

SPORTS

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PAGE 9

NU to No. 3 in BCS, Buffs loom ahead

By DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

Other than Florida State and Virginia Tech, the remaining college football teams have made the other three spots in the top five a revolving door.

Nebraska is one of those teams that can't decide if it wants to be in or out. In a matter of three weeks, the Cornhuskers were No. 7 and now No. 3 in the most recent Bowl Championship Series rankings released Monday.

At 9-1 and 6-1 in the Big 12 Conference, Coach Frank Solich feels good about Nebraska's spot in the polls.

"It's good to be sitting where we are sitting," Solich said. "We feel good

about that with the way the season has come down.

"But really (the ranking) means little to me at this point. What means something right now is the Colorado game coming up. I think our team realizes that, too."

If NU loses to Colorado, it won't have to worry about a national championship. And if past games are any indication, a win in Boulder on Nov. 26 won't come easy.

Dating back to 1989, NU is 3-1-1 in Boulder with a 27-24 victory in 1997, a 21-17 win in 1993 and a 44-21 clobbering sandwiched in between in

1995. Last year in Lincoln, the Huskers barely survived, winning 16-14.

With a week off before that game, Husker fans can bask in the rankings and still hold out hope of a New Year's Eve on Bourbon Street in New Orleans.

The Huskers are No. 4 in both the traditional polls, trailing No. 3 Florida by 31 points in the AP poll and 37 in the coaches poll.

But in the all important BCS, Nebraska has the edge over the Gators. However, to get into the grand daddy of them all this year, NU will likely still need either No. 1 Florida State or No. 2 Virginia Tech to lose.

It could happen.

Florida State and Florida meet Saturday in Gainesville. If Florida wins, it likely goes to No. 1 in the poll.

An FSU victory assures them a seat in the Sugar Bowl.

Meanwhile, Virginia Tech needs wins at Temple next week and against No. 22 Boston College on Nov. 26 to complete its first perfect regular season since 1918, which would send it to New Orleans.

If Florida wins Saturday, that sets the Gators up for a critical matchup in the SEC Championship game against either Alabama or Mississippi State. The Tide beat UF 45-38 in overtime earlier this year.

Another very remote possibility includes NU, despite having one loss, jumping an undefeated Virginia Tech in the BCS poll based on strength of schedule.

When asked how he felt about the polls, senior cornerback Ralph Brown responded: "I'm thinking about all the

Bowl Championship Series rankings

Team	PA	CA	SR	BCS Score
FSU	1.0	1.00	16	2.64
Va. Tech	2.0	2.14	54	6.30
Nebraska	4.0	2.65	21	6.70
Florida	3.0	4.29	25	9.29
Tenn.	7.0	6.50	6	16.74
Alabama	8.0	6.00	1	16.04
Wisconsin	5.0	8.14	63	17.86
Kansas St.	9.0	7.00	48	18.92
Texas	6.0	10.21	23	19.23
Michigan	10.0	8.43	4	20.59

PA - Poll Average
CA - Computer Average
SR - Schedule Rank
BCS Score - Bowl Championship Ranking

possibilities right now. We've got a lot of talent over here, and when we play Nebraska football, I don't think there is anyone out there who can hang with us."

Sports Opinion

Lack of production doomed Phillips



Samuel McKewon

Along with death and taxes, add the fallibility of Lawrence Phillips to the short list of life's certainties.

Phillips, the former Nebraska I-back, will probably play football again in the NFL. Some might say his official departure with the San Francisco 49ers on Monday could be his final stint in the league, and he will play elsewhere.

Maybe Canada. Maybe Arena land. Maybe, in a beautiful twist of irony, he'll be right back here, playing for our own Lincoln Lightning at \$150 per game, or whatever it is they get paid to draw up plays on that old turf.

But probably, he'll end up in the NFL, maybe the Buffalo Bills — anywhere but San Francisco.

Monday, 49ers Coach Steve Mariucci said at a press conference that the team will eventually release Phillips, keeping him suspended without pay for numerous team violations. Eventually, he will be released.

But the career by the Bay was really over Friday when 49ers General Manager Bill Walsh announced Phillips was done with the team because of "insubordinate behavior" and not practicing, which ranks right up there with one of the biggest shocks my body's ever taken.

"His remark was, 'Why practice? You don't put me in anyway,'" Walsh told The Associated Press. "So I think Lawrence was deeply distressed over not playing as much as he expected to. There was a lot that led up to him finally saying that."

Poor Lawrence. Such a dignified soul.

Phillips, it seems, also took to not doing what he was told when he did practice. He clashed with

Running Backs Coach Tom Rathman, a former Husker. Displeased with playing time, he laughed at a Coach Steve Mariucci speech about playing harder.

But what doomed him in San Francisco is the same as what's doomed him both in Miami and St. Louis — Phillips just isn't very good. The temper tantrums are secondary to his play — the Niners didn't use him because he isn't good enough to use.

How else does Isaiah Rider stick around so long in the NBA? He's a menace to every team he plays for.

Rider survives on ability. Phillips could have, too. He only needed to complete his role of being a decent running back. The 49ers, without quarterback Steve Young, aren't very good anyway. It shouldn't have been this hard.

He should have been outstanding from the start, considering his size, reasonable speed and amazing patience in finding a hole in the defense during his college days at NU. But somewhere between college and pro football, and, in reality, directly after his suspension from the Huskers for beating up his ex-girlfriend, Phillips lost some of that ability.

Those handful of weeks that Phillips missed in 1995 cost him yards and continuing development. It probably cost him the Heisman Trophy. It almost certainly destroyed his career in the NFL, which, in a way, is exactly what the running back deserved for his actions that September night.

In many ways, Phillips' life parallels that of former heavyweight Mike Tyson, who damages his career at almost every turn, because in his veins, he knows he's lost it. In San Francisco, Phillips knew it too. It was a risk anyway — playing a complete season right after playing a full schedule in Europe.

But Phillips was smart enough to know he only had a small window of time to excel. No use keeping damaged goods on the roster for 3 yards per carry.

Aside from a 68-yard touchdown run and 75-yard kickoff

Please see **PHILLIPS** on 10



MIKE WARREN/DN

NEBRASKA I-BACK Dahrran Diedrick, who started the season listed as No. 4 on the depth chart, now plays a pivotal role in the NU offense.

Diedrick makes most of time

■ The No. 3 I-back finished with 93 yards in NU's win over Kansas.

By SEAN CALLAHAN
Staff writer

Coming into this season Nebraska's Dahrran Diedrick was not really in the I-back picture.

With juniors DeAngelo Evans, Dan Alexander and Correll Buckhalter all competing for the top slot, no one expected the freshman from Canada to come in at the end of the season and make himself the top back in the season's biggest game against Kansas State.

But when Alexander fumbled on the game's opening play and Buckhalter added two more fumbles, it wasn't a hard decision for Nebraska Coach Frank Solich to go with Diedrick, who finished with 93 yards on 14 carries in NU's 41-15 win.

"I had as much confidence in giving him the ball as I did Eric," Solich

said.

Solich said he has not lost confidence in his top two backs and feels he will need all three of his I-backs to finish out the season where the team wants to be.

"It's just a point where we have a lot of guys who are physical running backs," Solich said.

After the game, Diedrick said he was not surprised when Solich called on him.

"It wasn't a big surprise; I knew I'd get a chance to go in the game," Diedrick said. "I'm just glad it came as early as it did, and the line blocked enough to give me some opportunities to run the ball."

Coming from Ontario, Diedrick knows football isn't respected much north of the border. With his performance on Saturday, Diedrick thinks he answered a lot of people's questions on what type of player he really is.

The highlight of his game was a 46-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter that gave the Huskers a 34-9 lead.

"I always try to prove something," Diedrick said. "Football is the same

anywhere you play it."

The school's record 10 fumbles against Kansas State on Saturday was something that made Diedrick nervous every time he carried the ball.

"I was just trying not to think about fumbling," Diedrick said. "That's what I think is the number one thing that makes you fumble."

With Diedrick's game on Saturday, some people wonder who Solich is going to start against Colorado. Diedrick doesn't think it will create a controversy when Solich names his starter against Colorado. In fact, Diedrick said he will be happy in whatever role he plays.

"I'll do whatever the coaches do," Diedrick said. "If I get in the fourth quarter, I get in the fourth quarter."

Diedrick knows if his role is limited he still has three more seasons to compete for a starting spot.

"The two guys ahead of me are really close to each other, and I guess I might have jumped a little closer to them," Diedrick said. "They're all juniors, and I am just a freshman, so I'm going to take my opportunities whenever they come."