

SPORTS

Tuesday, October 3, 1995

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SPORTS OPINION



Derek Samson

NU dazzles skeptics with running game

Scary things are happening in the Nebraska backfield.

Ahman Green, a true freshman who has never started a game for the Cornhuskers, is the team's leading rusher with 525 yards.

Four different Nebraska I-backs have rushed for more than 100 yards in a game this season, with a fifth coming 20 yards short while only carrying the ball once.

And all of this has happened with what was supposed to be an inexperienced offensive line.

Nebraska always has been a powerful running team. But in the last couple of years, the Huskers have risen above the rest of the nation, carrying rushing football to a different dimension.

The plays look the same, the backs don't look much different physically and the line is only a bit larger than most teams' offensive lines.

Yet, opposing coaches can't help but be in awe of the Huskers' running game.

"I think they've taken their kind of offensive football to a new level," Pacific coach Chuck Shelton said. "They've improved it to a point where it is very difficult to deal with. Even if you match up with them physically, it's difficult to deal with."

Last year, Nebraska tore up defenses with its running game. The offensive line was given credit for Nebraska's 11th NCAA rushing title after Nebraska totaled 340 yards per game on the ground.

But Nebraska lost four of its five starters on that line. As an unexpected result, the Huskers are posting even bigger numbers.

The Huskers averaged 507 rushing yards a game over their first four games, but last Saturday promised to be different.

Washington State had the fourth-best rushing defense in the country, giving up only 69.7 yards a contest.

So how did the Huskers meet the challenge?

By racking up 428 yards rushing, including 70 from quarterback Tommie Frazier.

The most impressive fact about the running game this year is that a different back has dominated each game—Lawrence Phillips, Clinton Childs, Damon Benning and Ahman Green.

As everyone sings the praises of top-ranked Florida State's passing game, Nebraska sits in the No. 2 spot with a potent running attack. And some people still question whether it is enough to get by Colorado—not to mention the Seminoles.

But Nebraska will prove itself very soon and show the critics that this rushing game is at least equal to last year's, especially after it opens up the playbook.

And it will be a frightening experience for Colorado.

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

On the ball



Jay Calderon/DN

Cornhusker softball player Tobin Echo-Hawk is eyeing a trip to the College World Series in her final year at Nebraska.

Echo-Hawk eyes postseason goals

By Antone Oseka

Staff Reporter

After last year's finish in the regional tournament, Nebraska softball player Tobin Echo-Hawk said the College World Series would be within the Cornhuskers' grasp this season.

Last year, the Huskers lost to regional champion Arizona and were put out of the double-elimination tournament by Florida State. As a result, Nebraska is more mature, more confident and more relaxed as it concludes the fall season.

"I think that we'll probably do a lot better just because we're more mature," Echo-Hawk said. "We've already learned what it takes."

"Regionals was a learning experience to see how the top teams in the nation play. It really opened our eyes to a whole new world. It let us know that we can be up there and compete with the best in the nation," she said.

Personally, Echo-Hawk just wants to improve on her performance from last year, and be more of a leader for the team. That role,

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TOBIN ECHO-HAWK

NU softball player

however, doesn't fall on her shoulders alone.

"I'm kind of the leader on this year's team, but everyone's kind of that way," she said. "No one person is the leader. If one person needs to lead the way, then they will."

As a team, Echo-Hawk said the Huskers needed to maintain their intensity during all of their games.

"We need to play our best; everyone's gunning for us," she said. "If they beat us, it makes their season."

Softball doesn't end this year for Echo-Hawk, who is a senior education major. She said she expected to coach for Nebraska while she finished school. After graduating, she will look for a position

elsewhere.

But Echo-Hawk's playing days may not be over after this season.

Another chance for her is a newly formed a professional fast-pitch softball league.

"I've had contact with them (the pro league)," she said. "I'll stick around here and help out with the team, and try to find a coaching job next year."

If softball doesn't work out, Echo-Hawk can turn to basketball. As a freshman, she was a walk-on player for the Husker women's basketball team. But after that season, Echo-Hawk concentrated solely on softball.

"I wasn't very good," she said, "and I'd rather be great at one sport than average at both."

Great is also how Echo-Hawk describes Nebraska softball coach Rhonda Revelle.

"She knows how to work her players mentally and physically to get the best out of them," Echo-Hawk said. "She challenges us every day. If it wasn't for her, I probably wouldn't be here."

Coaches discuss title site

By Todd Walkenhorst

Staff Reporter

Although a host for the Big 12 title game has not been selected, reports say that the Houston Astrodome has offered the most money.

Big Eight coaches said Monday that they'd rather have a title game at a different site each year.

Kansas State coach Bill Snyder said he was concerned about the quality of the Astrodome's playing field.

"Last I heard, they canceled a ball game there because they couldn't play on that surface," Snyder said. "I'm sure anywhere they play the game will be fine."

The idea of one location playing host to the game every year does not rest well with Missouri coach Larry Smith.

"It's not my decision," Smith said, "but I'd kind of hate to see them tie themselves into one area. There's a lot of interest up north too, and I'd like to see a rotating basis."

Kansas coach Glen Mason said a city's climate should not be an issue.

"I'd like to see it spread around," Mason said. "I have no problem going to Texas, but I'm not one who thinks it has to be played in a warm-weather site or in a dome."

"I think of those NFL games played in Buffalo in January in zero-degree weather, and I think that would just add to the mystique of it, not distract."

Nebraska coach Tom Osborne said he didn't support a title game.

"If we don't have the game, you would probably have two conference schools in the alliance making \$8 million a piece," Osborne said.

The Astrodome offer would give each school a projected \$684,000. But Osborne wasn't concerned about the sight of the title game.

"If you take \$16 million and divide it between 12 schools, I think that would be more," Osborne said.

Osborne said having the game in Houston wouldn't bother him.

"We've been involved in so many bowl games, usually in southern environments where we were not usually the home team," Osborne said. "Maybe the game should be rotated between San Antonio and Kansas City or whatever."

"I'd say it doesn't make that much difference. If we don't have the championship game, you'd have two teams in the alliance and make more money, but I don't think we can change anybody's mind."

Coach: Players need lessons in game of life

By Mike Kluck

Staff Reporter

Nebraska football players may know what it takes to win on the playing field, but Nebraska assistant coach Ron Brown said he didn't think the majority of the Cornhuskers were being taught how to win in life.

Brown, Nebraska's receivers coach, told the Extra-Point Club Monday that because of a changing society, many Nebraska recruits are not being prepared to succeed in life.



Because of NCAA rules, Husker coaches are allowed to spend only four hours each day with their players, but Brown

questions whether parents spend that amount of time with their own children in a week.

"How many parents today have taken their children and coached them for one day a week and then put them in the game of life and expect them to perform admirably?" Brown said. "It doesn't work that way. We're getting products of one day a week or less of coaching in the game of life."

Over the past 10 years, Brown said he had noticed a change in how involved parents are in their children's lives.

When Brown goes recruiting, he very seldom goes to a house where both parents are living with their son, he said. In the 1990s Brown said it had become more common to find potential recruits living without their parents and in alternative situations.

"It's not Ward and June Cleaver with brother Wally at home anymore,"

"It's not Ward and June Cleaver with brother Wally at home anymore. We would all like to have that ideal situation, but it isn't for a lot of these kids."

RON BROWN

Nebraska receivers coach

Brown said. "We would all like to have that ideal situation, but it isn't for a lot of these kids. This is what we're getting."

Brown said changes in today's society have altered the role of a football coach.

"We treat these young men like they're our children," Brown said. "They are our family."

Because of Brown's feelings toward his players, he said he found it difficult to understand why people

thought athletes should be dismissed from the football team if they get in trouble.

The Nebraska football team has been questioned about junior wingback Riley Washington, who has been charged with attempted second-degree murder, and Lawrence Phillips, who pleaded no contest to third-degree assault.

Washington has played the last two

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