

Utah's plan includes confusion, trickery

By Darran Fowler
Senior Reporter

If Nebraska's defense was confused periodically by Utah's offense in Saturday's football game, it was not without reason.

Nebraska won the game 42-30 in front of 76,333 fans at Memorial Stadium.

Utah quarterback Scott Mitchell said the Utes' game plan was to intentionally try to baffle the Cornhuskers' defense all day with numerous offensive formations and trick plays.

"Part of our game plan going into the game was to be pesky and try to do things to get them frustrated and confused," Mitchell said.

Part of that confusion and trickery came in the second quarter when the left-handed quarterback came off the field clutching his left shoulder in obvious pain after being sacked by Husker middle guard Mike Murray. While the play was being negated by a holding call on the Huskers' defense, Mitchell was on the Utes' bench being attended to by the Utah trainers.

Utah then gained five yards on the next play with a run up the middle by Utah running back Clifton Smith, before Mitchell returned to the game lining up in the shotgun.

At the same time Mitchell was walking toward the right side of Utah's line pointing

and giving directions with the impression there was a mix-up in the Utes' offense, center Jeff Parson gave a direct snap to Smith, who then ran the ball.

Mitchell admitted after the game that he was never injured and it was all part of the Utes' ploy to try to confuse Nebraska.

"In all honesty it was part of the game," Mitchell said. "That particular play was one we used to try and confuse them."

The play resulted in a loss of two yards as Nebraska strong safety Reggie Cooper came up to make the tackle, but it exemplifies Utah's endless attempts to try to befuddle Nebraska's defense.

And, some of those attempts were successful as Utah took leads of 7-0 and 13-7, and trailed at halftime 21-16.

Smith and Mitchell said the Utes' mood at the half was one of optimism.

"At that time we were thinking, 'Hey, we got them where we want them,'" Smith said.

Mitchell, who completed 26 of 41 passes for 297 yards and four touchdowns, said mistakes hurt the Utes.

"At the beginning of the second half we made some mistakes that I think cost us the ball game," Mitchell said. "I don't think it's the best we can play. We made too many mistakes to win. Nebraska's a good team and I'm sure they created a lot of those mistakes, but we can

play better."

Mitchell said he wasn't satisfied with the Utes' keeping the score close. With Nebraska leading 42-16, Utah scored two touchdowns in the game's final four minutes.

Utah coach Jim Fassel said he told his players after the game that they have improved a lot since losing their season opener 52-22 at Fresno State.

Fassel said the Utes' defense played well. "Any time our defense plays well, we play well as a team," he said. "They played like I expected them to. I was proud of the way our defense didn't give up the long runs. They got some good gainers, but it wasn't like an 80-yard burst for a touchdown."

Mitchell was sacked four times for 38 yards. "They just brought four people and it was effective," Mitchell said. "They're a good solid defense."

Utah blended the rush with the pass in its first two scoring drives. The Utes' first score was a nine-play 59-yard drive -- five passes and four rushes -- capped by a five-yard pass to tight end Dennis Smith in the first quarter.

After Nebraska tied the score 7-7, Utah answered with a five-play 76-yard drive -- three passes and two rushes -- when Mitchell again connected with Smith for a 43-yard touchdown pass.

"We went after them early because they were in a nickel package and they were bringing people in," Fassel said. "So we were running some traps and draws and it felt like that would help us. I think it helped us early in the ball game."

Mitchell's first interception of the season resulted in a five-yard touchdown return by Husker linebacker Mike Croel in the second quarter, giving Nebraska a 21-13 lead.

Nebraska linebacker Mike Petko and free safety Tyrone Byrd also intercepted Mitchell.

"All interceptions are crucial and we should be able to bounce back from something like that," Mitchell said about Croel's interception. "(Croel) was playing pretty good man-to-man coverage and I thought (Croel) was a little aggressive, but then again I'm not the official. (Croel) made a heck of a play and it was just unfortunate for us."

Smith finished with 82 yards on 17 carries and caught seven passes for 62 yards.

"I'm not tired right now, I'm beat up," Smith said. "I'm just bruised, but I'll be ready for next week."

Smith said he was impressed with Nebraska.

"Other teams they may be quick, but they may not be as strong," he said. "Others they may be strong, but not as quick. Nebraska has all the elements."

Dirksen praises NU cross country weekend efforts

By Scott Stream
Staff Reporter

Nebraska cross country coach Jay Dirksen had high praise for both of his teams after they opened their seasons by competing in the Nebraska Invitational.

Dirksen said he was pleased with Nebraska's performance Saturday at Pioneers Park because both teams had an abundance of runners finish among the top competitors. The Nebraska women had seven runners finish among the top 10 finishers, while the Cornhusker men had six.

In addition to Nebraska, the meet included teams from Kearney State, Nebraska Wesleyan, Midland College, Tarkio (Mo.) College and Northwest Missouri State. No team scores were kept.

Dirksen said he could not fault his team's efforts.

Nebraska's men were led by Jacques van Rensburg, who captured the men's title with a 32:27.8 clocking. Teammate Joe Kirby was second in 33:08, while Kevin Clark was fourth, Harald Graham fifth, Tom Banks sixth and Frank Graham seventh.

The Nebraska women were led by Juliet Prowse, who finished second to Midland's Amber Anderson with a time of 18:31.1. The Huskers' Katie Fletcher finished third with a time of 18:36.8, while teammate Michele Marthaler was fourth. Tracy Smith was sixth, Fran tenBensel was seventh, Lisa Darley was eighth and Kelly Loos was ninth.

Prowse said she was pleased with her performance because she has not tapered yet. Tapering is a process in which runners hope to improve their times by resting.



Al Schaben/Daily Nebraskan

Nebraska freshman fullback Brian Dunlevy

Huskers are motivated to play against Bethany

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

In the last two seasons, Nebraska's junior varsity football team has defeated Bethany (Kan.) Junior College's junior varsity team by scores of 55-0 and 68-0.

Even so, Cornhusker coach Shane Thorell isn't taking today's game lightly. The game, which will be broadcast live by KRNU (90.3 FM) begins at 1 p.m. at Memorial Stadium.

"We have no idea what kind of team they'll bring up here," he said. "There are different players every year, so it's hard to say whether they'll be better or worse than last season."

Thorell said his players will be motivated for the game regardless of the past scores.

"We only play five games, but our guys get up for every game," he said.

Against Snow Junior College two weeks ago, Nebraska faced an offense similar to Bethany's, Thorell said. The Huskers tied Snow 23-23.

Thorell said Bethany runs a one-back offense to highlight its passing game, but occasionally will run an I-formation set similar to Nebraska's. He said many of Bethany's players are sophomores and juniors.

"Their varsity played (Saturday), and a lot of players who didn't play in that game are players they'll bring to Nebraska," Thorell said. "They want to get a look at them in a game situation."

Thorell said injuries have

caused depth problems for Nebraska's defensive line. Tackle Kevin Ramaekers injured his Achilles' tendon, and middle guard Ryan Barry is out with a pinched nerve in his neck.

Wingback Vernon Powell is recovering from thumb surgery, which repaired a torn ligament. Thorell said Powell has been practicing with a cast, but "he's having trouble catching the ball."

Powell may redshirt this season, Thorell said.

Marvin Callies, who split playing time between quarterback and I-back in Nebraska's first game, has been moved back to quarterback and no longer will play I-back.

Against Snow, Callies rushed for 130 yards and a touchdown, and completed 3 of 7 passes for 32 yards.

Shane McClanahan will start at I-back against Bethany.

Thorell said the game against Snow exposed several problems with execution, particularly blocking and defensive mental mistakes.

He said the team isn't practicing at the level he would like to see at this point of the season.

"It's really hard to keep up the intensity when you play a five-game schedule," Thorell said. "The freshmen go a couple of weeks without playing a game, and that's pretty tough."

"We've been telling them that they need to practice as hard as they can every day so that they improve. I think they'll be up for this one."

Coach says injuries 'no excuse' for loss

By Darran Fowler
Senior Reporter

Nebraska softball coach Ron Wolforth offered no excuses after seeing his team drop the first half of a double header to Kearney State.

Wolforth said he could not use injuries as an excuse, even though four Cornhuskers either missed or saw limited action in Friday's games at the NU softball complex.

Those injuries showed, as Nebraska lost for the first time in nine years to Kearney State when it dropped a 5-1 decision before defeating the Lopers 11-1.

Wolforth said injuries are not a legitimate excuse because great teams have to adjust to

adversity. Center fielder Kristin Davidson, catcher Kris Vucurevic, third baseman Lori Cook and pitcher Tracy Smith all missed the games or saw limited action because of injuries.

"I don't want (injuries) creeping into our subconscious, because we are 18 players and we're going to have to play with a couple key people short," Wolforth said. "I don't care how you slice it -- we're still accountable for our actions even though we're a couple people short."

Wolforth said the loss was a big disappointment for himself and his players.

"It was very disappointing and I think they're very disappointed in themselves," he

said. "At the same time, I probably have the tendency to expect too much, but sometimes if you don't expect too much you don't get a lot."

In the first game, Kearney State opened the scoring in the third inning when shortstop Wendy Welsh scored on a wild pitch by sophomore Marie Bowie.

The Lopers then broke the game open with a four-run sixth inning that was sparked by a two-run double by freshman first baseman Carrie Loudon. Nebraska right fielder Amy Killman and left fielder Joy Rishel each committed an error, which also benefitted the Lopers' rally.

Nebraska's only run came in the sixth inning when first baseman Deanna Mays

doubled and scored on a single by Cook. Cook was pinch hitting for catcher Khara Trenka.

Bowie surrendered five hits, walked three and struck out three.

With the addition of former Husker pitcher Lori Sippel to the coaching staff this season, Wolforth said he expected Bowie to have a few problems.

He said Sippel, who has 10 Nebraska pitching records, has introduced the pitchers to some different techniques.

"It's a new system and she's not comfortable," Wolforth said. "I knew she was going to struggle a bit."