

Sports

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said. "and what a decent guy, one of the most honest coaches in America, if not the most honest coach in America, is prepared to do to increase his chances of winning."

Osborne continued to defend his decision to allow Phillips back on the team, saying the athlete "needed football in his life."

"You don't want to take away the one thing that has given the person some sense of self-worth and some sense of self-esteem."

Meanwhile, the Cornhuskers rolled. And they rolled. And they rolled. For the season, the Nebraska defense allowed no more than 28 points in a game — seven fewer than the offense's lowest output of the year.

The Huskers trailed for eight minutes in their first 11 games, allowed three points to their final two regular season opponents, beat four top 10 teams 196-73 and scored 49 points or more eight times. Freshman I-back Ahman Green filled the huge void left by Phillips. Green carried the ball 141

times for a freshman-record 1,086 yards and 13 touchdowns.

In the shadow of Phillips for much of the season, quarterback Tommie Frazier emerged as one of college football's most exciting players. Frazier, a first-team All-American, won the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award, finished his career with 33 wins as a starter, won three bowl game most valuable player awards and was the runner-up in the Heisman voting.

Unchallenged for 11 games, Nebraska apparently had met its match in the Fiesta Bowl against Florida. Nearly every major sports publication and all the "experts" picked the Gators to down the defending champs.

Florida players acted confident at the bowl game's media day, but under the cool act, the Gators realized they had never played in a national championship game. Nebraska was playing in its third straight.

On Jan. 2 at Sun Devil Stadium, the experience showed. Nebraska outscored Florida 29-0 in the second quarter, held the Gators to minus-28 yards rushing and did not punt in the first half. Frazier ran for 199 yards, Phillips burned Florida for 165 yards,

securing a spot in the first round of April's National Football League draft and the Husker defense dominated.

Nebraska won 62-24, its 25th straight win and 36th win over a three-year period, a college football record. The back-to-back consensus national titles were the first since Oklahoma accomplished the feat in 1955-56.

And finally, the chapter was closed on what Osborne called his best team ever and his most difficult season in 23 years as a head coach.

While the football team was busy mowing down opponents, the Husker volleyball team was doing the same. Directed by Christy Johnson (the leader), Allison Weston (the power) and Billie Winsett (the glue), Nebraska claimed another national title with a win over Texas on Dec. 16 in Amherst, Mass.

In Amherst, Michigan State awaited. The Spartans pushed Nebraska to five games, finally falling when the three Husker seniors refused to give in, earning Coach Terry Pettit his third trip to the championship match in 19 years at Nebraska.

Pettit lost in 1986 and 1989, but 1995 was different. Texas, after elimi-

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ALLISON WESTON

senior All-American volleyball player

nating heavy favorite Stanford in the semifinals, fell in four games to Nebraska, which relied on

Winsett, Johnson and junior Kate Crnich to carry the load in the title match.

"I know how much he wanted this," said Husker assistant Cathy Noth, who has coached under Pettit since 1989. "He wouldn't voice that himself, but I'll say it for him."

"Not a day goes by that I don't learn something from him. But most of all, he let the players know that he cared about them. This is what it's all about right here."

Immediately after winning the title, Pettit spoke to his 32-1 team behind the closed locker room doors at the

Mullins Center on the snowy, white campus of the University of Massachusetts.

"This season will never end for you," he said. "What changes in your life is that you see that you can take risks and goals and follow through."

For Weston, Nebraska's all-time kill leader, the national title was a sweet end to a record-setting career.

"This is the most important dream for all of us, for as long as I can remember," she said. "I don't care if they remember me. I just hope they remember that the 1995 Nebraska Cornhuskers fought hard and brought home the championship."

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