

Sports Opinion



David Wilson

NU's Green deserving of trophy hype

When talking about the most overly hyped hunk of bronze in college football, two names come to mind as candidates for this year's Heisman Trophy. Sadly, the field was narrowed to two players long ago.

Over the course of the season, Tennessee quarterback Peyton Manning and Michigan cornerback Charles Woodson have been compared in every aspect by just about every college football guru.

What about the other top players in the nation - including NU I-back Ahman Green?

Not a chance.

"It seems to me that when people determine Heisman candidates, it's almost before their senior year," Nebraska Running Backs Coach Frank Solich said. "If you're not one of the top five or so guys that they're looking at coming out of the box, it's an uphill battle."

It's pretty crappy that the "outstanding college football player of the year" might not actually be the best player.

Green, a finalist for the Doak Walker Award, ranks second in the nation with 1,698 rushing yards behind Texas's Ricky Williams' 1,893. But Green has had fewer carries and averages seven yards every time he touches the ball - better than any other back in the top 40.

He plays for the undefeated Cornhuskers and ran for an average of 170 yards against three currently ranked teams, but Green isn't even listed on ESPN SportsZone's Heisman Trophy watch.

The bottom line may be the fact that Green is a quiet runner. Five yards here, 10 yards there - but not a lot of runs that make SportsCenter.

"That's me," Green said. "I'm a quiet person. I don't say much. I play how I am: quiet."

Green ranks second among NU's top career rushers with 3,701 yards - behind Mike Rozier's 4,780. He holds the record for most points scored in a season by a junior with 114 - breaking the old record of 102 held by Johnny Rodgers (1971) and Rozier (1982).

Both Rodgers and Rozier won the Heisman Trophy as juniors. Green probably won't even be invited to the Downtown Athletic Club of New York on Dec. 13.

"I think it's very difficult to pick a guy out this year because there are a number of guys that have played tremendously well for their football team," Solich said. "I think Ahman is one of them."

Too bad he didn't get the hype.

David Wilson is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.

Osborne urges: Forget polls

BY DAVID WILSON
Senior Reporter

Football
Big 12 Championship
Texas A&M vs. Nebraska
Saturday Dec. 6 3:35 p.m.
San Antonio, Texas

This year's national championship may come down to a decision by the pollsters, but the Nebraska football team still must win its last two games - both against ranked opponents - to remain in contention for the national title.

NU Coach Tom Osborne said he hoped the Cornhuskers (11-0 overall and 8-0 in the Big 12 Conference) would remain focused on the game at hand rather than worrying about the polls and risking their second-consecutive Big 12 Championship loss.

No. 2 Nebraska will travel to San Antonio, Texas, Saturday to face No. 14 Texas A&M (9-2 and 6-2) in the Big 12 Championship at 3:35 p.m. The game will be televised nationally on ABC.

In last year's league championship, the Huskers fell to Texas 37-27, but NU was without starting I-back Ahman Green and many players were hit by a flu bug.

This year, Nebraska rush end Grant

Wistrom said, the Huskers are ready. "We just went out and got embarrassed last year," Wistrom said, "and that's the last thing that we want to happen this year."

A year ago at this time, Nebraska was coming off a 17-12 win over Colorado that may have emotionally drained the Huskers.

"I think last year's Colorado game was played in the rain and was a very hard-fought game," Osborne said. "And this year, it was at the end, but I don't know if we put as much into the game emotionally that we did a year before."

"Another thing that happened last year was we lost early to Arizona

State. It seemed like it took all the focus we possibly had to just kind of climb ourselves out of a hole we dug and get back into contention for the national championship. This year it hasn't been as big of struggle."

Last Saturday, the Huskers played a three-point game against the Buffaloes, but the 27-24 win appeared closer on the scoreboard than it actually was, Wistrom said.

The Aggies also struggled to down the Buffaloes and left Boulder, Colo., with a 16-10 win Oct. 4.

Texas A&M ranks among the nation's top 25 in 12 statistical cate-

Please see POLLS on 8

One more time

NU helped Reitsma realize dreams

BY SHANNON HEFFELFINGER
Assignment Reporter

When the curtain rises for the final act of Nebraska's volleyball season this weekend, its star of four years will give her last performance.

Lisa Reitsma makes her final NCAA Tournament appearance Saturday night at 7:30 when the No. 9 Cornhuskers (25-6) play host to either Butler (28-6) or Michigan State (22-11).

And if Reitsma has her way, the show won't end until the Huskers arrive in Spokane, Wash. Dec. 18 for the NCAA Final Four.

"This has definitely been the strangest year of my career here, with the losses and everything," Reitsma said. "But it shows a lot of character

that we were able to come such a long way and get back. We are really driven right now, and I would be disappointed if we didn't make it to the Final Four."

It has never been any different for Reitsma, a quiet but fierce competitor. The Huskers advanced to the Final Four in each of Reitsma's first three years, winning their first national championship during her sophomore season.

NU has compiled a 118-12 record since 1994 - the year Reitsma made her debut at Nebraska - and the list of individual honors Reitsma has earned along the way continues to grow.

First-team All-American, Big 12 Conference Player of the Year, and national runner-up player of the year were honors Reitsma could not imagine earning five years ago as she sat at

her home in tiny Sanborn, Iowa, and talked to NU Assistant Coach Cathy Noth about a possible future at Nebraska.

Cathy started calling me and they sent me a media guide," Reitsma said. "I looked through it and saw 'win, win, win' and I could not see myself going to Nebraska. I didn't really take them seriously."

Reitsma had planned on attending Bord

Please see REITSMAS on 8

MATT MILLER/DN

NEBRASKA SENIOR LISA REITSMAS will more than likely close out her impressive career at the NU Coliseum as a Husker when NU begins competition in the NCAA Tournament this weekend. The two-time All-American and last year's national player of the year runner-up leads the Huskers in kills, attacks and assists by a non-setter.

Nee hopes to refine Lue, offensive play

BY DARREN IVY
Staff Reporter

This weekend the Nebraska football team is playing in the Big 12 Championship in San Antonio, Texas, hoping to avoid a loss that would end its national championship hopes.

Meanwhile, tonight, the Husker men's basketball team is looking to rebound from its first loss of the season to Tulsa Monday.

The football mentality is "Lose one game and you're out," said NU Basketball Coach Danny Nee.

"In basketball, we have the good fortunes of the (NCAA) tournament," Nee said. "For us to lose three, four or five games is not going to be the end of our season at this point."

NU (5-1) will take on the University of North Carolina-Wilmington, 3-3, at 6:30 p.m. in the first round of the 11th Annual Ameritas Classic at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The winner of that game will play the winner of the Cornell/Grambling game at 8:15 p.m. Saturday while the two losers in the first round will meet in the consolation game at 6 p.m. Saturday.

UNC-Wilmington believes in playing a tough nonconference schedule, Nee said. The Seahawks already have played three rated teams including

Clemson, Rhode Island and Princeton.

"They are not the best team in the nation, but they are a team that can really make you look bad and beat you if you are not ready to play," Nee said.

Nee said NU's main objective of the early season is to win every nonconference game, but he also wants NU to improve and be ready for conference play.

"No matter how we cut it," Nee said, "how we do in the conference sets us up for what we are going to do in postseason."

One player Nee wants to get on track before the conference schedule starts is junior point guard Tyrone Lue. Lue is averaging 19.5 points a game and also has 31 assists but has committed 31 turnovers.

Lue, a preseason All-America candidate, has had a target on his chest each game, Nee said.

"Players guarding Lue have a gleam in their eyes and come at him like he is a marked man," Nee said.

Lue hasn't met their emotional challenge, Nee said, but it should be just a matter of time before he adjusts.

Former Huskers Jaron Boone, Erick Strickland and Eric Piatkowski experienced similar problems when other teams focused on them, Nee said.

Lue has sought advice from former Colorado and current NBA player Chauncey Billups to help him adjust.

"I talked to Chauncey last night and he said he went through the same thing," Lue said. "He told me to try to draw more fouls and get to the line."

Men's Basketball

Ameritas Classic
UNC Wilmington vs. Nebraska
6:30 p.m. today at Bob Devaney
Sports Center
Cornell or Grambling St. vs. Nebraska
6 or 8:15 p.m. Saturday



In six games this season, Lue has attempted 24 free throws. Lue is just one player, though, and Nee said the other players need to step up as well.

"We are not going to win with just Tyrone Lue," he said.

This week, NU has worked on making adjustments on offense, Lue said.

When he penetrates in the lane and draws help defense, NU's wing players, Cookie Belcher and Troy Piatkowski, will move to a better passing lane, Lue said. A lot of balls have been deflected when Lue tried to pass the ball to the corner, Nee said.

By making this adjustment, NU hopes to get better shots and cut down on its turnovers. Through six games, the Huskers have 101 turnovers or nearly a 17 per game average. The Huskers are shooting 43.6 percent from the floor.

"It's reality check for us," Nee said. "There is still a lot of work that needs to be done at both ends of the floor for Nebraska basketball."