



Nebraska wingback Abdul Muhammad stretches to catch a pass during the second half of the Cornhuskers 50-27 victory over Texas Tech.

Al Schaben/DN

Hometown favorite Receiver takes aim to make game special

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

For junior wingback Abdul Muhammad, Nebraska's matchup Saturday with UCLA in the Rose Bowl is more than just a chance to showcase his talents in front of a national television audience.

It's a chance for Muhammad to play in front of numerous friends and family members.

Muhammad, who grew up in gang-infested Compton, Calif., near Los Angeles, will be playing his first football game in the Los Angeles area since high school.

And it will be the first time Muhammad has returned to his hometown since this summer — when he was shot in the back during

a drive-by shooting in July.

Muhammad and a few friends were hanging out when gang members fired at them. Muhammad said he bent over before being struck by the bullet.

Had he been standing up, he said, doctors told him the bullet would have hit him in the chest. Although the bullet remains lodged in his buttock, it does not cause any pain, Muhammad said, and has not hampered him on the gridiron.

But it has altered his perspective. "It has changed me some," Muhammad said. "Being that I could have died, it changed my life. I'm thinking about positive things now."

"Before I was thinking about what if I get shot and this and that.

And now that I've been shot, I'm just staying focused and thinking about positive things."

The negative things were often tough to escape in Compton, Muhammad said.

"Sometimes in high school it was hard to stay focused, because of the things that went on around you in the neighborhood," he said. "My school was 15 minutes outside of where I stayed. I went to school in the nice neighborhood. I'd be focused on football and class and getting the job done."

"When I came home, the scenario changed," he said. "You get around the gangs. It was hard to stay focused on things."

See MUHAMMAD on 8

Alberts leads defense, gets league honor

By Jeff Griesch
Senior Reporter

Trev Alberts is not a guy who likes to let plays come to him — he likes to make things happen.

The 6-foot-4, 240-pound senior outside linebacker from Cedar Falls, Iowa, made things happen in Nebraska's 50-27 over Texas Tech on Saturday.

Alberts led the Cornhuskers with 11 tackles, including three sacks of Red Raiders' quarterback Robert Hall.

For his performance Saturday, Alberts was named the Big Eight Conference Defensive Player-of-the-Week Monday.

"I took it upon myself that I had to make something happen," Alberts said.

With Nebraska clinging to a 23-21 lead in the third quarter, Alberts' third sack of the day forced Hall to fumble deep in Texas Tech territory. Nebraska recovered and eventually scored the deciding touchdown.

"No one even thought for a minute that we were going to lose that game," Alberts said. "Everybody was really working hard to get us the win."

However, Alberts said, the closeness of Saturday's game may benefit the Huskers when they face teams like UCLA, Nebraska's next opponent.

"I think we're a better team this week than we were last week, and I think we'll keep getting better from week to week," Alberts said.

"We may look back in three or four weeks and say this was a really good game for us because it was a tough game."

After the game, the Butkus Award candidate was more interested in looking ahead to the Huskers' upcoming game with UCLA than in talking about his performance against the Red Raiders.

"Next week's game is going to be tough because we are going to be on the road against a team with great tradition, and we know they have great athletes," Alberts said.

Alberts said that if the Huskers were going to beat the Bruins, the Nebraska defense needed to cut down on mental errors.

"We made some mistakes

See ALBERTS on 8

Osborne expects tough challenge from UCLA

By Mitch Sherman
Staff Reporter

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne told the Extra Point Club Monday to expect a difficult game Saturday at the Rose Bowl against UCLA.

The Bruins, who did not play last week, lost to No. 21 ranked California, 27-25, in their opener, despite dominating the second half.

"The second half was all UCLA," Osborne said. "UCLA was driving and was down at the 20-25 yard line, within field goal range, with about 20 seconds left. They decided to try one more pass to get a little closer, but they had it picked off."

Osborne said UCLA provides a contrast to Texas Tech. The Huskers beat Texas Tech 50-27 Saturday.

"Tech had most of their experience returning on offense," he said. "UCLA has most of their experience returning on defense. They felt their defense would be a very, very strong part of their football team. After that first game, they'll look at this as kind of a make or break situation."

Injuries continue to scramble Nebraska's quarterback situation, Osborne said.

"Frazier was very fortunate last week to be able to do what he did,"

Osborne said. "I think he ended up playing well — very well under the circumstances. We had thought he would play 30-35 snaps. He ended up playing 85."

Osborne said Brook Berringer continues to be bothered by a chronic elbow problem, which began when he was a high school baseball pitcher.

Tony Veland suffered tendon damage in his knee Saturday and will be out for eight to 10 months, Osborne said. He underwent surgery Sunday.

Redshirt freshman quarterback Ben Rutz, who is recovering from surgery to repair a torn ligament in his knee, will probably make the trip to UCLA, Osborne said.

Rutz will only be used in case of an emergency.

Osborne touched briefly on two other topics.

"As far as I'm concerned, you can take those (Top 25) rankings and put them somewhere where it doesn't make much difference. It's amazing how much public perception focuses on whether you are ranked or not and where you are ranked. I think by the end of the season, when you play eight, nine, 10 games, those rankings start to reflect something."

He further addressed the NCAA's

See EXTRA POINT on 8

Texas A&M, SWC don't measure up to images, Big 8

This weekend proved one thing to football fans in the Lone Star state.

Sorry, but your beloved teams in the Southwest Conference stink.

The Southwest Conference may want to begin scheduling its non-conference opponents from a conference other than the Big Eight. Perhaps the Big Sky Conference or even an intramural flag football league.

After the first weekend of college football, when Oklahoma ripped Texas Christian 35-3 and Colorado embarrassed Texas 36-14 on national television, Saturday's games were a major blow to the Southwest conference, the country's worst.

The Big Eight, known for being a mediocre conference, destroyed the Southwest Conference and its so-called powerhouses.

Let's start with Texas A&M, the most overrated team in the history of college football. The only team more overrated than the 1993 Aggies was the 1992 Aggies.

A&M was ranked fifth in the nation until they met up with Oklahoma, the Big Eight's fourth-place team in 1992.

Oklahoma's 44-14 rout Saturday finally gave the Southwest Conference fans a sign that has been visible for the rest of the country: There isn't a team in the conference worthy of being a Top 20 team.

Next comes Baylor, another top-notch Southwest school, which took on Colorado.

A reporter in the Nebraska press box Saturday covering Texas Tech commented that he "guaranteed a Baylor win over Colorado."



Derek Samson

Well, he was almost right. Only another 25 points — Colorado rolled to a 45-21 win — and the Southwest Conference reporter/fan could have boasted "I told you so."

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said Texas Tech had a legitimate chance to win the Southwest Conference and had a shot at landing a spot in the Top 20 if things fell into place.

The Top 20 doesn't look possible considering Nebraska, which was rated ninth in the AP poll, played a

below-average game and still won by 23.

Texas Tech does look to have a shot at winning the conference, after finishing tied for second last year despite having a losing record overall.

All the Red Raiders need to do is knock off Texas A&M, which Doane College in Crete could probably do. If Texas Tech does beat A&M, then both teams could represent the Southwest Conference in the "others receiving votes" section of the Top 25, right along such powers as Akron and Memphis State.

Oklahoma State coach Pat Jones said he would like to see the Big Eight and Southwest conferences combine to form the Big Southwest.

Unless Jones wants to make the Big Eight look dominant over an

overrated conference, the Big Eight should look elsewhere.

Why not join with a more competitive conference — like the Western Athletic Conference — and form the Big WAC?

It will be interesting to see if the Southwest can come out with a win over the Big Eight this season.

As of now, it stands Big Eight 5, Southwest Conference 0. And in total points the Big Eight edged the Southwest 210 to 79.

Not bad, Southwest Conference, considering the teams that lost were at the top of your conference.

Samson is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan sports reporter and columnist.