

# SPORTS

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## SPORTS OPINION



### Trevor Parks

## Big 12 retains classic rivalry for two years

Steve Hatchell and the people involved with the Big 12 Conference finally did something right. Hatchell, the Big 12 commissioner, finalized a schedule that keeps the Nebraska-Oklahoma game alive.

At least for two more years anyway. Then the game takes a two-year hiatus, but should return.

For a time, the classic rivalry looked like it could end when talk of conference alignment placed Nebraska in the north division and Oklahoma in the south.

At the Big Eight Media Kickoff in late July at Kansas City, Mo., Hatchell called the game a casualty of the situation, and it looked as if there was nothing he could do.

But he must have done something because the battle of the Big Reds still will exist.

Two more years to reflect on unbelievable plays made by Keith Jackson, Billy Sims and Buster Rhymes. Two more years to remember the trash talking of Brian Bosworth. And two more years to remember the glory days of Sooner Magic.

After a three-game non-conference schedule, the Cornhuskers' first official Big 12 game will be at Kansas State on Oct. 5, 1996. Baylor, the first former SWC opponent Nebraska will face, follows the next week.

The first real road trip of the new Big 12, at Texas Tech, should be a more entertaining game than the 42-16 Nebraska win there last year.

Fans could make what is the worst road trip in college football to Lubbock, Texas, to see one of the best games in college football, as Zebby Lethridge should lead the Red Raiders at quarterback.

After a game with Kansas, the Oklahoma Sooners mark the schedule. Did I mention this game was Nov. 2, which means it won't be the last game of the season?

The game will lose some tradition in one sense because it won't conclude the season. After playing Missouri and Iowa State, Nebraska's final game will be against Colorado.

And former coach Bill McCartney finally will get his wish a year after leaving Colorado. The Nebraska-Colorado game will end the season in Lincoln, and it will probably decide the northern division title.

Then the controversy starts, depending on if there is a Big 12 playoff. I wouldn't mind one because it would give Nebraska and Oklahoma a chance to play each other twice in the same season.

Then the rivalry really would explode. No matter what, there is a chance the Huskers could play one of three teams from the south twice in a season if they both make it to the championship game.

I'm sure Hatchell has everything figured out.

But at least Nebraska will get to play Oklahoma.

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

## NU still in running for title game

By Mike Kluck  
Staff Reporter

OMAHA — Lincoln is still in consideration for possibly playing host to a Big 12 postseason football title game, Nebraska athletic director Bill Byrne said, despite reports that only five cities, not including Lincoln, were being considered.

Many cities still are being considered as possible sites, Byrne said at Eppley Airfield Wednesday night upon returning from Dallas after attending the Big 12 Conference meeting.

"No one has been eliminated yet," Byrne said.

Texas Stadium in Irving, Texas, the Astrodome in Houston, the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas, Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Mo., and St. Louis' new domed stadium already have submitted bids for consideration to play host to the game, officials of the new conference said Wednesday.

Byrne said the committee decided to go back and gather more data from

all the cities that submitted proposals.

"Big 12 officials said they would confer with designees from the five sites by telephone to review proposals and arrangements, the league said as its first round of autumn meetings concluded.

"We hope to have this contact process completed in the next two weeks, possibly a little longer," Commissioner Steve Hatchell said.

He said final proposals were expected to go to the Big 12 Council of Chief Executive Officers for a meeting in late November.

The title-game discussion was part of a three-hour segment of the day's format. A championship game would be between teams from the north — Colorado, Iowa State, Kansas, Kansas State, Missouri and Nebraska — and south divisions.

The south consists of Baylor, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas, Texas A&M, and Texas Tech.

Byrne said all the league athletic

## Knee injuries bench two; Benning returns to lineup

From Staff Reports

Nebraska I-back Clinton Childs will not play Saturday against Pacific and is doubtful for next week's game against Washington State, Coach Tom Osborne said Wednesday.

Childs, who ran for 143 yards against Arizona State last week, underwent an MRI on his knee earlier this week. Osborne said the results showed no ligament damage, but he said Childs had "a very severe knee strain."

Defensive tackle Larry Townsend (knee) will not play Saturday, Osborne said. I-back Damon Benning returned to practice Wednesday. He will play against Pacific, but may not start, Osborne said. If Benning doesn't start, true freshman Ahman Green will get the nod.

WILL linebacker Phil Ellis aggravated his thigh bruise again at practice Wednesday, and wingback Clester Johnson sprained an ankle. Neither injury appeared to be serious, Osborne said.

directors were doing was gathering information to present to the school presidents.

"Sometime later this fall they'll (the presidents) come to a decision as to whether or not were going to have a playoff," Byrne said. "That has not

been decided yet. It has been erroneously reported in the media that the decision has been made to have a playoff. That is not true."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

## Hard work reaps skills for Crnich

By Mitch Sherman  
Senior Editor

Kate Crnich has learned a little bit from a lot of people.

During her two-plus seasons in the Nebraska volleyball program, Crnich, a 5-foot-11 junior, said she had watched her teammates closely, picking up pointers as often as possible.

"I have learned something from everybody on the team in different ways," Crnich said.

Senior Billie Winsett, Crnich said, has served as a model to her on the court.

"Coach Pettit has wanted me to watch her in every way," Crnich said, "defense, passing and hitting. Just doing that has helped me out a lot."

Crnich said she also had modeled parts of her game after her roommate, junior Maria Hedbeck, a defensive specialist.

"Maria is a great defensive player,



Jay Calderon/DN

Nebraska's Kate Crnich is now a starter for the No. 1 Huskers after two years of learning. Crnich leads the team in digs.

See CRNICH on 8

## Tigers look to build on last year

### Pacific player: Last experience will help team

By Derek Samson  
Senior Reporter

Pacific linebacker Bill Denny will be grateful for one thing when he walks onto the Memorial Stadium turf Saturday — he's been there before.

The two-year starter from Mission Viejo, Calif., started in Pacific's 70-21 loss to the Cornhuskers last year, and was extremely happy he did.

"Hopefully, it will have a tremendous impact on how we perform," Denny said. "I'd say when we walked in there last year, there was a bit of awe. I didn't even know they made that many red shirts. It was a sea of red. Now, we know exactly what we're up against, both on the field and with the crowd."

Last year's game will help the Tigers deal not only with the environment, but also with the Huskers, Denny said.

"Most of us played last year, and we know the talent they have," he said. "It's basically just the same plays we see all year, but they happen so much quicker. I was always a step or two too late last year. That's what sets Nebraska and the other top teams apart — the speed.

"They don't do anything different, but it's just at such a faster speed, and it's very hard to react. At least now, we'll be prepared for that. Last year we went in there blind to it. They shocked us with the great athletes they have and how quick everyone was."

But what must the 1-2 Tigers be thinking after Nebraska posted 77 points against Arizona State last week?

"Oh, we're not really that surprised," Denny said. "I know what type of program they have, and it's

See DENNY on 8

### Team success more important to running back

By Gregg Madsen  
Staff Reporter

Pacific running back Joe Abdullah is used to being the underdog. And he loves it.

"I feed off of pressure," said Abdullah, a senior who is coming off of a 1,075-yard campaign last season. That total is the ninth-best single-season effort in Pacific history.

Abdullah rushed for more than 100 yards in four consecutive games last season, including a monster 272-yard performance against Arkansas State. That ranks as the best outing ever for a Pacific player against Division I-A competition.

"I got into a zone," he said of the record-setting day.

Last year's success has carried

over into this season for Abdullah, who is averaging 5.3 yards a carry in the Tigers' first three games. Last week against Fresno State, he rushed for 166 yards on 23 attempts.

But individual success isn't what Abdullah is about.

"This is the most depressed I've been all season," he said of Pacific's 56-24 loss to the Bulldogs last Saturday.

"The Fresno State loss was hard," he said. "The score doesn't show how the game really went."

The 6-foot, 220-pound Abdullah is more concerned with his team's success than his own achievements. Rather than demanding the ball every time, Abdullah said he wanted to see the passing game improve.

The Tigers have been held to an average of 149 yards passing in their first three games. Improving execution, Abdullah said, will be necessary if the Tigers are to make a good showing against Nebraska on Saturday.

See ABDULLAH on 8