

SPORTS

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Osborne explains why Pacific is on schedule

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Reporter

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne didn't expect to spend 30 minutes on Tuesday afternoon defending the football program's schedule-making decisions.

But at his weekly press conference, Osborne fielded numerous questions about the Cornhuskers' upcoming opponent, the University of Pacific, from Stockton, Calif.

Specifically, he was asked to explain why the Huskers are playing the Tigers, a team from the Big West Conference that finished 3-8 last year.

Pacific, 2-1 after a 27-7 victory over Southwest Texas State on Saturday, is filling in for Utah State on the Huskers' schedule, Osborne said.

After Chuck Shelton was fired as head coach of Utah State after the 1991 season, the Aggies dropped Nebraska from their schedule for this

year. The best replacement the Huskers could find in the short period of time was Pacific, which, ironically, is coached by Shelton.

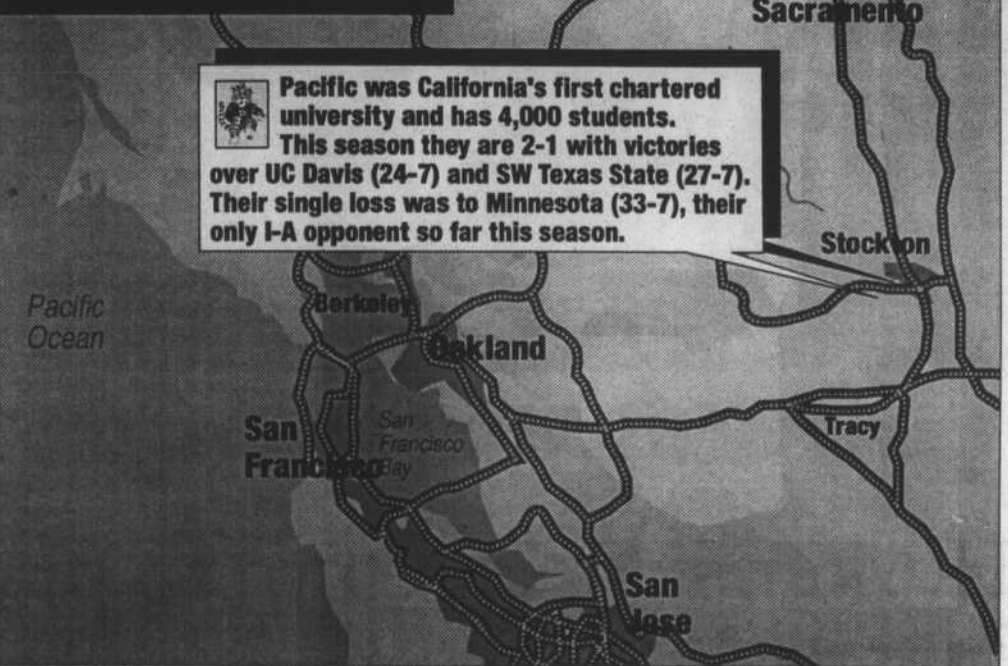
"I have always had a great deal of respect for Chuck Shelton," Osborne said. "We played him when he was at Utah State, and I thought he got the most out of his players. He has always had his team well-organized and well-prepared."

Shelton, who was 26-39-1 from 1986 to 1991 at Utah State, played the Huskers three times during his tenure. Nebraska won the three games by an average score of 59-17.

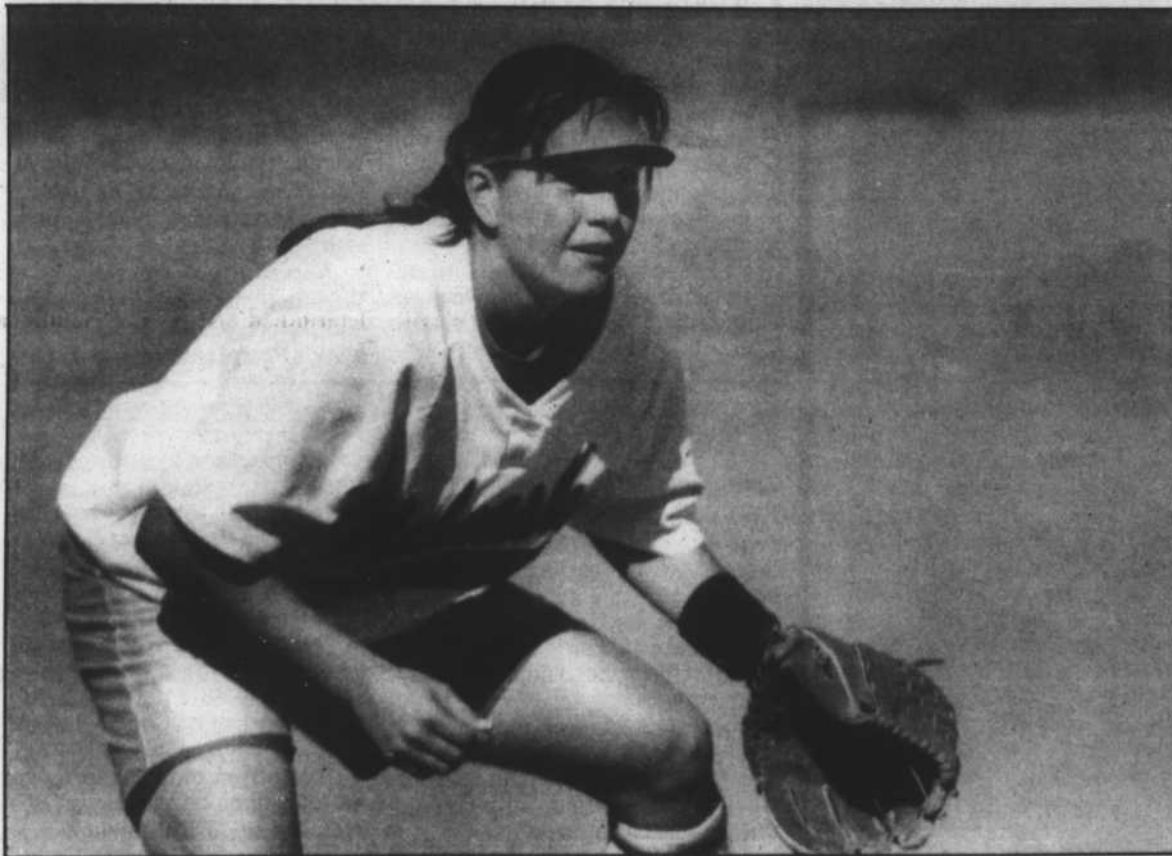
"The measure of a coach is not really his record," Osborne said. "It's more a matter of what he did with the situation. Chuck has had difficult situations. He has done a great job. I think. He will get as much out of these guys as he can. We won't be able to just line up and find some obvious weaknesses."

See PACIFIC on 8

Where Is Pacific?



Role reversal enhances softball player's perspective



Damon Lee/DN

Nebraska softball player Tobin Echo-Hawk waits for action at third base on Sunday during the Husker Fall Classic championship game against Northern Iowa. During the summer, Echo-Hawk experienced another side of the game when she coached a team in Colorado.

By Trevor Parks
Staff Reporter

This summer Nebraska softball player Tobin Echo-Hawk got to experience what it was like to give orders.

The Cornhuskers' third baseman, Echo-Hawk returned to her home state of Colorado to help coach a team on which she used to play.

Echo-Hawk was an assistant coach for the BV Comets 18-and-under girls' softball team, a team on which she had played for seven years.

On the field last season, Echo-Hawk was an All-Big Eight selection and set a Big Eight record for best batting average in a season — .439.

But coaching gave Echo-Hawk a different perspective of the game. "It makes you love the game more," she said. "You just have to watch and can't do anything ... you learn how important the fundamentals are."

Echo-Hawk said the team traveled to Tennessee, Georgia, Washington, Texas and California and finished seventh in the American Softball Association.

"We had a pretty good team," Echo-Hawk said.

On the team, the junior from

Louisville, Colo., got a chance to coach one of her Husker teammates, freshman catcher and Fort Collins, Colo., native Jenny Smith.

Echo-Hawk said it was a challenge keeping her feelings for Smith in check.

"It was hard to separate coach and friend," Echo-Hawk said. "But it worked out pretty good."

Husker coach Rhonda Revelle said all Husker players who coached during the summer gained a great advantage on the softball diamond.

"That makes them better ball players," Revelle said.

Echo-Hawk said she reflected her former coach, Jerry Hall, whom she has known since her playing days with the Comets.

"At first I was a little tentative," Echo-Hawk said. "After I got into the swing of things, I was more like Jerry."

Echo-Hawk said she really enjoyed her first coaching experience — so much so that she said she was looking forward to continuing her coaching career once her playing days at Nebraska were over.

"That is definitely something I want to do after I graduate," Echo-Hawk said. "Either college or high school, it really doesn't matter."

Huskers should ram Buffaloes on championship charge

It's still almost six weeks away, but sooner or later, someone is going to start talking about it. So why not start now?

Mark the date Oct. 29 on your calendar today. On that Saturday in Lincoln, two trains are going to collide, and in the process, the Big Eight champion will be crowned.

Just a word of caution here. Read on at your own risk. This column addresses future events, and if you subscribe to the Nebraska football coaches' theory of never overlooking an opponent (or five opponents), your perception of the season could be damaged. Who knows? Maybe Pacific will beat Nebraska on Saturday.

OK, back to business. If you witnessed Colorado's brutal slaying of Big 10 and Rose Bowl champion Wisconsin on Saturday, you saw a great, maybe remarkable, performance by Buffalo signal-caller Kordell Stewart — not to mention a dominant show by the rest of the Buffaloes.

Stewart, in his last year at Colorado, looks like he's on a mission.

A mission with a destination point in Lincoln during late October. You see, Stewart and his teammates have revenge in mind.

But Nebraska coach Tom Osborne isn't counting on seeing the Buffalo team of the past, based on Colorado's performance of the season, the Big Eight champion will be crowned.

"Colorado was pretty well in control throughout the first half," he said. "I was impressed with Colorado's performance both offensively and defensively."

Osborne went on to call the Buffs a legitimate contender for the national title.

However, since the Buffs began emphasizing the passing game two years ago, Colorado quarterbacks Stewart and Koy Detmer have been mere pretenders rather than contenders.

The quarterback duo completed 20 of 62 passes against Nebraska. They've been intercepted six times, they've been sacked nine times, and most importantly, they've been outscored 73-24.

In those same two games, Nebraska



Mitch Sherman

quarterback Tommie Frazier has thrown for 222 yards and three touchdowns while rushing for 155 yards. The important thing is that Frazier is 2-0.

Now you're thinking, what does any of that have to do with this year?

At first glance, not a whole lot, but there are a couple of major points to address.

In the last two seasons, it didn't matter who Colorado beat or how badly they did it. When it came time to play their "designated rival," the Buffs didn't quite have what it took to stack up with the Huskers.

Literally, they didn't stack up, which brings me to reason No. 1 why Colorado still may not have what it takes to play with Nebraska.

The Buffaloes' play in the trenches

has been below average compared to the play of the Huskers in the last couple of meetings. Colorado's highly touted linemen have been blown off the ball at times. They have been vulnerable to the sack, and the Buffs have run for less than 200 yards total in their last two games against Nebraska.

Against Wisconsin, Colorado dominated the line of scrimmage, even while playing without defensive tackle Shannon Clavelle, who had 11 tackles against Nebraska last year in Boulder. Whether Colorado can stack up in the trenches will go a long way toward deciding whether the Buffs can end their losing ways.

Reason No. 2 why Colorado — despite its hot start — still isn't in the Huskers' league: poise at the quarterback spot.

Stewart has felt the heat of the Nebraska pass rush, and he has bailed out. On the other side of the line, Frazier has calmly dismantled the Buffs.

If this season has been an accurate indication, Stewart could be a different type of player as a senior. He has

been so impressive early that he should be a leading candidate for the Heisman.

That's right. Stewart for Heisman. Not Frazier, because Heisman voters look at statistics rather than a player's value to his team. Frazier, who has a 19-1 regular season record, has separated himself from Stewart by establishing himself as a true winner.

Time and time again, Frazier has risen from the ground to lead Nebraska to victory.

Stewart, on the other hand, hasn't shown such poise. While driving for the winning touchdown last year against Nebraska with his team down by four, he threw an interception. Until Kordell can complete that pass, Colorado won't beat Nebraska — especially playing in Memorial Stadium, where the Huskers should have a 21-game winning streak on Oct. 29.

In 5 1/2 weeks, we will find out whether Stewart can take the heat.

Until then ... bring on Pacific.

Sherman is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and columnist.