

Big 12 Notebook

No. 14 Huskers blast Jays



MATT MILLER/DN
NU SENIOR ANNA DEFORGE drives the lane in the Huskers' 80-59 victory over Creighton Monday night. DeForge led Nebraska with 14 points. Before the game, she was named Big 12 player of the week.

The Big 12 offensive player of the week was Oklahoma sophomore quarterback Justin Fuente. Fuente completed 14 of 21 passing attempts for 228 yards and two touchdowns in a 32-21 comeback victory over Texas Tech.

Oklahoma State junior safety Ricky Thompson was the Big 12 defensive player of the week. Thompson had seven tackles and two key interceptions in a 24-14 win over Baylor. OSU finished the season 8-3, its best since 1988.

OSU also had the Big 12 special teams player of the week. Sophomore cornerback R.W. McQuarters won the award for the third time this season, as he had two punt returns for 93 yards in the win over Baylor.

Nebraska will finish the season first in the Big 12 in third down conversions at 53 percent, and is the only team over 50 percent in the conference. NU is 9 percent better than Missouri, who finished the season at 44 percent on third down. The worst in the conference was Kansas at 22 percent.

The Huskers are also tops in Big 12 attendance with a 75,587 per home game this season, a 0.7 percent increase over last season. Texas was second in the conference averaging 74,631 per game. Missouri had the biggest increase in attendance at 34 percent, while Kansas had the worst attendance this year at 37,353 fans per game.

There's a shake-up in the Sooner nation as OU Head Coach John Blake fired four assistant coaches after OU's 32-21 victory. Blake fired both his offensive and defensive coordinator. One of the coaches he hired to replace the four was Rex Ryan, son of former Philadelphia Eagles Coach Buddy Ryan.

ISU Coach Dan McCarney is a voter in the USA Today/ESPN Coaches Poll and he said he selected Nebraska as the number one team in the nation over current No. 1 Michigan.

"Just by seeing Nebraska first hand and on the field, I think they're the best team," McCarney said.

Texas Coach John Mackovic makes no bones about how important the Texas-Texas A&M matchup is this week in College Station, Texas. The Aggies and Longhorns annually engage in one of the most heated rivalries in football.

"One day out of the year, we want to win more than anything," Mackovic said. "This game means a lot to us."

Big 12 Notebook compiled by staff reporter Sam McKewon.

BY SAM MCKEWIN
Staff Reporter

The Nebraska-Creighton women's basketball game provided a simple lesson in Darwinism Monday night.

Both teams played pressure defense early in the first half, and both teams tried to get out to quick starts. But only the Cornhuskers were fit for survival in the physical battle, coming away with an 80-59 victory in front of 2,005 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

"We came out and jumped on them right away," NU senior forward Anna DeForge said. "We wanted to make a statement."

The Huskers (4-1), who moved up to No. 14 in The Associated Press poll Monday, their highest ranking ever, struck quickly against the Lady Jays (0-3), sprinting out to a 16-4 lead with 13 minutes, 21 seconds remaining in the first half.

NU's pressure-trapping defense forced 16 CU turnovers in the first 20 minutes as Nebraska took a 37-25 lead at halftime.

Nebraska Coach Paul Sanderford said the Huskers were able to make big defensive plays from the opening tip, giving NU a sizable lead.

"We felt like we pretty much dictated the game with our pressure defense," Sanderford said. "The defense was pretty good tonight."

Nebraska's offense was also able to score against a Creighton team that had only been giving up 59 points per game. The Huskers finished the game with 29 turnovers, but shot 51 percent from the field for the game, including 60 percent in the second half.

Women's Basketball

Sanderford said Nebraska effectively handled the Lady Jays' tight man-to-man defense throughout the contest.

"We knew exactly how they would play us, and we attacked it," Sanderford said.

Creighton, on the other hand, continually shot itself in the foot with poor shooting and turnovers. The Lady Jays did cut the NU lead to 39-28 early in the second half, but misfired on its next seven possessions, helping the Huskers build an insurmountable 46-28 lead.

"We knew what we were getting into," CU Coach Connie Yori said. "And we knew what we were going to see from Nebraska. We just weren't able to execute on offense."

Sanderford said he was pleased to see NU put Creighton away in the second half.

"We were very focused after halftime," he said. "We knew exactly what we wanted to get done and we did it."

DeForge, who was named the Big 12 player of the week on Monday, led the Huskers with 14 points while sophomore guard Brooke Schwartz added 13 and a team-high eight rebounds. Sophomore guard Nicole Kubik also scored in double figures with 12.

After the game, Sanderford said he was satisfied with the effort his team gave against the in-state rival.

"Anybody who thought we didn't play hard tonight can go back and watch the tape with me," he said. "We played very hard, Creighton."

Osborne expects best shot from CU

BY ANTONE OSEKA
Senior Reporter

During the 1990s, the Colorado-Nebraska game has been a late-season showdown for the conference championship.

Not this year. Nebraska (10-0 overall and 7-0 in the Big 12 Conference) has already clinched the Big 12 North Division Championship, while Colorado is fourth in the Big 12 North with a 5-5 overall record and a 3-4 conference mark. The two teams meet Friday at 1:35 p.m. at Folsom Field in Boulder, Colo.

With a win, CU could clinch a spot in the Aloha Bowl on Christmas Day in Honolulu. With a loss, the Buffaloes put their uniforms away for the season.

"You've got to assume they're going to give us their best shot," Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said. "We'll see them at their best and, hopefully, they'll see us at our best."

Nebraska had an off week last Saturday, but is coming off a 77-14 win over Iowa State on Nov. 15. Colorado also had an off week last Saturday, and is coming off a 37-20 loss to Kansas State in Manhattan, Kan.

"We approached Missouri, Washington and Iowa State the same way," Osborne said of his team's preparation this week. "Colorado has good athletes. Basically, they're very strong."

On paper, the Huskers are



stronger. They rank first in the nation in total and rushing offense while ranking third nationally in total defense. Colorado ranks 10th in the conference and 64th in the nation in rushing offense, and seventh in the conference and 63rd in the nation in total offense. In total defense, Colorado ranks sixth in the conference and 40th in the nation.

The only major category in which Colorado ranks better than Nebraska is in passing offense. Although NU senior quarterback Scott Frost completed eight of nine passes against ISU, Nebraska is still last in the conference and 106th in the nation. Colorado, behind the arm of John Hessler, is second in the conference and 44th in the nation.

Osborne just wants Nebraska to focus on playing well against a desperate Colorado team.

"The only thing we have to focus on is how well we can play, so I think we'll play hard," he said. "This is their last hurrah. If they were going to play hard for 60 minutes, this ought to be it."

"We understand that, we have a good team and we're going to play hard too."

Nebraska runners finish season strong

BY SAM MCKEWIN
Staff Reporter

After battling through a season of injuries and departures, the Nebraska men's cross country team finished with its best performance of the season with an 11th-place finish at the N C A A Championships in Greenville, S.C., Monday.



Boor

NU finished with 294 points and defeated three teams that had previously beaten the Huskers this season. Stanford won the meet with 53 points, while Arkansas finished second with 56.

"Our guys ran just great today," Nebraska Coach Jay Dirksen said. "Two All-Americans and an 11th-place finish is more than we could have ever hoped for coming into this season. I think this finish is tremendous."

Leading the way for Nebraska was senior Cleophas Boor, who finished sixth in the race with a time of 29 minutes, 22 seconds over the 10,000 meter course at Furman University, 28 seconds behind winner Mebrathom Keflezighi of UCLA, who ran the course in a time

Cross Country

of 28:54.

NU freshman Jeroen Broekzitter finished 20th with a time of 30:06. Senior Aaron Johnson finished 98th with a time of 31:21, freshman Marcus Witter was 109th at 31:34, and junior Lou Petricca was 138th with a time of 32:01.

"Cleophas ran very well," Dirksen said. "The top six guys really took off, and Cleophas just went with them. They were flying up front."

The women's team had hoped for similar results Monday, but couldn't produce them as they finished 19th out of the 22-team field. Nebraska failed to have any runners in the top 90 of the race and finished with 457 points. BYU won the women's title with 100 points, two points ahead of second-place Stanford.

Freshman Amy Wiseman was the top Husker for the seventh straight time this season, in 94th place with a time of 17:56.

Senior Nora Shepherd was second among the Huskers in 101st at 17:59. Freshman Kate Centerwall was 109th at 18:05, sophomore Melinda Mohr was 133rd at 18:24, and sophomore Jaime Pauli, who ran the race with a stress fracture in her leg, finished 149th at 18:41.