

Coach says young defense limits changes

By **Todd Cooper**
Senior Reporter

According to Husker coaches, Nebraska can't change much after Saturday's 36-21 loss to Washington.

Defensively, Coach Charlie McBride said the Huskers don't have the experience or personnel to alter too much.

"If you have an experienced football team, you can do a lot of changes," McBride said. "But you've got kids out there that are just learning this thing, you don't just take them out and make wholesale changes. You can't do that. You'll really be in bad shape."

But McBride admitted that Nebraska's defense wasn't in the best shape Saturday. The Huskers gave up 618 total yards to Washington, including 283 yards passing. Nebraska has forsaken an average of 445 total yards in their first three games, including 266 yards through the air.

Coach Tom Osborne said, "It's going to be hard for us to play against a good passing team and sit in a zone because we're not getting enough pressure (on the quarterback). If you sit in a zone and you have four seconds to throw the ball, there's going to be some place to throw it."

Osborne said the Blackshirts might blitz more to prod opposing offenses.

"We may have to gamble a little bit more to get some pressure," Osborne said.

But Nebraska won't overbet, he said.

"We blitzed against Colorado State four times and gave up two touchdowns," he said. "If you blitz you better get there. (But) I do think that helps."

He said the Huskers will rely on more man-to-man coverage in the backfield from Curtis Cotton, Kenny Wilhite and Tyrone Legette.

Beyond that, McBride isn't committing.

"That comes with just saying we're going to change overnight and teach

all our kids new things," he said. "I don't think there is anyone here that could comprehend what they have to learn. You don't change in the middle of the stream and put a new defensive scheme in."

Nebraska's younger players haven't dived under the present schemes, he said.

"Mentally it's been real good," McBride said. "We knew we were going to have to fight through (the) early season dilemma of having kids just coming out."

"There's a lot of kids like Kevin Ramaekers, that have been here three years and have never played a down."

Coming into the season, middle guard Pat Engelbert had three times as many total tackles as the four defensive tackles on each side of him put together.

"We just have to fight through those things as coaches," McBride said, "and understand that they're kids. Some of 'em handle it better than others so we just have to get ready to play the next week and forget about what happened last week."

NOTES—

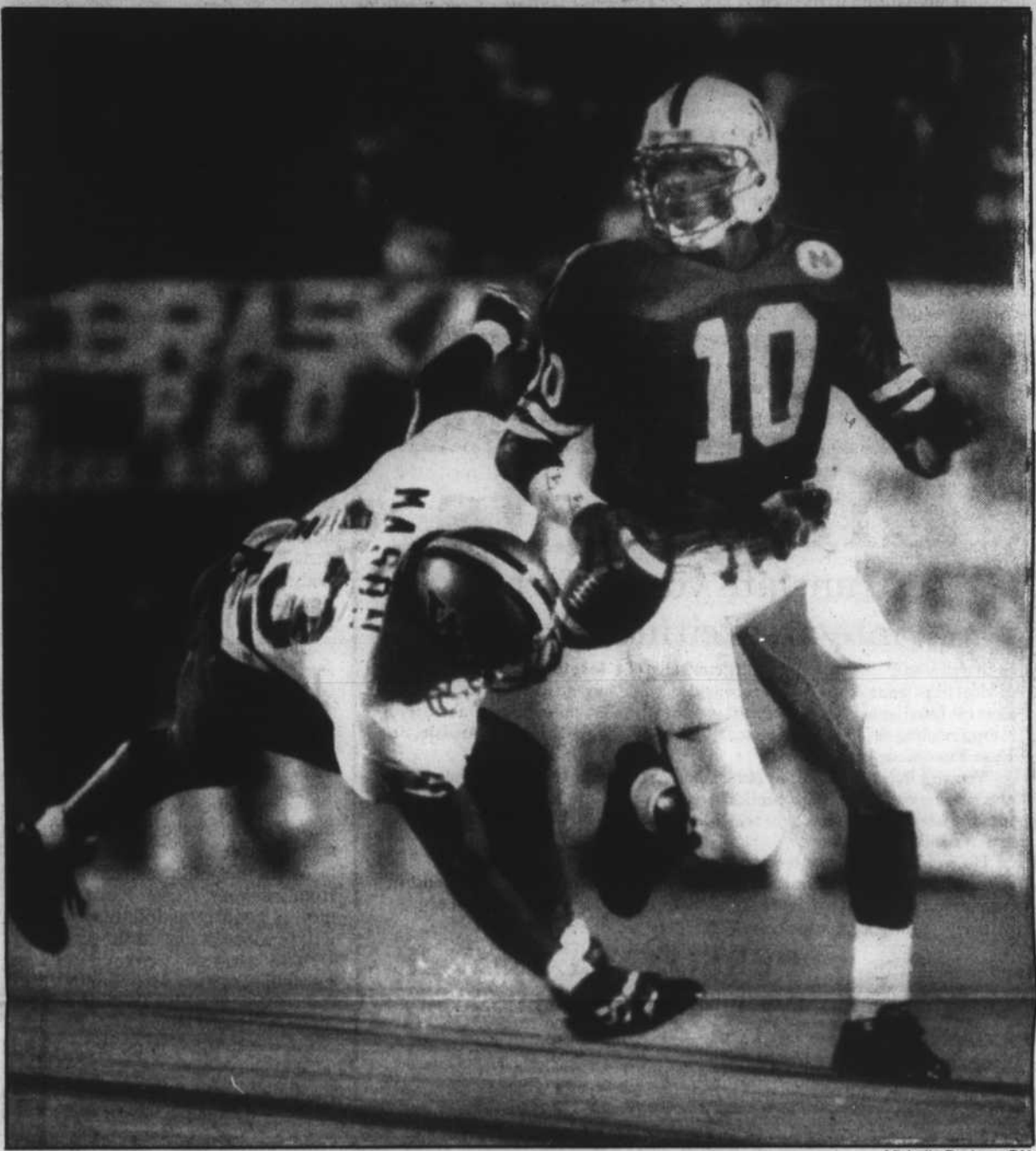
●Outside Linebacker Trev Alberts will probably sit out this week after spraining his ankle Tuesday, Osborne said.

●I-back Scott Baldwin, who sprained an ankle against Utah State, will miss this week, Osborne said. But tight end William Washington may return after pulling his hamstring against Colorado State.

●Osborne said he would like to change one play against Washington. With 10:35 left in the game, quarterback Keithen McCant was blind-sided and fumbled on Washington's 33. Washington scored nine plays later to go up 29-21.

On the play, "Nate Turner broke up the middle of the field, 10 yards behind everybody," Osborne said.

"So that was almost a 14 point play. Had we had a little bit more time, we get the touchdown. As it was, they got the touchdown."



Nebraska quarterback Keithen McCant eludes Washington defensive end Andy Mason during Saturday's 36-21 loss to the Huskies.

Michelle Paulman/DN

Football dreams live on with transitive property

Don't worry about it. Nebraska can still win a national championship.

The Huskers' 36-21 loss to Washington on Saturday night doesn't eliminate Nebraska from the hunt.

How soon we forget.

Remember 1981?

Nebraska lost to Iowa 10-7 in the

2 Georgia in the Sugar Bowl.

How sweet that was.

Nebraska, through some not-so-bizarre situations, had a chance for that year's national championship. But go figure, they lost 22-15 when a late fourth-quarter drive stalled.

Ten years later, the situation looks much simpler.

Follow me through this year's journey.

Next week, Nebraska beats Arizona State 31-21, right there in the Fiesta Bowl (whoops, I guess it won't be Jan. 1).

Normally a 16th-ranked team's victory over a 24th-ranked team wouldn't be all that monumental.

But Arizona State beat Southern Cal last week. And the Trojans beat Penn State the week before. Therefore, by midnight Saturday, Nebraska will have beaten Penn State because the Huskers beat Arizona State, which beat Southern Cal, which beat Penn State.

Some sweet vengeance for that 1981 loss to the Lions, eh?

But wait, there's more.

Like 10 years ago, Nebraska's Oct. 26 snarl with another pack of Tigers (Missouri's) seems to have added significance.

Missouri beat Illinois two weeks ago. Illinois will most likely upset Michigan, which will beat Florida State this week.

Therefore, by midnight Oct. 27, Nebraska will have defeated Florida State, since Missouri beat Illinois, which will beat Michigan, which will



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season opener and dropped from the seventh spot in the ratings to 17th.

After beating Florida State, Nebraska lost to Penn State 30-24 in a hard fought Memorial Stadium battle. Following that game, the Huskers plummeted out of the Top 20 for two weeks.

But the Huskers rattled off eight straight wins and returned to challenge Clemson for the championship.

Ah, how soon fickle fans forget.

Remember that situation?

Coach Bobby Ford's Clemson Tigers entered the game rated No. 1 and, by most accounts, favored over the fourth-ranked Huskers.

But a Husker national championship depended on a couple other upsets.

First, third-ranked Alabama would have had to be toppled by Texas. The 'Horns hooked 'em, 14-12.

That night, while Nebraska battled Clemson, Pittsburgh eliminated No.

See **COOPER** on 8



Robin Trimarchi/DN

Caught in the middle

Adam Beckman, a senior psychology major, cuts upfield Saturday between a Lincoln City team defender and UNL men's rugby club teammate Eric Schneider, a sophomore chemical engineering major. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln club lost to Lincoln City 30-17 in the A match.