

# SPORTS

Tuesday, November 1, 1994

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Nebraska's Terry Connealy celebrates after Dwayne Harris' sack of Colorado's Kordell Stewart. The Nebraska defense has allowed just 23 points in four Big Eight games.

Michelle Paulman/DN

## NU's Tenopir asks voters to be 'honest'

By Mitch Sherman  
Senior Reporter

Nebraska offensive line coach Milt Tenopir said Monday that justice was served this weekend when the Cornhuskers returned to the top of the rankings in the Associated Press poll.

Nebraska narrowly moved ahead of Penn State — which defeated Ohio State 63-14 Saturday at University Park, Penn. — in the Associated Press poll after the Huskers' 24-7 win over Colorado at Memorial Stadium. The Nittany Lions remained two points ahead of Nebraska in the USA Today/CNN coaches' poll.

"If people are honest," Tenopir told the Extra Point Club on Monday, "you shouldn't lose ground if you continue to win."

Tenopir criticized voters who dropped Nebraska in the polls after an idle week on Sept. 4 and after a road win over No. 16 Kansas State on Oct. 15.

"If everybody is honest and fair, this football team has done more than any other football team in the country for this reason: you lose two quarterbacks and you end up getting your third quarterback hurt, and you still find a way to win."

"Now, I think that's overcoming tremendous odds. To hang together and continue winning says something for the integrity and resolve that the rest of your football team has."

A win against a ranked team often times can set the stage for a flat performance the next week, Tenopir said, but he didn't think Nebraska would lose any intensity against Kansas this week.

"You always guard a little bit coming off of an emotional game like we had Saturday."

He said the Huskers appeared to be a focused team.

"We certainly don't anticipate those guys going out there and falling on their faces," he said. "They seem like they have a dream, and we feel that dream is going to be fulfilled if they continue to prepare as they have for the rest of the year."

Tenopir praised Nebraska's offensive line, which is blocking for a Husker rushing attack that averages a nation-leading 369.2 per game.

He said centers Aaron Graham and Bill Humphrey did an excellent job containing Colorado nose tackle Kerry Hicks, an All-Big Eight selection last season and preseason All-American this year. Graham and Humphrey have been allowed to substitute at their discretion this year, without interference from the coaches.

"A year ago, (Hicks) was a factor," Tenopir said. "This year, he was on the ground 70 percent of the time. And I know he's sore today."

## CU victory hits a high with McBride

By Mitch Sherman  
Senior Reporter

If Charlie McBride had his way, every day would be like Saturday.

McBride, in his 13th year as defensive coordinator of the Nebraska football team, said the No. 1 Cornhuskers' 24-7 victory over Colorado was one of his most satisfying days as a coach.

The Colorado alumnus watched proudly as the high-powered Buffalo offense was shut down for the first time this season.

Although Nebraska had allowed only 16 points to its first three conference opponents, McBride said he didn't expect Colorado to follow suit.

"They were scary," McBride said of the

Buffalo attack, which had been averaging more than 40 points and 500 yards per game before Saturday. "They are still scary. We knew what we were in for."

"When you watch them on film, you want to shut it off. Every time I watch film, I'm going, 'Oh, my goodness.' It's pretty depressing, and then you have got to go out and play them."

Not everybody on the Nebraska sidelines saw the Buffs in the same light. Linebacker Troy Dumas, who led the Huskers with 11 tackles and played a key role in containing the Colorado option attack, didn't have any doubts about Nebraska's ability.

"I was thinking to myself last week when I was watching them against Kansas State that there was no way in the world that

Colorado, with a one-back offense, was going to come in here and run the ball up and down the field," Dumas said. "Our defense was just too quick for that."

McBride cited simplicity and organization as major reasons why the Nebraska defense had been able to rebound so well since surrendering 32 points to Wyoming on Oct. 1.

"We took some criticism, and we knew we were a better football team than that," McBride said. "We kind of panicked a little bit."

After free safety Mike Minter went down with a knee injury in the second half of Nebraska's 42-16 win over Texas Tech on

See DEFENSE on 8

## NU basketball will start again as underdog in Big 8

This past spring, the Nebraska men's basketball team stunned every coach, player and fan in the Big Eight by winning the conference's tournament championship.

It was Nebraska's first Big Eight basketball championship, but nobody around the conference seems to remember.

The Huskers were picked fourth in the Big Eight preseason poll, receiving no first-place votes and only two second-place votes.

Only Norm Stewart, whose Missouri Tigers won the regular-season conference crown with a 14-0 record last season, seemed to give any chance to Danny Nee and the Huskers in the 1994-95 season.

"Danny's ballclub won the tournament last year, so you can make a case for about anybody," Stewart said.

But even Stewart's comment could be translated into a quick, little slap in the face. That was kind of like saying, "By golly, if Nebraska can win a title, then any school that can

afford tops, baggy shorts and shoes can win the darn thing."

Kansas was the overwhelming choice to finish first, collecting 30 first-place votes, while Oklahoma State earned 11 first-place votes. Iowa State was picked third with seven votes for the top spot, and Missouri earned one vote for No. 1.

The Huskers may not finish first in a conference loaded with returning talent, but they will battle for the top spot.

Nebraska is good enough to finish at 10-4 or 9-5, but so is everybody else in the conference except Kansas State and Colorado.

Nebraska has some question marks after losing Eric Piatkowski, the best player in Husker history, and team leaders Bruce Chubick and Jamar Johnson.

But they also return a talented, maturing nucleus and a front court that could be Nee's best since he's been at Nebraska.

On paper, the Huskers should be at



Jeff Griesch

least as good as they were last season, and in meetings, in the locker room and on the court, Nebraska should be even better.

Although Piatkowski could dominate a game, his fiery temperament often appeared to clash with coaches and teammates.

And the "Polish Rifle's" shoot-first and pass-it-later attitude didn't exactly exemplify a team concept.

Tom Best also allowed some off-the-court problems to cloud his performance in practice and in games, creating unnecessary distractions.

Even Chubick, the consummate team leader, allowed a run in with police to bother him and his team-

mates.

Finally, Erick Strickland couldn't decide whether he wanted to play baseball, basketball or football, and his divided attention slowed his development as a basketball player.

Now, Strickland has made a commitment to his teammates and should emerge as a force and a leader.

Jaron Boone said this year's team appeared to be the most unified team he had been on at Nebraska.

"We have had a strong unity and focus during practice and drills so far, and I think if we can maintain that throughout the season, then we are only going to get better."

Boone is a year older and should be more comfortable playing both at the point and at shooting guard, while Terrance Badgett gives the Huskers a finisher on the break.

Melvin Brooks has added more muscle to complement his quick feet and soft hands, which may make him the Big Eight's most improved player.

The additions of 6-foot-11-inch

freshman Leif Nelson and 6-10 transfer Chris Sallee could allow the Huskers to redshirt 6-11 sophomore Mikki Moore.

Tom Wald, a transfer from Mankato State, will open some eyes around the conference with his all-out, full-speed every play aggressiveness, while freshmen Chester Surles, Chad Ideus and Andy Markowski give Nebraska added size, quickness and depth.

With more talent and more depth, Nebraska may be able to surpass the 87.3 points per game it scored last season.

The Huskers may be pushed aside right now, but they won't be pushovers when the season begins.

This year's Big Eight should be wide open, and Nebraska's wide-open offense may be a perfect fit for another title.

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