

Sports Opinion



Jay Saunders

Pollsters direct fate of teams

Husker fans should send Minnesota football Coach Glenn Mason a thank-you note.

After years of Nebraska beating up on Mason's Kansas teams, he has turned around and done NU a huge favor. The Golden Gophers' narrow 16-15 loss to Penn State allowed the Huskers to leapfrog the Nittany Lions into the No. 1 ranking in both major polls.

But Cornhusker fans, don't make any national championship plans yet. If Nebraska were to falter this week or any week, the Huskers could easily be replaced at the No. 1 spot, just like Penn State.

The pollsters have all the power in deciding who is No. 1 and have a major influence on who will be in the Bowl Alliance. This is college football's biggest problem.

The polls will never be done away with. It's just too much of a tradition. The stubborn coaches and media just won't allow the NCAA to not have their voices be heard. What can be done, though, is to modify the way the polls operate.

Keep both The Associated Press and ESPN/USA Today Coaches polls. Those are the standards college football has been operating with for years. But follow the model of the College Football Writers of America poll format.

The football writers do not release a poll until the sixth week of the season. This can save a lot of embarrassment for the pollsters as well. Did Texas really deserve to be ranked No. 12 in the preseason poll?

Redesigning the polls is only one step to finding a true No. 1.

Next step, do away with the Bowl Alliance. Adding the Rose Bowl to the mix next year to form a "Super Alliance" is not the answer college football should look for. There is a chance, as there is this year, that three teams could go into the bowl season undefeated. More than likely, the No. 1 and No. 2 teams would face off in a national championship game, leaving the No. 3 team out in the cold. The only answer is a playoff system.

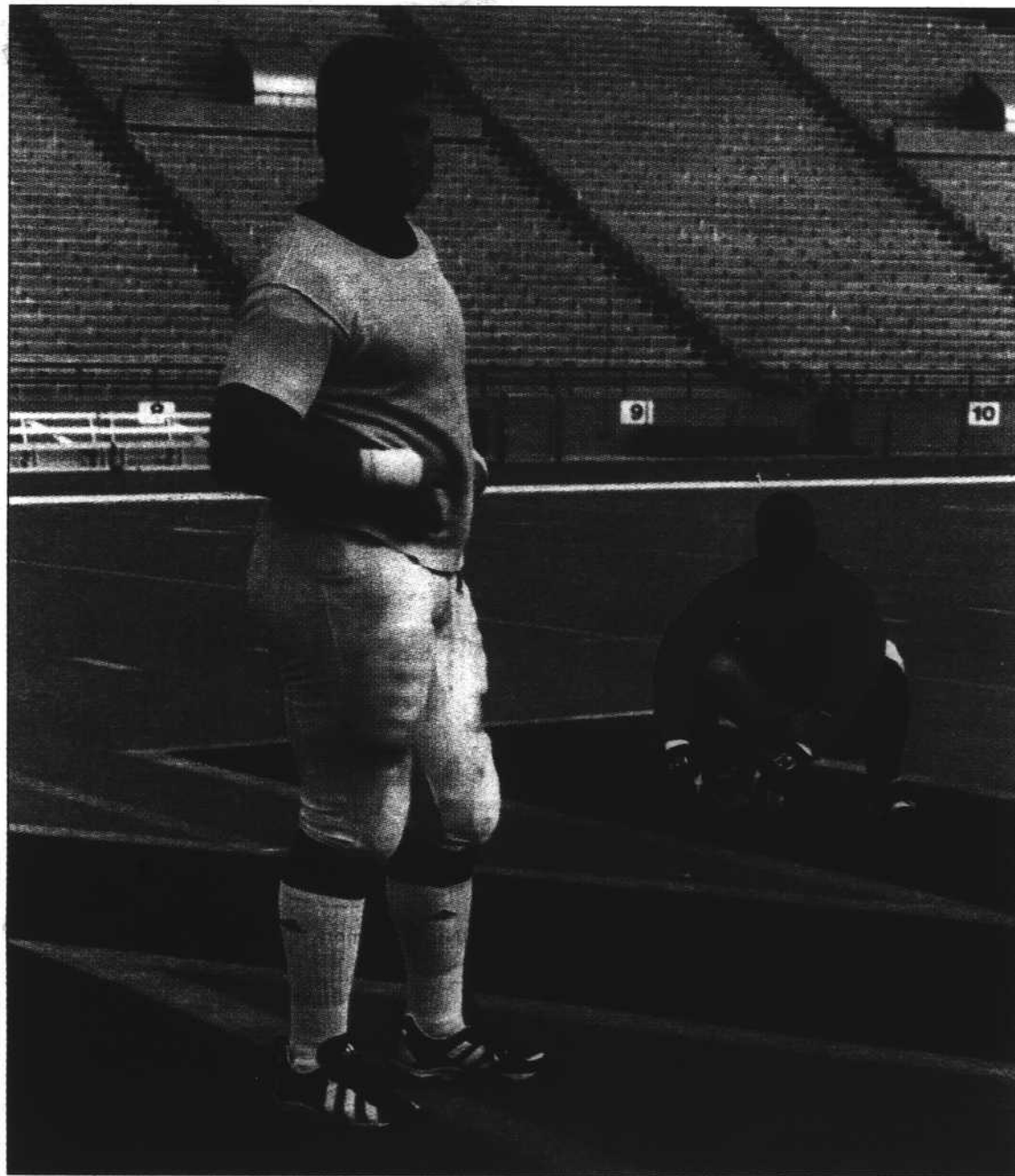
Take the top four teams in the two polls and have them face off in a playoff. A playoff would be a huge moneymaker for the teams involved and for the NCAA.

But for now, Nebraska looks on track to go to the Orange Bowl and a chance for the national title. But how happy can the Nittany Lions be in Happy Valley?

It's all because of Glenn Mason. What a nice guy.

Saunders is a sophomore broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan assignment reporter.

Fitting in Tightly



Nikki Fox/DN

NEBRASKA SENIOR TIGHT ENDS Vershan Jackson and Tim Carpenter have not piled up the receptions this season but have helped the Huskers through their blocking.

Tight ends adapt, excel

By SAM MCKEWN
Staff Reporter

Johnny Mitchell, Jamie Williams, Junior Miller: All were All-America Nebraska tight ends who made a name for themselves catching the ball.

Current NU senior tight ends Tim Carpenter and Vershan Jackson are making a name for themselves in a different way.

Both are major factors in helping the Nebraska rushing offense to lead the nation in rushing at 401.5 yards per game. If the Huskers continue on this track, they will become one of the most prolific rushing offenses in the 107-year history of football at Nebraska (6-0 overall, 3-0 in the Big 12 Conference), which takes on Kansas (4-3, 2-2) on Saturday at 6:07 p.m. in Lawrence, Kan.

"Every play begins with the tight end keeping his block," Carpenter said. "If we miss our assignment, the first linebacker is going to be there to make the tackle and make the play."

Carpenter, from Columbus, and Jackson, from Omaha, team up with junior Sheldon Jackson as the tight end tandem for the Huskers. So far this season, Sheldon Jackson has six receptions for 124 yards,

"It takes time to get everything down perfect and become a complete tight end at Nebraska."

TIM CARPENTER
NU tight end

and Vershan Jackson has grabbed three balls for 50 yards, while Carpenter has yet to tally a catch.

But Carpenter said the number of receptions NU tight ends have doesn't tell the whole story.

"People who don't know a lot about Nebraska football don't realize that first and foremost, we're blockers," he said. "Our job isn't to go out and catch the ball all the time. We run the football."

Playing tight end hasn't always been the job for Carpenter and Vershan Jackson. Both were recruited out of high school as fullbacks, and Jackson still holds the Class A record for rushing yards in one game with 389 for Omaha South.

After their arrival in Lincoln, however, both were switched to a position they didn't know.

"We got switched over to tight end at the same time, so we've kind

of grown up together at Nebraska," Carpenter said. "We both have learned how to play the position the same way."

It's a position that got better every day with more experience, Vershan Jackson said.

"It takes time to get everything down perfect and become a complete tight end at Nebraska," he said. "You have to do everything well, blocking and catching, everything. Tim and I have been through that system."

With the experience, NU has created what Carpenter likes to call "the three-headed monster." Carpenter is primarily a blocker and gets much of the work on short-yardage plays. Sheldon Jackson has developed into one of the team's leading pass-catchers and route-runners, while Vershan Jackson is a

Please see ENDS on 10

Golf play satisfies NU coach

By SAM MCKEWN
Staff Reporter

For the second time in the fall season, the Nebraska men's golf team shot a team score good enough to win most tournaments, but was outdone by another team.

The Cornhuskers finished in a tie for fourth at the Red Raider Intercollegiate in Lubbock, Texas, although the team shot a 7-under 857 for the 54-hole tournament. New Mexico State was 15 strokes better than NU, with a 22-under score of 842.

Also finishing ahead of the Huskers was Iowa State at 850 and Sam Houston State at 856.

NU Coach Larry Romjue said he wasn't happy with NU's finish, but was pleased with the team score.

"It's hard to be completely disappointed when you shoot a 7-under score," Romjue said. "I have to give all the credit to New Mexico State. They're a good team that played good for three rounds."

Romjue said NU struggled somewhat in the opening round and lost valuable ground to the Lobos.

"We didn't get it going right away, and that hurt us," Romjue said. "New Mexico State shot under par all three days."

Individually, juniors Steve Friesen and Jamie Rogers paced the Huskers with sixth- and seventh-place finishes, respectively. Friesen shot a 5-under 211, while Rogers shot a 4-under 212. Matt Lewis of Iowa State won with 207 strokes.

Romjue said Rogers' score could have been even better if not for a few mishaps in the first two rounds.

"Jamie had a couple of balls that he lost in the first two rounds, which is rare for a golf course in Texas,"

Please see GOLF on 11

NU's home advantage legendary

By SAM MCKEWN
Staff Reporter

On Sept. 21, 1991, George Bush was the president of the United States, the Washington Redskins were on their way to the Super Bowl and the Miami Hurricanes were still a good college football team.

It was also the last time Nebraska lost a home football game.

The Cornhuskers fell 36-21 to Washington in one of NU's most lopsided losses in Memorial Stadium. The Huskies racked up 617 total yards and scored 27 points in the fourth quarter.

Since the loss, Nebraska (6-0 overall and 3-0 in the Big 12 Conference) has won 40 straight games at home. In those 40 wins, only three teams have been within a touchdown of the Huskers (Kansas State, 38-31 in 1991; Oklahoma, 19-14 in 1991; and Colorado, 17-12 in 1996).

Please see HOME on 11