



## Wounded NU waits for KSU matchup, wants win for Solich

By SHANNON HEFFELFINGER  
Senior staff writer

For the first time since 1982, the Nebraska football team has lost two games in its season before November began. The Cornhuskers have fallen



Solich

out of the national championship picture. They probably will not win the Big 12 Conference.

To say that No. 11 NU will experience a total role reversal Saturday when it travels to

Manhattan for a much-anticipated battle with first and second-ranked Kansas State would be an understatement.

But Husker quarterback Eric Crouch said the Huskers will have no problems finding motivation.

He counted them off on his fingers Tuesday: Odds-makers have labeled twice-beaten Nebraska, a team that hasn't lost to the Wildcats in 29 years, a 10-point underdog. The Cornhusker offense will face one of the nation's best defenses. NU has yet to prove it can play well on the road against a ranked opponent.

And the pride of the program is on the line.

"We just have a lot of guys who really want this -- who really want to go out and win," Crouch said. "I think that's what's holding us together, despite the injuries and the losses. There's been a lot of stuff we've had to fight through to overcome a lot of adversity."

"We're on a team that has been great for so many years, and no one on this team wants to be included in the group that loses the tradition or loses the pride."

No. 11 Nebraska (8-2 overall and 4-2 in the Big 12 Conference) faces a tall order Saturday against No. 2 Kansas State (9-0 and 6-0). The Wildcats lead the country in scoring offense, scoring defense and punt returns and rank in the top 25 in all 12 NCAA major statistical categories.

"As I see them, they are a great team with no weak areas," NU Coach Frank Solich said. "They have a strong football team and are playing on a championship level. We've looked at all of their tapes from the season, and they are just that good."

Kansas State's success this season has centered around quarterback and Heisman candidate Michael Bishop. The senior leads the conference in total offense (271.4 yards per game)

"We just have a lot of guys who really want this -- who really want to go out and win. I think that's what's holding us together."

ERIC CROUCH  
NU quarterback

and pass efficiency (164.3 points). Bishop has thrown for 2,040 yards and 18 touchdowns.

But the Wildcats' defense may present the greatest challenge. KSU's defense ranks in the top three in the nation in three categories. Kansas State has given up more than 10 points only once this season.

With Crouch making only his fourth start of the year and I-back Dan Alexander making his second start, Nebraska will need a strong performance from the offensive line in order to counter KSU's defense.

"I know that their defensive line is big and aggressive, and their techniques are very good," Solich said. "I think we've been improving as an offensive line. Hopefully, we've improved enough to get some things done both on the ground and in the air."

NU rush end Mike Rucker believes the Huskers have improved enough. And despite both Nebraska and KSU's motivational factors, he said Nebraska may own the best one -- Solich.

"We've had some disappointments this year," Rucker said, "but we want to do this one for him just as much as we want to do it for ourselves."

Husker linebacker Jay Foreman agreed.

"Everyone wants to try to blame Coach Solich, but it hasn't been him," Foreman said. "It's been the players. We haven't been making the plays, and we haven't been doing the things that we should be doing. Everybody cares about Coach Solich a lot, and this is a chance to get everything back."

"I think our team is going to step up this week. Everyone knows what's riding on it. A win would make a statement that our program is not going downhill."

### Sports Opinion



Dave Wilson

## K-State fans prepared for upset of NU

MANHATTAN, Kan. — On a given afternoon at Rusty's Last Chance Saloon in downtown Manhattan — better known as Aggieville — you can find Mike Arria slouching on his forearms behind the bar.

He's deep in thought, staring at the stained-wood doors that block the entrance.

Many days, the 24-year-old might think about life in New York — his former home. This week, however, you're probably more likely to find him wondering just how crazy Manhattan can get — Manhattan, Kan., that is.

Without cracking a smile, Arria will tell you about the time the Wagner Field goal posts ended up behind the bar following a 37-20 victory over Colorado last season — a team the Wildcats hadn't defeated since 1984.

But even Arria can't imagine what would happen if KSU downed Nebraska on Saturday for the first time in 30 years.

"If it's a K-State win, it's going to be something we've never seen before," Arria said. "I don't think anybody thinks they're going to lose."

From behind the counter at the bowling alley in the Kansas State Student Union, Nathan Killion, 21, painted a similar scene.

"It will be total chaos," Killion said. "Everybody is all hyped up."

The fans are ready. The KSU players are ready (but not too ready, of course). And even the lovable Coach Bill Snyder is ready — though he won't directly answer any questions regarding the issue.

"Will this be the loudest crowd ever?" Snyder asked himself at Tuesday's news conference. "I would hope so. It needs to be."

Senior offensive lineman Jeremy Martin is also expecting big things from the Wildcat faithful.

"They're going to be geeked-up — stoked," Martin said. "They're going to be crazy."

This is the game that's been talked about since last January.

The students are already plotting ways to get around security guards to rip down the goal posts. Even ESPN's Lee Corso will be in town for College Gameday.

"I think it means a lot to our fans," Martin said. "It's time for them to enjoy it and heckle Lee Corso."

The Wildcats haven't had a legitimate chance to beat the Cornhuskers in as long as most KSU players — or fans — can remember.

Manhattan is ready. Better grease up those goal posts.

David Wilson is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior staff writer.