

SPORTS

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SPORTS OPINION



Tim Pearson

Pacific coach better prepare for nightmare

Pacific coach Chuck Shelton must be having nightmares.

Last season, the Nebraska offense was in high gear when Shelton's Tigers came to Lincoln. Cornhusker quarterback Tommie Frazier was in the game for nine plays before sitting down for the day.

To make a very long story short, the final score was 70-21.

Shelton said last year's Nebraska team was the best team he had ever coached against.

Now it's the same story all over again.

Just stay home and watch last year's game film.

The Huskers have won their first three games by a combined score of 191-59, averaging an astounding 63.5 points a game.

Watch out Pacific. With all the clamor about top teams running up the score to impress voters, Nebraska coach Tom Osborne better have his reserves in early on Saturday, or it could get really ugly.

And with Frazier at the helm, Shelton could be crying mercy after the Huskers' first drive of the game.

After last year's drubbing, Shelton already was looking ahead to this year and cringing about facing Frazier again.

"Having to face him next year may be why I retire," Shelton said after last year's game.

But Shelton is still here, and he'll be in Lincoln Saturday hoping to avoid what happened last year.

It will happen again, though. There really is no way that Pacific — a team that gave up 56 points to Fresno State last Saturday — can stop the Husker offense.

So now the focus shifts back to Osborne and Nebraska. Will there be more cries about Nebraska and other ranked teams, such as Big Eight foe Colorado, running it up?

"I think there are some cases where people are trying to pile up points to impress voters," Colorado coach Rick Neuheisel said. "But the bottom line is that coaches have to keep it reasonable.

"We have an obligation to let players who don't play have a chance. We have to be careful not to run it up, but when the players get the chance, they're going to do exactly what they've been practicing."

To put it plainly, Pacific is probably no better than the Huskers' third-team. Against third- and fourth-team players, Pacific played the Huskers to a tie in the second half last year.

When you have a program that is as good as a Nebraska or a Colorado, quality players are collected in mass quantity. The Huskers and Buffaloes have quality from top to bottom.

And that's enough to give Shelton nightmares for years to come.

Pearson is a senior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.

Hard hitter



Jon Waller/DN

Nebraska rover Octavious McFarlin hits Oklahoma State tailback David Thompson in the Huskers' 64-21 victory over the Cowboys on Aug. 31 in Stillwater, Okla.

NU defensive back still waiting for his shot

By Mike Kluck
Staff Reporter

Octavious McFarlin hasn't had the opportunity to deliver a hard hit at Nebraska yet, but he is looking forward to getting his first good shot.

McFarlin, a Cornhusker rover, said when he played football at Bastrop High School in Texas he had the opportunity to give one of his favorite bonecrushing hits.

An opponent came across the middle of the field, McFarlin said, and jumped for the football. McFarlin saw his opportunity. He hit the receiver solid, knocking him out cold.

"If I can get a good shot off and hit a guy real good," McFarlin said, "then he knows that he is playing against somebody who is going to come out there at him every play

and every snap."

McFarlin, a 5-foot-11, 180-pound sophomore, said he was waiting for the chance to hit a Husker opponent as hard as he could. Even though he hasn't, McFarlin is still pleased with his performance.

In Nebraska's win over Michigan State, McFarlin graded the best of any defensive back with a score of 92 out of a possible 100 points.

After every game, he said, Nebraska defensive coaches grade their players based on performance and techniques.

Nebraska's defensive backs don't talk about their scores, McFarlin said. Instead they let their actions speak for themselves.

"They just look at me like I got a 92, and I just smile," McFarlin said. "And I just look then to see what everybody else got."

As a true freshman last season, McFarlin played in eight games as a backup to Kareem Moss at rover after Mike Minter went down with a knee injury in the Huskers' second game of the year.

He was one of only two true freshmen — Grant Wistrom was the other — to play last season.

McFarlin said his experience in high school helped prepare him for college. At Bastrop, McFarlin started for three seasons as safety and had the chance to learn defensive coverage.

Learning to read defenses in high school, McFarlin said, helped him last year at Nebraska. He said his high school team ran some of the same defenses and coverages as Nebraska.

Against Arizona State, the Husker defense gave up 290 passing yards, but McFarlin said he wasn't worried. He said most of the Sun Devils' passing yards came from three big plays.

"If you take those three big plays away, it wouldn't be that bad," McFarlin said. "It's nothing that we can't correct."

Part of the problem against Arizona State, McFarlin said, was the Huskers' tendency to relax after jumping to a big lead. Nebraska led 28-0 before the Sun Devils scored on a 2-yard pass three plays after a completion of 66 yards.

But by that time McFarlin had left the game with a deep right thigh bruise. He is questionable for Saturday's game against Pacific.

Legal process too slow for Osborne

By Trevor Parks
Senior Reporter

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne's duties now include being a judge.

Over the past nine days, Osborne has had to make many decisions regarding Cornhusker football players who have been the subject of legal charges with their names slapped around in the press.

Because of the slowness of the legal process, Osborne said he had no choice but to make decisions regarding his team before the courts' verdicts.

"You folks don't take time, and I

can't take time because we play every week and I have to make judgments before it all plays out," Osborne said. "Sometimes my judgments have to be awfully quick because of the fact of publicity."

I-backs Lawrence Phillips, Damon Benning and James Sims have all been arrested since July. It was announced Tuesday that charges would not be filed against Benning.

Osborne said it was tough for him to find out everything that happened before making those quick judgments.

Time is all that Osborne wants. He said he would like a period of 24 to 48 hours to gather all of the information before a media explosion occurred.

"Then at least we could provide a little balance," Osborne said. "You have some guys get burned, and that's part of the deal ... I try to get the best information I can and then I go from

there."

Osborne said he had tried to be open about all the incidents. "We're not ever trying to have anybody fix anything or hide anything," Osborne said. "That's not what we're doing. We're just trying to make sure that it's dealt with, and that everybody's dealt with fairly."

But Osborne said athletes were more scrutinized than regular students.

"Most of the students on this campus, with a lot of these charges, nobody knows or nobody cares until it's all resolved," Osborne said. "You could say, 'Well, he was found guilty or he was found innocent.' But here we've got a little different case."

Looking into Huskers' criminal records has become somewhat of a pastime, Osborne said.

"Apparently there have been quite a few people interested in looking at

records of potentially former players," Osborne said. "It's kind of a sport I guess."

But with the way Nebraska has been portrayed and investigated lately, Osborne said neither he nor the athletic department had time to examine all criminal records.

"If your name is Joe Brown or James Sims, they may not pick it up real quick," Osborne said. "Once you go 80 yards against Michigan State, then the odds are better that it will be picked up."

NOTES:

• Defensive tackle Larry Townsend (knee), offensive guard Steve Ott (ankle), rover Octavious McFarlin (thigh bruise), and I-backs Damon Benning (hamstring) and Clinton Childs (knee strain) missed practice Tuesday.