

# Nickel blitz pays dividends for Huskers

BY BRANDON SCHULTE  
Staff writer

It was the first drive of the game, and the Iowa State football team had driven deep into Nebraska territory.

By spreading out the Cornhusker defense, the Cyclones had methodically moved down the field on fourth-ranked Nebraska to the 19-yard line.

But following a holding penalty that sent ISU back to the 33, NU nickel back Joe Walker crashed through the line on a nickel blitz to sack quarterback Sage Rosenfels and cause him to fumble.

While the blitz is one of many in the Husker defensive scheme, it has been responsible for several big plays. On several occasions this year, the nickel blitz, and others like it, has

enabled the NU defense to change the momentum of games by causing turnovers and large losses.

Linebackers Coach Craig Bohl said the blitz has been part of the Husker defensive package for awhile and is having more success than in the past.

"Things go in cycles," Bohl said. "Sometimes you have a bead on why a certain blitz is going to come free, but other times it is kind of the luck of the draw."

"You never really know how an offense is going to protect something, and sometimes the blitzes are predicated on a guy screwing up."

Two other times this season plays by the nickel back have dealt a decisive blow to the offense.

It caused a defensive touchdown later in the ISU game when Walker caused another fumble, which was

returned for a score by rush end Demoiné Adams.

Against Southern Mississippi, it accounted for the winning touchdown when nickel back Keyuo Craver deflected Golden Eagle quarterback Jeff Kelly's pass into the hands of linebacker Julius Jackson, who returned the interception for a touchdown.

"One of the things the coaches stress on pretty much any blitz is that if you're coming in and have a good shot at the quarterback to focus on an arm swipe (to dislodge the ball) and then focus on the tackle," Walker said.

Nebraska should be in a nickel defense, which trades a linebacker for a defensive back, often this weekend to combat Texas formations that use three and four receivers.

Texas sophomore quarterback

"The key offensively is to be patient, and when the chances come, take them."

MAJOR APPLEWHITE  
Texas quarterback

Major Applewhite has thrived in the open attack this season, scorching opposing defenses for 2,091 yards and 14 touchdowns, and Applewhite said nothing will change against Nebraska.

"This offense is definitely a little more wide open this year," Applewhite said. "Last year, it didn't have to be because we had Ricky (Williams)."

"The key offensively is to be patient, and when the chances come,

take them."

And just like the Longhorns' offense, the Nebraska defense will continue to take risks, such as the nickel-back blitz to cause Applewhite to make the errors his counterparts have made facing the Huskers.

"I think it will be very effective for our defense," Walker said. "It really doesn't matter what the offensive scheme is. If we got a blitz called, you know we're coming."

## Huskers earn third in Big 12 coaches poll

From staff reports

Nebraska senior Nicole Kubik headlines four returning starters for the Cornhusker women's basketball team, which is the third-best team in the Big 12 Conference, according to a preseason poll of conference coaches.

Kubik earned first-team All-Big 12 honors in the poll. Kubik led the conference in scoring last season at 19.8 points per game.

Nebraska returns key players from a team that went 21-12 overall last season and tied for fifth in the

Big 12.

But four returning starters were not enough to rank the Huskers above Iowa State. The Cyclones return their entire starting lineup from last season's Elite Eight team and received 10 out of 11 first-place votes.

Preseason player of the year honors were also tabbed on Cyclone senior Stacy Frese.

Kansas was sandwiched in between Iowa State and Nebraska in second place.

Fifth place is where defending conference champion Texas Tech found itself in the poll, after losing three starters from last year's team.

## KU first, NU seventh in preseason rankings

From staff reports

The Big 12 coaches believe that Kansas will regain its status as the elite team in the conference, as the Jayhawk basketball team edged defending champion Texas in the preseason conference rankings released Thursday.

Kansas beat out Texas with six first place votes to the Longhorns' five. Oklahoma State picked up one first place vote and was slotted third in the conference.

Nebraska was picked seventh in the poll, one point behind Iowa State. Oklahoma came in fourth in the voting; Missouri was fifth.

Colorado, Texas Tech, K-State, Texas A&M and Baylor rounded out

the preseason conference predictions.

Nebraska had no players among the All-Big 12 team.

Texas center Chris Mihm was voted as the preseason player of the year.

He was joined on the conference first-team with Marcus Fizer of Iowa State, Kansas big man Eric Chenoweth, Oklahoma's Eduardo Najera and Desmond Mason of Oklahoma State.

The Jayhawks continue to land top prospects with the addition of McDonald's All-American Nick Collison to the team.

Collison already has earned the respect of the conference coaches, as he was bestowed the preseason freshman of the year title.

## Huskers look to secure key conference victory

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However similar both schools may be, the Huskers have played the role of the evil twin of late, besting Texas in eight of the last nine meetings.

Pettit says that Texas comes to the dance with a better team this year, though.

"I think (Texas Head Coach) Jim Moore likes his team this year a lot more than his team last year," Pettit said.

The Longhorns also boast the top hitting percentage in the conference at .254, but Nebraska is close at .250.

Texas is led by senior middle blocker Erin Aldrich, who leads the

team with kills and blocks and carries a .307 hitting percentage.

The importance of this game is not lost on any of the Nebraska players, though. Setter Jill McWilliams was confident that Nebraska will be ready to play well minutes after Wednesday night's win over Missouri.

"We have two days to prepare for Saturday, and we will be ready," she said.

Pettit said he believed his team is blossoming with five straight wins after a few early setbacks.

"I think we're right where we belong," Pettit said. "We're getting better and better and better."

## NU looks for Big 12 crown

■ With expected wins over OU and OSU, Nebraska would wrap up conference title.

BY BRANDON SCHULTE  
Staff writer

After remaining in first place of the Big 12 Conference standings the entire season, the Nebraska soccer team can officially secure its second straight regular season conference championship with a win this weekend.

With a victory at either Oklahoma on Friday or at Oklahoma State today, the Cornhuskers can clinch the Big 12 Conference title and the No. 1 seed at the tournament in two weeks.

The fourth-ranked Huskers, 14-1 overall, have breezed through

their first seven league encounters, winning all of them by the combined score of 30-2.

On paper it's very easy to imagine that Nebraska can add to that lopsided figure against the Sooners and the Cowboys. Both rate at the bottom of the Big 12 Conference standings with OU 1-7 in league play and OSU just a game better at 2-6 in the conference.

NU Coach John Walker said both teams are better than their records suggest.

"In Oklahoma's case they have lost eight games by one goal," Walker said. "They are as good as other teams in the conference but they've just had a tough time finishing teams off. All road games are tough."

He added that Oklahoma State has extra incentive to defeat the Huskers.

"(OSU) is a real physical hard working team," Walker said. "If they beat us Sunday they have a shot at

making the Big 12 tournament. Last time we went down there they gave us a game. We have to be ready to compete."

Nebraska took off an extra day of practice this week in order for the team to rest but will go into the matches short-handed again as All-conference midfielder Amy Walsh is expected to be out with an injured ankle, sustained Oct. 10 at Colorado. Husker midfielder Jenny Benson, who missed practice Wednesday, is also questionable with a groin injury that has bothered her for several weeks.

Senior forward Lindsay Eddleman said more players will see action this weekend as the team makes sure it is healthy for the conference tournament.

"The coaches will probably play more people this weekend," Eddleman said. "Players who need rest will get time off because this isn't as big of a weekend."

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