

Sports Opinion



Mike Kluck For the good of the sport, hold a playoff

For the past two years, I have tried to support the Bowl Alliance. Convincing myself that the bowls are good for college football and a welcome reward for a good season has been a December tradition for me.

But I just can't do it anymore. I have switched allegiances, and now I am shouting from the bandwagon. It's time for a playoff.

This season has killed any chance that I could continue to support the alliance. When two 11-0 teams can't play for the national championship, something is wrong.

Even in a few years, when the Rose Bowl finally joins the rest of the world, it still won't be fun watching the other games, because no team will be happy about where it goes.

How is an unmotivated Nebraska team going to get up for Virginia Tech? How can Brigham Young be happy about playing in the Cotton Bowl? How can Colorado be pleased with the Holiday Bowl? The list goes on and on.

If college football's hierarchy got together and planned a playoff — for the good of the sport — it could be a spectacle greater than the Super Bowl and the Olympics.

First, the season needs to be dropped to 10 games.

I can already hear athletic directors complaining. Bill Byrne has often talked about how a six-game home schedule is essential for the university to make money.

With only 10 home games and an eight-game conference slate, the Huskers would be looking at five games at Memorial Stadium.

Counter this with the playoff, in which each team gets to keep the money from its first two games, instead of sharing with the league.

With a 10-game season, every league champion could be crowned on Thanksgiving weekend. On that Sunday, call it Selection Sunday, 16 teams are invited to the playoff.

This year, Louisiana State (9-2) and Miami (8-3) would not have been invited.

Is that fair? I don't know. But when you have 64 teams in the NCAA basketball tournament, some teams are left out. This season, Wyoming is not going to a bowl. Is that fair?

Imagine Alabama vs. Florida State, Penn State playing Colorado, Northwestern vs. Nebraska. Excellent matchups with a great deal at stake.

First-round games are played on December's first weekend at the sites of the Holiday, Sun, Copper, Alamo, Peach, Carquest, Outback and Independence bowls.

The winners advance to the Elite Eight, to be played the next weekend at four more bowl sites. The Final Four is the third weekend of December and the championship game is played on New Year's Day.

With this system, a true champion is found. The bowls aren't lost and money isn't squandered.

Most importantly, however, teams and fans are excited and intrigued about every game.

Kluck is a graduate student in journalism and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.



SCOTT BRUHN/DN

GRANT WISTROM chases Texas running back Ricky Williams during Nebraska's 37-27 loss to Texas in the Big 12 championship game. No. 6 NU will play No. 10 Virginia Tech in the Orange Bowl, Dec. 31 in Miami.

Orange Crush

Huskers will 'play for pride' against Virginia Tech in Miami.

By Mike Kluck
Senior Reporter

When Nebraska takes the field for the 63rd Orange Bowl at Pro Player Stadium in Miami at 6 p.m. on Dec.

31, Cornhusker Coach Tom Osborne knows he will have a well-prepared game plan.

But what Osborne may not know is what type of NU team he will try to lead to victory and ring in a third straight happy new year in Nebraska.

The Huskers' state of mind is in doubt. For the first time in four seasons, NU will not be playing for the national championship. And it won't be until the moon is high over Miami that Nebraska will know if its disappointing 1996 season ends on a happy note.

"It's always a concern how people react when they have played in three straight national-championship games and then all of a sudden they aren't," Osborne said. "We had an opportunity to play in the fourth. Then on the other hand, if we can win it, we will have won 47 games in four years, which I don't think anybody has done."

The New Year's Eve game will be the first-ever Orange Bowl held away from the Orange Bowl stadium.

If the Huskers (10-2) beat the Hokies (10-1), Nebraska will complete a four-year string with a 47-3 mark. One of those wins was a 24-17 victory over Miami in the 1995 Orange Bowl.

In addition to wanting to be part of a team that has won more games than any group in a four-year period, Husker players said there are many other motivational factors in playing the 10th-ranked Hokies.

"A lot of people thought when the Texas game was over, since we were not playing for (the national championship), that we would have nothing to

Football Starters

Dec. 31, 6 p.m.
Pro Player Stadium
Miami

Nebraska Offense						Virginia Tech Offense					
Pos.	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Pos.	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
SB	5	Brendan Holcomb	5-9	195	Sr.	SB	4	Corbinus White	6-4	202	Sr.
LT	77	Adam Treu	6-6	305	Sr.	LT	71	Jay Hagood	6-4	313	Sr.
LG	75	Chris Dufresne	6-3	316	Sr.	LG	73	Todd Washington	6-3	309	Jr.
C	67	Aaron Taylor	6-1	305	Jr.	C	61	Billy Conaty	6-3	298	Sr.
RG	64	Jon Zatorsky	6-2	296	Jr.	RG	64	Benjamin Delapied	6-3	299	Jr.
RT	70	Eric Anderson	6-4	305	Jr.	RT	76	T.J. Washington	6-4	313	Sr.
TB	28	Ken Oxendine	6-1	225	Jr.	TB	28	Ken Oxendine	6-1	225	Jr.
QB	7	Scott Frost	6-3	215	Jr.	QB	16	Jim Druckenmiller	6-4	224	Sr.
RB	2	Brian Schuster	5-11	230	Jr.	RB	2	Brian Schuster	5-11	230	Jr.
LB	21	Damon Benning	5-11	210	Sr.	TB	28	Ken Oxendine	6-1	225	Jr.
PK	35	Kris Brown	5-10	205	So.	PK	17	Shayne Graham	5-11	185	Fr.
Nebraska Defense						Virginia Tech Defense					
Pos.	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Pos.	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
DT	97	Jeff Ogard	6-6	310	Sr.	DT	98	Waverly Jackson	6-3	298	Sr.
DT	98	Grant Wistrom	6-5	250	Jr.	DE	87	John Engelberger	6-4	245	Fr.
MIKE	44	Jon Hesse	6-4	250	Sr.	ILB	49	Steve Tate	6-1	240	Jr.
LCB	20	Michael Booker	6-2	205	Sr.	LCB	12	Loren Johnson	5-10	176	So.
ROV	10	Mike Minter	5-10	190	So.	ROV	20	Pierson Prioleau	5-10	174	So.
P	19	Jesse Kosch	6-0	185	Jr.	P	95	Jimmy Kibble	5-10	195	Fr.

lose," defensive tackle Jason Peter said. "We are still playing for pride, and we certainly want to go out and finish the season off on the right note."

"To a certain extent, since we are not playing for the whole thing, there's not that pressure. We're still Nebraska, and Virginia Tech has never been to a game like this, playing Nebraska in the Orange Bowl."

However, senior Mike Minter said he has a different motivation heading into his final game.

"I'm looking forward to going down there to have fun and take care of business for the last time here at Nebraska," Minter said. "This is it. This is the last game I am going to put on the Big Red uniform and go out and perform."

"It definitely will be tough, but I think that will be a motivation for most of the seniors. For the last time, they are going to go out there and play for Coach Osborne. That's big enough if you need motivation."

Minter, who has played Will line-

backer since NU's Nov. 29 win over Colorado, said he will probably return to the defensive backfield during the Orange Bowl.

Virginia Tech's rushing attack is led by junior tailback Ken Oxendine and senior fullback Brian Edmonds. Oxendine, an All-Big East Conference first-team selection, led the conference, scoring 13 touchdowns, and finished second with 914 rushing yards, averaging 5.9 yards per attempt.

Edmonds gained 298 yards on 67 rushing attempts.

But what concerns Minter and has prompted the coaches to start Ryan Terwilliger at Will linebacker is the size of the two running backs. Oxendine is 6-foot-1 and 221 pounds, and Edmonds is 5-10 and 235 pounds.

"They try to pound it at you," Minter said. "In the past history, big backs have not had much success on us. For the first time, I don't think there will be any pressure on our game."

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Football Picks

The Daily Nebraskan sports staff members pick the winners (in bold) of the 18 college bowl games. The staff was 104-36 this season.

Aloha Bowl Navy (8-3) vs. California (6-5) Dec. 25

Carquest Bowl Miami (8-3) vs. Virginia (7-4) Dec. 27

Peach Bowl Clemson (7-4) vs. LSU (9-2) Dec. 28

Holiday Bowl Washington (9-2) vs. Colorado (9-2) Dec. 30

Independence Bowl Auburn (7-4) vs. Army (10-1) Dec. 31

Gator Bowl North Carolina (9-2) vs. West Virginia (8-3) Jan. 1

Cotton Bowl Kansas St. (9-2) vs. BYU (13-1) Jan. 1

Fiesta Bowl Penn St. (10-2) vs. Texas (8-4) Jan. 1

Orange Bowl
Nebraska (10-2) vs. Virginia Tech (10-1)