

Big 12 Notebook

Colorado wide receiver Rae Carruth was named the Big 12 offensive player of the week for his record-setting performance against Missouri. Carruth set a CU record with 222 yards receiving on seven catches. He was also on the receiving end of two Koy Detmer touchdown passes.

The Big 12 defensive player of the week is Kansas linebacker Ronnie Ward. Ward recorded 16 total tackles, one sack and blocked a field goal in the Jayhawk victory.

Nebraska rush end Jared Tomich has been named one of four finalists for the 27th annual Lombardi Award, which will be presented Dec. 5 in Houston. The other three finalists are Arizona State tackle Juan Roque, Ohio State tackle Orlando Pace and Virginia Tech defensive end Cornell Brown.

Grant Wistrom, also an NU rush end, is one of 15 semifinalists for the Football News Defensive Player of the Year. Chris Canty of Kansas State and Colorado's Matt Russell are also semifinalists for the award.

Iowa State's Troy Davis and Texas Tech's Byron Hanspard are up for the offensive award.

Iowa State Coach Dan McCarney knows that in order to turn the Cyclone program around, his team will have to play better in close games. ISU has lost four games by three points or less. In all four of those games, including Saturday's 34-31 loss to Kansas, the Cyclones (2-6 overall and 1-4 in the Big 12) have been ahead at halftime.

"I guess my pre-game speeches are better than my halftime speeches," McCarney said. "In my heart, there is a lot of progress. But it is not showing with victories right now."

Texas' 28-23 victory over Baylor Saturday put the Longhorns back into contention for the South Division title, which they were favored to win at the beginning of the season. Texas is 3-2 in the Big 12, one-half game behind 4-2 Texas Tech. The Longhorns play Tech in Lubbock, Texas, on Saturday.

Missouri Coach Larry Smith said his team played well against Colorado in the Buffs' 41-13 win. "I think we kept the game in check for three quarters," Smith said, "but from there on, it was all downhill."

Kansas Coach Glen Mason said senior Ben Rutz will continue to be the starting quarterback after his performance in the Jayhawks' win in Ames, Iowa, Saturday. "He played well enough for us to win the game," Mason said.

Rutz completed 14 of 22 passes for 204 yards in a game that had 10 lead changes. Rutz also orchestrated the Jayhawks' game-winning drive.

In other Big 12 action Saturday, Texas A&M beat Oklahoma State 38-19 in Stillwater, Okla., snapping OSU's four-game home winning streak.

Big 12 Notebook compiled by staff reporter Jay Saunders.

Blackshirts overpower foes early

By SAM McKEWON
Staff Reporter

For opponents of the Nebraska football team, the opening kickoff has not been a welcome sight this season.

The Husker defense has set the tone immediately this year, making its presence known early, often on the opening snap.

"We let them know the defense is there from the first snap," senior Will linebacker Terrell Farley said. "We want to make a big statement and set the tone right away."

Farley has made the biggest statement of the season, recovering a fumble by Texas Tech running back Byron Hanspard and taking it 21 yards for a touchdown on Tech's first play from scrimmage. It was the quickest touchdown in the history of Nebraska football.

"It was kind of shocking," Farley said. "That play kind of took the crowd right out of it."

Farley also sacked Kansas State quarterback Brian Kavanagh for a 4-yard loss on the Wildcats' first play during Nebraska's 39-3 win.

Mike linebacker Jon Hesse and defensive tackle Jason Peter have also spoken loudly to open a game. Hesse nailed Kansas' Eric Galbreath for a 7-yard loss on the Jayhawks first play, and Peter sacked Oklahoma's Justin Fuente for 7-yard loss on the Sooners' first play Saturday.

"Most of the teams want to get their crowd into it with a big play," Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride said. "We're aggressive out there and get big plays of our own."

The lone team to score on the Huskers on the first drive is also the only team to beat them. Arizona State went 80 yards in 10 plays on its first possession, scoring the game's only touchdown in its 19-0 win on Sept. 21.

Farley, who was suspended and didn't play in the game, said the Sun Devils appeared to reverse roles with Nebraska.

"It looked like we were playing in a dream," he said, "but it was real."



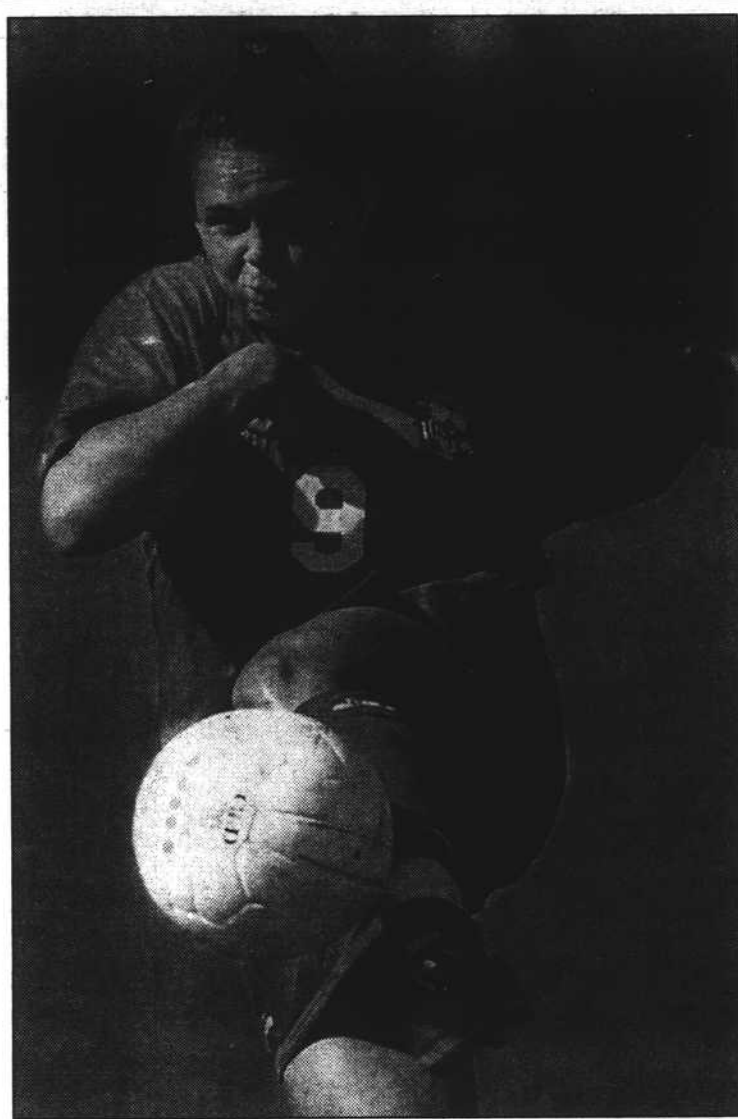
Farley

Explosive Start

In Nebraska's last five games, its opponents have totaled minus-19 on their first offensive series. Here's a look at the opening possession of each of NU's eight opponents this season.

Opponent Plays Yards

| | | |
|--------------|----|-----------|
| Michigan St. | 3 | 3 |
| Arizona St. | 10 | 80 |
| Colorado St. | 8 | 64 |
| Kansas St. | 3 | 2 |
| Baylor | 3 | 3 |
| Texas Tech | 1 | 1 (NU TD) |
| Kansas | 3 | minus-14 |
| Oklahoma | 3 | minus-11 |



MATT MILLER/DN

ISABELLE MORNEAU, a Nebraska freshman, has scored 24 points in the Cornhuskers' last seven games. Morneau is one of three freshmen among the top four NU scorers this fall.

Huskers still gaining speed

Victories over Duke and Texas A&M boosted NU's confidence.

By VINCE D'ADAMO
Staff Reporter

Before the 1996 soccer season began, Nebraska Coach John Walker knew his team had great potential.

He had no idea, however, that in early November his young Cornhusker squad would be a perfect 19-0 with a 9-0 Big 12 record and heading into the Walker postseason as the nation's hottest team.

"I probably wouldn't have believed it," Walker said. "The odds against winning every game are great."

"There's so many variables. There are a lot of strong teams. You could have injuries, or play well but have trouble."

A 3-1 win over then-sixth-ranked Duke on Sept. 8 and a 1-0 shutout of then-sixth-ranked Texas A&M on Sept. 29 are the lights that shine brightest, Walker said.

"They are definitely the two landmark games from a confidence standpoint," Walker said. "We felt OK, but were still wondering if we

could beat a top 25 team."

Prior to the victory over Duke, the Huskers were ranked 25th. Nebraska, which has the only unblemished mark in Division I, is now ranked fifth.

The Huskers — who will play either Texas Tech or Missouri Saturday at 11 a.m. in the Big 12 Conference Tournament semifinals in St. Louis — cruised through league play, but occasionally, Walker said, the intensity level dropped.

"But it rarely happened," Walker said. "It's a reflection of how we train. We really battle every day in practice. It becomes the players' way. They don't know any other way."

Nebraska has outscored its opposition 83-11. Eleven different Huskers have scored at least one goal and eight players have recorded double-digit point totals.

Along with their gaudy offensive output, the Huskers also posted a school record 12 shutouts. Eight players have been nominated for all-conference honors, which will be awarded Friday in St. Louis.

"The effort we got was great," Walker said. "I'm very pleased with how hard the players worked on their commitment on and off the field."

Junior Kari Uppinghouse leads the potent Husker offense with 44 points on 17 goals. Nebraska has also received plenty of support from its freshmen, most notably Lindsay Eddleman (38 points on 15 goals) and Isabelle Morneau (39 points on 16 goals).

"We had quite a few new players," Walker said. "The freshmen have done a great job of acclimating to the college level."

6-2 guard to play in December

Junior fills one of six open scholarships for '97-98.

By DAVID WILSON
Staff Reporter

Devon Phillips, a guard from Chicago, will join the Nebraska basketball team in December, he said Monday.

Phillips, who verbally committed to the Cornhuskers in September, will sign a letter of intent when the fall signing period begins Nov. 13.

The 6-foot-2, 180-pounder played basketball at Midland (Texas) Junior College for two years after failing to meet Division-I academic requirements out of Chicago's Robeson High School in 1994.

At Midland, Phillips averaged 16 points per game as a freshman and 17 points as a sophomore last year, but again failed to qualify academically. After taking classes last summer at Kennedy King Junior College in Chicago, Phillips said, he raised his grades to meet the requirements.

Including this season, Phillips will have two years of eligibility at Nebraska.

Though he was offered scholarships from other schools — including St. John's and Colorado — Phillips said he made his decision to come to Nebraska after a visit from NU Coach Danny Nee and assistant Scott Howard on Sept. 10.

"They told me how much they needed me, and that I would be able to make an impact right away," Phillips said.

Phillips said he chose Nebraska because the Husker coaches stuck with him, even after he didn't meet academic requirements to play this fall.

After his first visit to Lincoln on Oct. 18, Phillips said he thought that he would fit in.

"(Tyronn) Lue, (Bernard) Garner and a few other players took me out and told me how things were," Phillips said. "It's going to be very hard, because I didn't get the opportunity to condition with the team."

Joining the team in mid-season will be difficult, Phillips said, but instincts will carry him until he learns the Husker system.

"I really haven't set any goals basketball-wise," Phillips said. "I'm just going to go and play my best."

Brant Harriman, a 6-11 center from Mason City, Iowa, who committed in April, is also expected to sign with NU later this month. With the two commitments, Nebraska has four scholarships remaining for next year.

Note:

Student season tickets can be picked up at the South Stadium ticket office. The bleacher seating is still available to full-time students, but it is also being offered to the general public.

Student tickets are offered in any combination of four packages. As of Monday, 269 tickets had been sold for package No. 1, 383 for package No. 2, 181 for package No. 3 and 522 for package No. 4.

The Huskers open their exhibition season Thursday night at 7:05 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center against Team Pella.