

Sports Opinion



Mike Kluck

Politics takes fun from big Husker win

BOULDER, Colo. — One thing for certain that the polls, the Bowl Alliance and the Big 12 championship game have done is take the fun out of football.

Nebraska won the Big 12 North Division championship and completed an undefeated regular season with a 27-24 victory over Colorado on Friday, but you couldn't tell by the looks on the Huskers' faces.

"In the locker room afterward, the guys were somber and kind of moping around, and it looked like we had kind of almost lost the game," said Nebraska center Matt Hoskinson, who filled in for the injured John Heskew. "I really didn't know how to react to something like this."

Somber and moping after a win? Over Colorado? To complete an undefeated regular season?

This is what the new age of college football has brought us.

Friday was a day for celebration, a day to enjoy the accomplishments of goals, a day to enjoy a victory over a conference opponent.

Yet, it turned into a day of sadness, disappointment and disgust.

If we believe what Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne, the NU players and Sporting News had said, then Colorado was a good team and capable of playing the Huskers tough and close, which it did.

But in this new age of college football, style points almost mean more than wins and losses.

"The bottom line is that we won the game," Osborne said. "But we almost lost to a team that had five losses, so that is probably in the voters' minds also."

Now the Huskers must get ready for the Big 12 championship game with a Texas A&M team that is ready to prove Osborne right for the second straight year.

Osborne has argued against a Big 12 title game, saying it gives a team like Nebraska — which is in contention for a national championship — an added chance to slip.

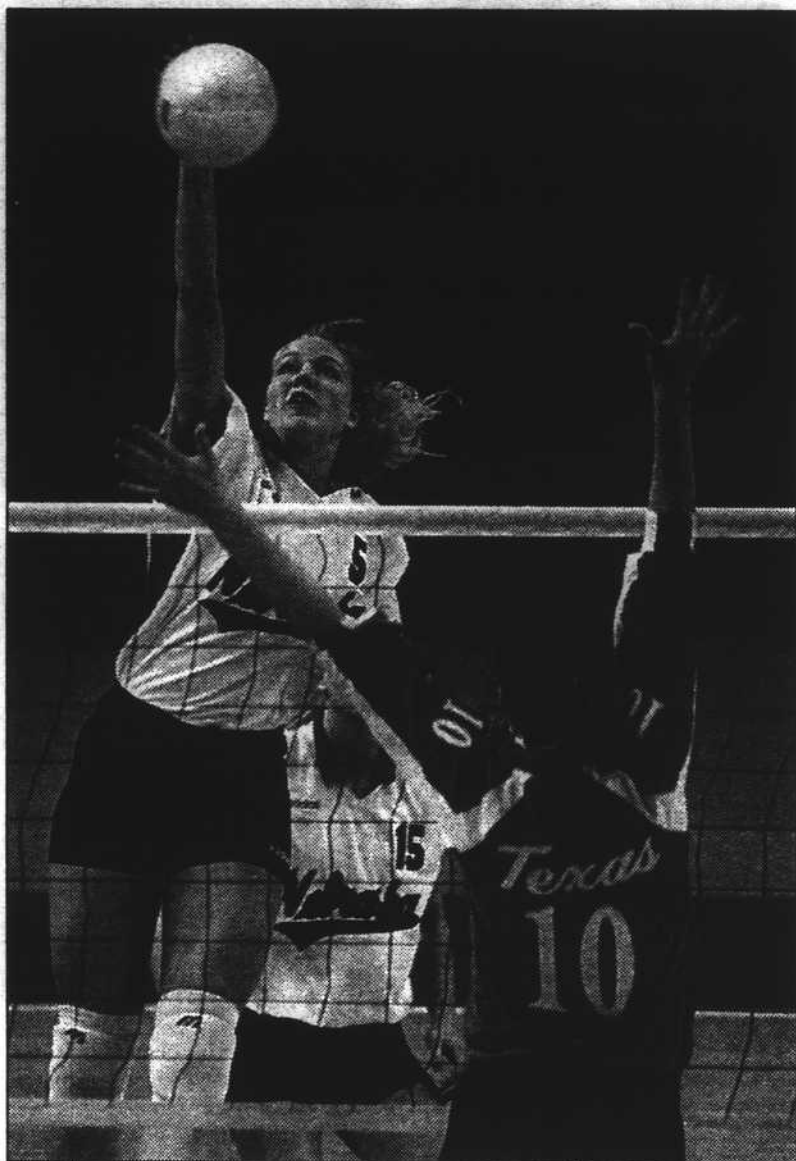
Last season, a win in the Big 12 championship game would have sent the Huskers to the Sugar Bowl to compete for their third title in three years. But a 37-27 upset by Texas knocked NU out of contention.

No. 14 A&M could do the same thing, placing the Huskers in a no-win, no-fun situation.

A loss would leave the Huskers upset. A close win would leave the Huskers disappointed, and a blowout would only meet expectations.

If we're lucky, we may get at least a high-five or a hug, or even, God-forbid, a little fun.

Kluck is a graduate student in journalism and the Daily Nebraskan sports editor.



MEGAN KORVER slams an attack over the Texas block Saturday night at the NU Coliseum. The Huskers defeated Texas in four games to end the regular season with 10 straight wins. NU received a No. 2 seed on Sunday in the Pacific region of the NCAA Tournament.

SCOTT McCLURG/DN

Committee rewards NU with No. 2 seed

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Assignment Reporter

A late-season surge by the Nebraska volleyball team nearly erased the memory of a midseason slip in the minds of the NCAA Tournament selection committee.

The Cornhuskers received a No. 2 seed Sunday night in the tournament's Pacific region, a reward for Nebraska's successful 10-0 November that proved a point behind which Coach Terry Pettit stood all season.

"They (the selection committee) put extra weight on the last half of the season," Pettit said. "We stumbled in the middle, but we're 10-0 the last half of the season."

"We've beaten a lot of ranked teams, and they see that. We've beat everyone in the Big 12 Conference at least once, and we have the longest winning streak of those teams."

The tournament begins with first round matches Friday and ends with the national championship match Dec. 20 in Spokane, Wash.

As one of the top eight teams in the tournament the Huskers (25-6 overall and 16-4 in the league) receive a first-round bye. NU will play host to either Butler (28-6) or Michigan State (22-11) Saturday night at 7:30 at the NU Coliseum. The Bulldogs and Spartans play Friday night.

NU missed out on a No. 1 seed for the first time in four years. Long Beach State received the No. 1 seed in the Pacific region, and will play host to one of four regionals if it can beat either Hawaii or Loyola

"The concept of Nebraska finishing second says a lot for our conference."

JIM MOORE
Texas volleyball coach

(Marymount) on Saturday.

Defending national champion Stanford, Wisconsin and Penn State claimed the other top seeds.

In addition to Nebraska, five other Big 12 teams earned bids: Texas A&M, Kansas State, Oklahoma, Colorado and Texas.

The Pac-10 and the Big Ten also placed six teams in the tournament, a fact that Texas Coach Jim Moore said testifies to the strength of the Big 12.

"You look at the top teams in the Big 12, and you see they're as good as any other team in the conference," Moore said. "The concept of Nebraska finishing second says a lot for our conference. Colorado is the most under-ranked team in the country, Nebraska is an excellent team, we're good and A&M is real solid."

NU outside hitter Mandy Monson said the Huskers were confident they'd earn a high seed after defeating Texas and A&M.

"We knew we'd move up after those wins," Monson said. "A couple of losses didn't ruin everything for us. We've got to be happy with where we're at."

Win streak grows to 10 as NU cruises

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Assignment Reporter

The last five weeks of the Big 12 Conference action meant everything and nothing to the Nebraska volleyball team.

It carried little significance in the race for the league title because of four losses in October that presented the Cornhuskers a slim chance to win their second straight Big 12 championship.

But after a month of frustration, the Huskers knew a November winning streak would provide an acceptable cure for a season that nearly took a turn for the worse.

With wins over No. 9 Texas Saturday and No. 16 Texas A&M Friday, Nebraska stamped an exclamation point on its regular season-ending 10-match streak, which as it turned out, meant everything to the Huskers.

NU (25-6 overall and 16-4 in the conference) earned the No. 2 seed in the NCAA Tournament's Pacific Region on Sunday and the No. 7 overall seed in the tournament.

Saturday night at 7:30, Nebraska — the only Big 12 team to earn a first-round bye — plays host to Michigan State or Butler, who meet in the first round Friday night in Lincoln.

"Five weeks ago, they could have decided to be a mediocre team and limp home," NU Coach Terry Pettit said. "They knew they couldn't win the conference and they could have just let things go, but they didn't do that."

Nebraska	17	15	14	15
Texas	15	6	16	10
Nebraska	15	2	15	15
Texas A&M	4	15	6	1

"They made a decision to play as hard and as well as they can, and they turned their season around."

NU completed the turnaround in grand style, defeating league champion Texas 17-15, 15-6, 14-16, 15-10 Saturday at the NU Coliseum after beating Texas A&M 15-4, 2-15, 15-6, 15-1 Friday.

The Huskers often faulted their inability to replace injured players Jaime Kronidak and Renee Saunders when explaining their October losses. Now, only one month later, depth has proven to be NU's strength.

Twelve Huskers competed before a season-high crowd of 4,408 in the win over Texas (23-6 and 17-3). Pettit pointed to Nebraska's depth as a deciding factor in the fourth game of the match.

Down 10-9 in the final game, Pettit inserted freshman Kim Behrends for the second time in the match. Behrends responded with a kill and two critical digs as the teams took turns siding out.

"I told Kim before the match that I thought she might be the difference tonight," Pettit said. "You can tell she really wants to be on the court."

"In the fourth game, (Mandy)

Please see STREAK on 10

Huskers struggle to get past UTSA

BY JAY SAUNDERS
Assignment Reporter

For the second time in three years, the Nebraska men's basketball team has started the season 5-0.

To get there, the Cornhuskers had to overcome more than just Texas-San Antonio.

The Huskers shot only 40 percent from the field and turned the ball over 16 times against the Roadrunners, but managed to pull off a 68-59 win in front of 7,637 fans at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on Saturday.

NU junior Venson Hamilton led the Huskers with 18 points and 14 rebounds.

For the second straight year, UTSA (2-2) provided the Huskers a formidable challenge. Last season, NU squeaked by the Roadrunners 79-76 in Lincoln.

"Those teams with hyphens in their name always come up here and give us their best shot," NU Coach Danny Nee said. "I don't think it was ever in doubt who would win the game."

Nine of the Huskers' 16 turnovers came in the first half as NU mustered just a 32-28 halftime lead.

Nebraska point guard Tyrone Lue, still recovering from a stomach virus that bothered him in Nebraska's 64-57

Nebraska	68
UTSA	59

win over Colorado State on Tuesday, shot only 2-of-7 before halftime. For the game, Lue was 4 of 16 with 14 points. He also had five turnovers. Even though Lue struggled in the last two games, Nee said Lue still has the green light.

"I thought (Lue) had some good looks tonight," Nee said. "He had a couple of flat shots, but the majority were pretty good. If (Lue) turns the ball over five or six times, nothing is going to look smooth."

In the second half, UTSA tied the game at 32 and 36, before the Huskers went on a 12-0 run. Lue and junior Troy Piatkowski each hit a 3-pointer. Sandwiched between was one of six baskets in the paint by Hamilton.

NU's lead grew to 11 with 11:30 left in the game before the Roadrunners put together a similar run. Junior guard Steve Meyer scored five consecutive points to make the score 50-44 with nine minutes left.

The Roadrunners, however, got no closer than five points as Nebraska hit its free throws in the final minutes to ice the game. Hamilton said the Huskers should have put UTSA away when they had the

Please see HOOPS on 10