in less-than-glamorous fashion, as the almighty Cornhuskers beat the not-so-mighty Northern Illinois Huskies 48-17.



The first half was interesting, as Northern Illinois -- thanks to five Nebraska turnovers -- forged a 17-17 tie. But in the second half, things got out of hand as the Huskers exploded for 31 points en route to pulling away from Northern Illinois.

Despite being a rout, Saturday's game showed a lot. It showed Nebraska has a lot of talent -- particularly at the receiver and running back positions -- and is capable of overcoming its own mistakes.

But it also showed Nebraska has a lot of work to do if it is going to seriously challenge Oklahoma and Colorado for this year's Big Eight title.

Nebraska showed early that its defense is shaky, as Northern Illinois mounted a 9-play, 53-yard drive midway through the first quarter by running straight up the middle and picking on cornerback Bruce Pickens.

When the Huskies drove to the Nebraska 2-yard line -- after repeated

runs by fullback Adam Dach and Stacey Robinson to split end Mark Clancy -- Cornhusker defensive coordinator Charlie McBride yanked middle guard Mike Murray and inserted Junior Monarrez. Monarrez's 6-foot-1, 270-pound frame towers over Murray's 5-10, 240-pound build, but Dach also found him to his liking, as it took him exactly one play to score.

While that touchdown turned out to be inconsequential, it showed that Nebraska needs to improve. More proof of that can be found in the statistics, which show that Nebraska's leading tackler was weakside linebacker Pat Tyrance.

That fact means one of two things: either Tyrance was a dominating force or the Northern Illinois offensive line was at least partially controlling Nebraska's defensive line. It's likely that it was a combination of both, as the Huskies' wishbone attack strung out Nebraska's defense and forced many players into one-on-one situations.

Tyrance's efforts did not go unnoticed by Dach, who praised the play of Nebraska's linebacking corps.

"I thought their linebackers were excellent," Dach said. "I was impressed with those guys."

Dach also should have been impressed with Nebraska coach Tom Osborne, who kept his promise and opened up the Huskers' offense more. Now, instead of running the standard power sweeps with an occasional fullback trap and virtually no passing, Nebraska has discovered the value of the pass.

Midway through the first quarter, Nebraska even committed the previously unthinkable, as it passed on two consecutive downs. The second pass was predictable, as the Huskers were facing a third-and-10 situation.

The first was not, even though a Ken Clark run had just netted no yards. In previous years, Nebraska would simply run a power sweep, which probably would have worked.

But this season, Osborne kept to his word of adjusting his offense and called for quarterback Gerry Gdowski to pass. He also called for Gdowski to pass seven other times in the game, and called for Mickey Joseph

-- Gdowski's replacement -- to throw five times.

That does not mean Nebraska has realized the full value of a passing game. The Huskers still do not throw over the middle, and they have yet to try to throw deep.

But things are improving. Wingbacks Richard Bell and Nate Turner are now more a part of the offense, as they return kicks and run reverses in addition to fulfilling their receiving duties. And Nebraska's tight ends, who previously were used almost exclusively for blocking, also are more active, as Monte Kratzstein and Chris Garrett both caught touch-

down passes.

It took Nebraska 100 years to figure out, but it's good to see the Huskers are finally seeing the value of a respectable passing attack. It's a change that should guarantee success for the next 100 years.

Apel is a senior news-editorial major and is the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.

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