

SPORTS

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NU falls further behind Tech in BCS

■ The Huskers will probably need a huge blowout of Texas to slip into the Sugar Bowl.

From staff reports

Nebraska's chances of playing for a national title went from slim to virtually none Monday with the release of the latest Bowl Championship Series poll.

No. 2 Virginia Tech, which finished its season at 11-0 after beating Boston College 38-14 Friday more

than doubled its lead over the Cornhuskers in the poll from .63 points to 1.54. Tech's total is 6.16; NU's is 7.70.

Florida State, also at 11-0, is No. 1 in the BCS and already guaranteed a spot in the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans, which will serve as the national championship game site this season Jan. 4.

It likely won't matter what NU does against No. 12 Texas on Saturday in the Big 12 Championship, save a major blowout, said Jerry Palm, a Chicago-based computer expert who runs www.CollegeRPI.com, a Web site that analyzes the BCS poll.

"It's virtually certain that

Nebraska cannot catch Virginia Tech," Palm said Monday. "If NU beats Texas 50-0, I guess you can ask me then."

The major difference this week can be found through a shift in computer rankings, all in favor of the Hokies. Tech moved up to first in seven of the eight polls used—and the BCS will drop the lowest computer ranking.

Meanwhile, Nebraska, coming off a 33-30 overtime win against Colorado, dropped in the same rankings, as NU went from first to third in the Dunkel Index. The Huskers, 10-1 overall, are second in another computer poll and third in the other six.

The Hokies also moved up in the strength of schedule department, from 66th to 54th. Boston College, an 8-3 team that won five games by four points or less, helped Tech's ranking significantly.

By contrast, Texas' loss to Texas A&M hurt NU's strength of schedule. "Nebraska was hurt by Texas losing as much as it was in its own game," Palm said. "It negatively impacts their strength of schedule in both the BCS formula and each of the computer rankings."

Nebraska Coach Frank Solich said Monday after practice that he is forced to accept any result the BCS elicits.

Bowl Championship Series rankings

Team	PA	CA	SR	BCS Score
Florida State	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0
Va. Tech	2.0	2.00	2.16	6.16
Nebraska	3.0	2.90	0.84	7.70
Florida	5.0	6.00	0.48	13.48
Texas	6.0	5.57	0.48	14.13

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

"You have to have some kind of system," Solich said. "You live and die

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THE CORNHUSKERS prepare to face Texas running back Hodges Mitchell and the rest of the Longhorns on Saturday in San Antonio. Texas has beaten Nebraska in their past three meetings, including an earlier match-up this season. LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN

Brown impressed by latest NU run

BY DARREN IVY
Senior staff writer

If Texas Coach Mack Brown and Nebraska Coach Frank Solich were artists, their paintings after Nov. 26's tough games would probably have many similarities.

Brown's piece would have pictures of a down-trodden coach and emotionally drained Longhorn players after a 20-16 loss to No. 24 Texas A&M.

Solich's would have a relieved coach but deflated football players after likely losing their shot at a national championship with a 33-30 victory over unranked Colorado.

The task of both coaches now is to get No. 3 NU and No. 12 UT back up for the Big 12 Championship game Saturday at 2:30 p.m. in San Antonio.

"It will be really tough," Brown said. "Both teams will be ready to play because it's for the conference championship, but I did realize that Florida and Florida State as well as Alabama and Auburn moved or had their championship games scheduled to have at least two weeks to prepare."

"It gets really difficult to play your biggest rival in the last game of the year and then play your biggest game, which is the conference championship, the next week."

Solich said the NU-Texas rivalry should help the teams get over the emotional games.

"Both teams have a tremendous amount of pride," Solich said. "Regardless of the outcome

"I think you are going to get both teams' best effort in this football game."

FRANK SOLICH
NU coach

of the two games, I think you are going to get both teams' best effort in this football game."

Said UT's Brown: "Both teams will be ready to play because it is a one-game shot at the conference championship, and that's what you play for all year."

A Big 12 championship was just one of the goals the Huskers had on their list when the season started, but a 24-20 loss to the Longhorns on Oct. 23 has become the one thing to keep NU out of the national championship game.

With that in mind, people might think Solich and the Huskers would be looking for payback Saturday, but Solich said that wasn't the case.

"I still don't see it as a way of revenge in preparing for them," Solich said. "I see it as preparing for an excellent football team—one that is well-coached and has good athletes on it."

Solich said NU coaches were preparing for the game as if the two teams hadn't faced one another. That included reviewing tapes from Texas' entire season.

Brown said both teams were familiar with one another, so he would use the week to fine-



tune his own team.

"We have enough problems right now with all of the mistakes we made on Friday," Brown said. "We can't even think or talk about Nebraska right now."

"We have to talk about us because we have a lot of things that need to be fixed and fixed fast to play a great team like they are."

One of the main areas Brown is concerned about is the deep pass. Texas A&M had only one run for more than 12 yards, but Aggie quarterback Randy McCown hurt the Longhorns throwing the ball deep.

Brown said Crouch was a more dangerous quarterback than McCown because "he can beat

Please see TEXAS on 8

Olympics take two key swimmers

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON
Staff writer

The Olympics have chopped in on Nebraska Swimming Coach Cal Bentz's territory again.

Every four years it comes around, and it usually succeeds at snatching a major talent from Bentz's team.

In this year's case, the 2000 Olympics in Sydney have caused two Nebraska women swimmers to take a year off from college to train in their home countries.

Therese Alshammar of Sweden and Australian Emma Johnson are doing just that this year in hopes of bettering their chances to make their countries' Olympic teams.

The year off is known in the college swimming world as a mistern exception, which is equivalent to a redshirt. Both athletes will gain back their year of eligibility when they return next season.

Bentz says he knows the potential is out there for athletes to take a year off when he is in the recruiting process.

"That's the price you pay when you recruit athletes at that level," Bentz said. "Whether you're recruiting internationally or in America, the chance is out there."

Both Alshammar and Johnson are at very high levels indeed and will be major losses this season to Nebraska.

Johnson, a sophomore, came to NU with a bronze medal as a member of the Australian 800-meter free relay team from the 1996 Olympics and also carries the title of world champion in front of her name in the 1997 world short course 400-meter individual medley.

Both scored points for the Huskers at the NAAs last year, with Alshammar doing her damage as a sprinter. Johnson was in the 200-yard backstroke, 400-yard IM and on a freestyle relay team.

Alshammar, who will be a junior when she returns next season, is ranked third in the world in the 50-meter freestyle, having been a member of the Swedish national team since 1993 when she was 16 years old.

The loss of the swimmers has forced Bentz to search for points from other individuals.

"Obviously, losing NCAA point-scorers like that is going to have a marked affect on your team," Bentz said.

Nebraska is not the only school to suffer with the loss of swimmers because of the upcoming Olympic year.

"Not every school has it happen, but it happens to other teams, too," Bentz said. "It doesn't always occur for us either, but this year it hap-

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