

Sports Opinion



## Mike Kluck Osborne's work here is finished

I sat with a friend on the night of Jan. 1, 1992, watching the Orange Bowl.

It was a tough night, my friend was an Oklahoma fan and the Cornhuskers lost 22-0 to Miami, furthering the belief that Tom Osborne always could get to the big game, but never win it.

The game was Osborne's fifth straight loss in a bowl game and NU finished 15th in The Associated Press poll that season.

Nobody is certain when it exactly happened—maybe it was one of those sleepless nights Osborne experiences following a game—but sometime after that fateful Orange Bowl, Osborne realized that if Nebraska was to become a national power again, the Huskers would have to change their recruiting style.

So he and the NU coaching staff renewed their commitment to the Huskers and Nebraskans and recruited speedier defensive players who could keep up with quick receivers.

The result wasn't immediate, as the Huskers went 9-3 in 1992.

But then it started paying off as NU compiled a 59-3 record over the next five years, won two national championships, played for a third and when Osborne coaches his final game against Tennessee in this year's Orange Bowl game, it could become his third national title.

So Wednesday, when Osborne announced his resignation, it was only prophetic. The rebuilding was complete—he had put Nebraska back on top.

Osborne took over a program in 1973 that was one year past winning back-to-back national championships. He took NU to the brink of a national championship in 1983 before losing on a two-point conversion play that for years defined his career. He won back-to-back national championships in 1995 and 1996 and is one win away from a third national championship.

Although I, like the Huskers, took a beating on that New Year's Day night in 1992, because of Tom Osborne we can hold our heads high.

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

# Coaches shocked at loss of Osborne

BY SAM MCKEWON  
Staff Reporter

The Big 12's eldest statesman among football coaches, Tom Osborne, stepped down Wednesday, leading some coaches around the nation and within the conference to express their disbelief about the resignation.

"I am in shock at this very moment," Kansas State Coach Bill Snyder said. "The only emotion that I can really express right now is surprise, and I am seldom taken by surprise at all. I talked to him (Tuesday), and he didn't say anything about it."

Snyder, who has coached at Kansas State since 1988 but has never beaten Osborne, said his departure will be a serious loss to the conference.

Osborne should go down as one of the best coaches in college football history, Snyder said.

"Legend, that's the only word I think of," Snyder said. "Tom Osborne represented the very best this conference had to offer and represented the very best in college football. He'll be missed by everyone."

Florida State Coach Bobby Bowden, who is 5-2 against Osborne and defeated the Huskers 18-16 in 1994 for Bowden's lone national championship, said that Osborne was a definitive winner and great spokesman for the game.

"He's an icon in Nebraska and in this nation," Bowden said. "And he was a winner. It's hard for me to even think of Nebraska without Tom."

Bowden said he and Osborne often traded ideas about football and the Cornhusker head coach was a stalwart in college football strategy.

"When you played a Tom Osborne-coached team, you knew you would play as fine a team fundamentally as there is," Bowden said. "They have always blocked and tackled better than any team we play."

"He and I are pretty close. He called me quite often to talk about things and get advice, and I did the same very often. I probably talked more to him, more than about anybody in terms of handling problems and questions I might ask."

Colorado Coach Rick Neuheisel, who played against Osborne's Nebraska team with UCLA in 1982 and has coached against him the past two seasons, said Osborne has



AFTER WINNING the 250th game of his career, Coach Tom Osborne was introduced to the Memorial Stadium crowd by Athletic Director Bill Byrne, who complimented Osborne on his amazing feat. Osborne was joined by his wife, Nancy, and one of his grandchildren.

MICHAEL WARREN/DN

"Tom Osborne represented the very best this conference had to offer and represented the very best in college football."

BILL SNYDER  
Kansas State coach

played a large role in his football experience.

"He has certainly earned the right to be mentioned in the same breath as the all-time greats," Neuheisel said. "It was a thrill to be on opposite sidelines both as a player and a coach."

Former CU Coach Bill McCartney, who retired in 1994 after 12 years of coaching and was 3-10-1 against Osborne, said he'll remember the NU coach in a positive light all-around.

"My first thoughts are admiration and affection," McCartney said. "To maintain the level of excellence that Nebraska achieved under Coach Osborne's leadership is staggering."

Professional coaches had even spoke out about Osborne's resignation.

Miami Dolphins Coach Jimmy Johnson, who coached at Oklahoma State and won a national title at Miami in 1987 and three Super Bowls with the Dallas Cowboys said he had great respect his former adviser.

"Osborne was one of the great coaches in college football, all-

### Milestone victories



|               |              |                  |                |
|---------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| Win no. 1 -   | Nebraska 40, | UCLA 13,         | Sept. 8, 1973  |
| Win no. 50 -  | Nebraska 23, | Iowa St. 0,      | Oct. 7, 1978   |
| Win no. 100 - | Nebraska 42, | UCLA 10,         | Sept. 24, 1983 |
| Win no. 102 - | Nebraska 14, | Oklahoma St. 10, | Oct. 8, 1983   |
| Win no. 150 - | Nebraska 47, | Arizona St. 16,  | Sept. 24, 1988 |
| Win no. 200 - | Nebraska 27, | Oklahoma St. 13, | Oct. 7, 1993   |
| Win no. 250 - | Nebraska 64, | Oklahoma 7,      | Nov. 1, 1997   |

### The last 25 years

- Won 13 conference championships
- Won 254 games (more than 10 wins per year)
- Won nine or more games every year (an NCAA record)
- Gone to 25 consecutive bowl games (17 consecutive "Major" bowls)
- Been ranked every year by The Associated Press



time," Johnson said. "He has a tremendous amount of respect from all of his peers."

Osborne cited health as part of his decision concerning his retirement, along with time constraints. He said 14- to 15-hour days were becoming tougher to handle.

Snyder concurred with the notion that coaching a major college football team can take a serious toll on the body after awhile.

"It can put some serious damage on your body over time," Snyder said. "If there was a coach that was 30 years old and he was starting out today, he could not last 25 years like Tom has done at Nebraska. The pressures of the game are just too much now."

Snyder said he was confident that Nebraska would be able to continue the success it has had in the past even without Osborne at the helm.

"When Bob Devaney left, there were questions about what would happen, and Tom's done a good job," Snyder said. "I think Solich will continue that tradition at Nebraska."

### Osborne in the bowls

#### Most bowl games, all time

1. Paul "Bear" Bryant 27
2. Joe Paterno 22
3. Tom Osborne 24
4. Vince Dooley 20
- Lou Holtz 20

#### Most bowl victories by active coaches

1. Joe Paterno 18
2. Bobby Bowden 15
3. Tom Osborne 11
4. John Robinson 7
- LaVell Edwards 7

#### All-time major bowl appearances

1. Paul "Bear" Bryant 20
2. Tom Osborne 17
3. Darrel Royal 12
- Bo Schembechler 12
5. Joe Paterno 11

#### Most years taking one college to a bowl

1. Joe Paterno 27/17
2. Tom Osborne 25/25
3. Paul "Bear" Bryant 24/24
4. Vince Dooley 20/9
5. LaVell Edwards 20/9

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