

Husky: UW improved on defense

By SAM MCKEWON
Staff writer

Three hundred eighty-four yards rushing at 5.8 yards per carry. Two rushers with 129 yards each.



Lambright

Those are the numbers the Washington defense has looked at for almost a year — numbers the Nebraska offense inflicted upon them in 27-14 victory last season.

And if the Huskies are to have any chance this season of beating Nebraska, they'll tell you they have to stop those numbers from happening again.

Specifically, they have to stop the option.

Going about it, UW Coach Jim Lambright said, is easier said than done.

"The game plan is going in as we speak," Lambright said. "We've got all our notes from last year. We just can not do what we did last year."

What the Huskies did last year wasn't much. UW's defensive line, a smaller, attacking unit, seemed outmatched against a bigger, stronger NU offensive line.

Nebraska also confused the Huskies with two new plays — one an option, the other a quarterback draw — both went for touchdowns, gaining the Huskers a 14-0 lead in the first quarter.

Lambright said this year the defensive line is in good shape with bigger, stronger and better-running players; it should help to slow the option down.

Husky defensive lineman Mac Tuiaea said Washington will be better prepared to stop the option.

"I definitely think we're an improved group," Tuiaea said. "We'll try and use our quickness to our advantage. We're going to be open to try and stop anything."

Stopping the option starts with stopping the fullback. And both Lambright and Tuiaea agree that NU's fullback, Joel Makovicka, is one of the nation's best.

"It's him on the goal line and in short yardage purposes that we have to take out," Lambright said. "He's going to get the ball and you know it."

Tuiaea said a lot of Makovicka's yards were the results of missed assignments defensively.

"Their offense executed really well," Tuiaea said. "We didn't get guys in the proper gaps and that's what led him to do what he did out there."

Trying to simulate the option in practice can be a daunting task as well. While the Huskies do play an option team in the Pac-10 Conference (Oregon State) every season, the Beavers' attack doesn't match up to Nebraska's.

Furthermore, UW can simulate the plays the Huskers will be running, but they cannot simulate the personnel or the execution speed of team in a system that has run the option for more than 15 years.

"It's really hard to prepare in a week for the multiple option that Nebraska runs," Lambright said. "It's hard enough to duplicate the scheme let alone how you duplicate a Bobby Newcombe. Those are two huge problems the defense face."

After last season's defeat, Tuiaea said, Washington goes into the Nebraska with somewhat of a chip on its shoulder.

"We've got a lot to prove," Tuiaea said. "We can't get consumed by them."

Burton returns to Lincoln

By DAVID WILSON
Senior staff writer

As the only Washington football player to have the experience of playing in Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Nigel Burton has been answering his teammates' questions all week.

Burton, a senior rover, played with Pacific in 1995, when the Cornhuskers downed the Tigers 49-7.

"Pretty much I've told them that it's a great place to play," Burton said. "The fans just respect great football. The fans will cheer for you and make you feel at home even though you're not."

Of course, the atmosphere of Saturday's game, which pits the No. 8 Huskies (2-0) and No. 2 Nebraska (3-0) at 2:35 p.m., might be a little different from what Burton faced in 1995.

Since the last time Pacific was in Lincoln, the Tigers have lost their football program. Washington, on the other hand, has gone 24-11-1 over the last three seasons, including winning the Pac-10 Conference in 1995.

Pac-10 fans, Burton said, can get a little crazy.

"It's nothing like you see out on

the West Coast," Burton said. "We've had some pretty foul things thrown at us. I don't foresee that happening at Nebraska."

Intimidation, said Burton, a 5-foot-9, 180-pounder, will not be a factor, as it was for some of his teammates on the 1995 Pacific team.

Burton recorded 13 tackles against the Huskers, caused a fumble and snagged an interception.

"If I was intimidated, I wouldn't be playing this game," Burton said. "I'm not the biggest and I'm not the fastest. I show up every day and that's just the way I am. I just wanted to go out there and prove that I could compete — and I think I did."

The attitude of this year's Huskies squad is much the same, Burton said.

"Our mission is pretty much to play to the best of our abilities," Burton said. "In the last few years, I'm not so sure we did that."

Washington entered its matchup with Nebraska ranked No. 2 in the country last season and lost 27-14.

Burton said he is pumped up for his return to Lincoln, and for the crowd at Memorial Stadium.

"I think they're just some good down-home folks."

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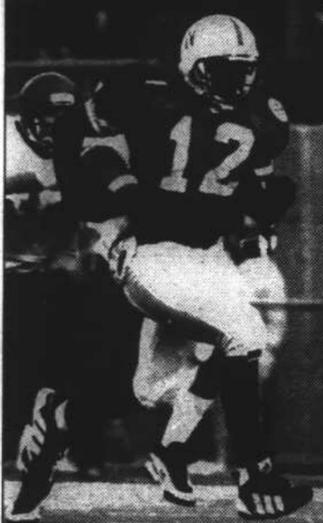
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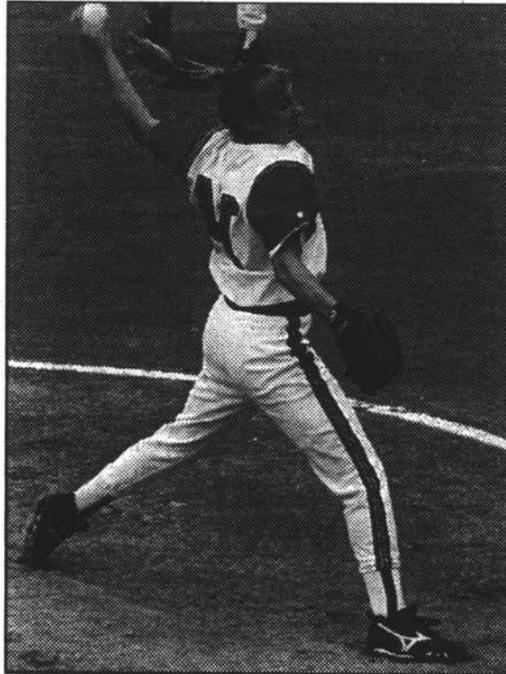
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