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# Cornhuskers: scoring explosion no excuse for defensive lapses

By Derek Samson  
Senior Reporter

In a three-game nonconference stretch last season, ending with the Nebraska football team's 42-32 win over Wyoming, the Cornhusker defense gave up 1,168 yards—an average of 389 yards a game.

At the same time, they surrendered 74 points, an average 24 points a game.

But in its next seven games, Nebraska gave up a total of only 65 points, 9.2 a game.

This year, after an impressive defensive effort against conference foe Oklahoma State in the season-opener, the Blackshirts have given up 796 yards and 38 points in games against Michigan State and Arizona State.

Nebraska secondary coach George Darlington said the difference this year was the Husker offense.

"This (Arizona State game) kind of reminded me of the Wyoming game last year," Darlington said. "Wyoming beat us on some big plays. The only difference was our offense was so remarkable in this game. We know better what our people can and cannot do."

"You try to learn what you can and cannot do and try to project it against Florida State, project it against Kansas State, project it against Colorado—teams that throw very well."

Mike Minter, a junior defensive back, said the recent slide was similar

to last year's, but not identical.

"Last year, I had just got hurt, and we had some new players in there adjusting to the system," Minter said. "We probably are a little bit better than we were last year at this time. But we still have a long way to go."

Minter, who missed almost the entire season after tearing his anterior cruciate ligament in the second game of the season against Texas Tech, said a big lead on the scoreboard wasn't an excuse to give up big plays.

"That's real frustrating because we should never give up passes like we did," he said. "The coaches aren't too happy about that. We're up 35-0, but that doesn't mean we can stop playing. But we'll come around."

Nebraska has given up 580 yards passing and four touchdown passes in the last two games, including three touchdown passes by Sun Devils quarterback Jake Plummer.

Jared Tomich, a junior outside linebacker, said it was important to get an effective pass rush on the quarterback. He said Plummer was elusive in the backfield.

"He was a quick thrower, and he was hard to get to," Tomich said. "He stepped up in the pocket a little more and didn't scramble out much so the linebackers could have a shot at him. We needed to get a better rush, but it was tough with him."

In three games, the Huskers have sacked the opposing quarterback eight times. A year ago, Nebraska totalled 47.5 sacks in 13 games, an average of 3.7 sacks an outing.

Minter blamed individual letdowns for Plummer's big passing performance.

"It's all up to the individual," he said. "Some individuals still play, but some get lackadaisical when you're that far ahead. The first three series, we shut them down because everyone was pumped up. We just have to learn to play through the times when we're not so fired up."

Tomich, who said the Huskers' defensive effort on Saturday was decent, agreed with Minter.

"Here and there, we'd get lazy, but then we'd pick it up again," he said. "We weren't in it mentally sometimes. We have to keep it so our emotions are always up."

Even though giving up big pass plays with a 28-point lead isn't the worst time possible, Darlington said, it still isn't acceptable.

"There are times you have to be perfect, and if you're not perfect, you will pay for it," Darlington said. "When you give up four big passes, you can't be excited. We wanted to match our big-play offense with a big-play defense."



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