

NU deserves recognition, Piatkowski says

Big Eight Basketball Media Poll

Big Eight writers and broadcasters conducted a preseason basketball poll, ranking the league's eight teams. The results of the poll:

1. Kansas
2. Oklahoma
3. Iowa State
4. Missouri
5. Nebraska
6. Oklahoma State
7. Kansas State
8. Colorado



Scott Maurer/DN

By Jeff Singer
Senior Reporter

It's taken a few years, but the Nebraska men's basketball team is finally receiving recognition as one of the top teams in the country.

But don't ask the Big Eight's news media to agree.

The Cornhuskers have four starters returning from last year's team that finished 19-10 and earned a trip to the NCAA championship tournament.

Nebraska also has a recruiting class that has received recognition as being among the nation's best as well as being one of the top classes in school history.

But all of this didn't seem to impress a select group of conference media. Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa State and Missouri were all chosen to finish above the Huskers.

"In a way it's a slap in the face to us," said Nebraska forward Eric Piatkowski, one of 25 finalists for the John Wooden award, given annually to the nation's best collegiate basketball player.

"We think we're better than a fifth-place team," Piatkowski said. "They've overlooked us in the past."

In addition to Piatkowski, center Derrick Chandler, forward Bruce Chubick and guard Jamar Johnson make up the four starters that return

from last year's team that made school history by playing in the NCAA Tournament in consecutive years for the first time ever.

Nebraska assistant coach Gary Barga said polls that underestimate the Huskers could be used for inspirational purposes.

"If it's less than where we might think we'll finish, then we can use it as a motivational tool," Barga said.

Publications such as Sport Magazine have been more impressed with the Huskers than the Big Eight media.

Sport listed Nebraska at No. 11 among its "Sweet 16" picks, and

Piatkowski said the Huskers deserved the national recognition.

"I think we're the type of basketball team to be in the Sweet 16," Piatkowski said. "People like Sport Magazine have looked into it and see what we've got coming in."

Barga said Sport's high rating was a credit to Nebraska's annual improvement.

"It's definitely a compliment that people are recognizing that we're recruiting good players and building a good program," Barga said.

Frazier wins starting spot against Buffs

By Nick Hytrek
Senior Reporter

Freshman quarterback Tommie Frazier will start Saturday's Nebraska-Colorado game, Cornhusker coach Tom Osborne said Monday.

"We will start Frazier this week," Osborne said. "We had a chance to talk with the quarterbacks and go over their grades."

Senior Mike Grant, who played one series in the Missouri game, will back up Frazier, Osborne said.

"Grant had three or four plays and did well and is a guy we have to count on to be ready to play," Osborne said.

Frazier made his first career start last Saturday against Missouri, and led a fourth-quarter drive to secure a 34-24 Nebraska victory.

Nebraska quarterbacks coach Turner Gill, who as a sophomore made his first start during the Big Eight season, gave Frazier some words of encouragement when it was decided that Frazier would start against Missouri.

"I just told him to relax and play, because he has the talent and he has the ability, and try not to overthink on some things," Gill said.

Frazier said Gill's advice helped.

"He just told me to go out there and play within myself and don't try to do too much because we have too much talent on this team right now for me to go out and do too much," Frazier said.

For Missouri fans, Frazier did do too much.

The first true freshman to start at quarterback for Coach Tom Osborne, Frazier responded by completing 9 of 20 passes for 154 yards, rushing for 77 and scoring three touchdowns. The last of those scores, a 5-yard run with 2:09 left in the game, clinched the win.

To make things easier for Frazier, the coaches kept the game plan simple, Gill said.

"We tried to call some plays where he wouldn't have to audible a whole lot, but he didn't have to audible a whole lot," Gill said. "He did some good jobs in those type of things."

After the game, Gill was left with a favorable impression of Frazier's ability.

"As you saw, he has great athleticism," Gill said. "He showed tremendous poise out there. I think he's going to be a very good quarterback."

And hopefully, Frazier said, Saturday was just the beginning of a successful career as a Husker.



Shaun Sartin/DN

Nebraska I-back Calvin Jones runs in last Saturday's Cornhusker win over Missouri. Jones is the 16th-leading rusher in the country, averaging 108 yards per game.

Injuries harm Buffalo offensive

By Jeff Griesch
Staff Reporter

Despite Colorado's 54-7 pummeling of Kansas State Saturday, Buffalo football coach Bill McCartney said he was concerned about his team's progress as they approached Saturday's showdown in Lincoln against Nebraska.

"It is true that we are playing better, but I don't know if we are playing as good as we have to play to beat Nebraska," McCartney said during the Big Eight coaches' teleconference on Monday.

McCartney's main concern is with the Buffalo's execution on offense. Key Colo-

rado players have suffered injuries during the season, including three starters on the offensive line.

"We are not where we want to be with the things we want to be doing offensively and that showed up against Oklahoma," McCartney said. "We have lost three of our top guards and we are starting a freshman center, so we are just not asserting ourselves up front like we need to."

Buffalo starting quarterback Kordell Stewart continues to be slowed by ankle and wrist injuries.

Nebraska I-back Calvin Jones and the rest of the Huskers realize that an ailing Buffalo team will still give the Huskers all

they can handle.

"They are going to come out and give Nebraska everything they have," Jones said. "The next two weeks are going to be crucial for us, and we are going to have to focus harder than we have ever done before."

It was also announced Monday that the Huskers' Nov. 7 game against 18th-ranked Kansas will be televised nationally by ESPN starting at 6:30 p.m.

Kansas coach Glen Mason said he was optimistic about his team's chances against the Huskers with the later starting time.

"We haven't been very successful playing Nebraska in the light of day, so we will try something different," Mason said.

Finicky fans may forget Frazier's flawless performance

The biggest mistake Tommie Frazier made Saturday against Missouri is that he didn't make a mistake.

To the casual observer, Tommie Frazier's performance against Missouri was flawless, perfect.

The freshman quarterback threw for 157 yards, ran for 77 and scored three touchdowns—the last of which sealed Nebraska's 34-24 win.

He threw no interceptions. He fumbled only one snap. He was in control from start to finish.

Too bad, Tommie.

You see, the best thing for Frazier would have been to throw an interception or two. He could have fumbled. He could have done something, anything to make him appear human.

But he didn't. There were no Cornhusker turnovers.

Game films probably will show that Frazier made a few minor mistakes. But those are mistakes only a coach can recognize. Things like audibling into or out of the wrong play.

But fans don't notice those types of things. To them, Frazier was perfect. He made some big plays and stayed calm under pressure.

But because Missouri was his first start, Frazier will always be remembered for that performance.

Should Frazier happen to throw an interception on the potential winning drive in the fourth quarter against Colorado this week, the same Husker fans who demanded that Frazier should be starting will be screaming for Mike Grant to replace him.

It won't matter if Frazier throws



Nick Hytrek

for 250 yards, runs for another 100 and scores five touchdowns. It won't matter if that's the only interception he throws the whole game. It won't matter if Frazier has Nebraska in a position to win the game, and Colorado wins anyway.

But that's the way Nebraska fans are.

Remember Steve Taylor? He had the same misfortune of playing perfectly in his first start.

Against Florida State in 1986, Taylor, then a sophomore, led the Huskers to a 34-17 win. Taylor ripped the Seminole defense by completing 10 of 16 passes for 130 yards and two touchdowns. He also ran for 139 and scored two more touchdowns.

After that one game, Husker fans had Taylor penciled in for the Heisman Trophy and All-American honors.

But none of that ever happened. Sure, Taylor was a good, maybe great, quarterback. A look in the Husker record book will attest to that. But fans expected that kind of performance every game. And when they didn't get it, Taylor heard the boos.

Maybe it's too soon to say what will happen in Frazier's case. He's

been named the starter for the Colorado game. Even if it's the last game he starts this season, it's probably not too far-fetched to say Frazier will be Nebraska's starting quarterback in future seasons. But when he takes the field, no matter who the Huskers are playing, everyone will remember a sunny October day in Columbia, Mo., when Frazier led the Huskers to victory.

But after that first interception in a crucial situation, Frazier won't be a hero anymore. He will hear the fans calling for Grant, Tony Veland, Ben Rutz or whoever is backing him up.

Welcome to Nebraska, Tommie.

Hytrek is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior sports reporter.