

## Slow pass rush hinders Huskers

## Big XII Notebook

■ The Blackshirts are giving up yards to opposing offenses that are statistically near the worst in the country.

BY JOHN GASKINS

The Nebraska defense expected growing pains with an inexperienced squad that lost six starters, two All-Americans, and a defensive coordinator from last year.

What the defense didn't expect was that it would take this long to get over these growing pains.

"(The first four games) are not reflective of Blackshirt defense," rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch said. "We like to come out and set the tone and really shut people down."

"It's kind of frustrating coming in here every week and saying we've got a great defense, and we're going to show it, that we want to do it next weekend and it hasn't happened yet."

The Blackshirts - fourth nationally in total defense a year ago - are 55<sup>th</sup> this year. They have given up an average of 338 yards against three consecutive teams ranked no better than 74<sup>th</sup> nationally in total offense.

Imagine how retired fiery Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride, who anchored one of his best defenses in his final year last season, would feel now.

"He'd probably be pulling his hair out like all of us," said Jeff Jamrog, who replaced McBride as defensive line coach.

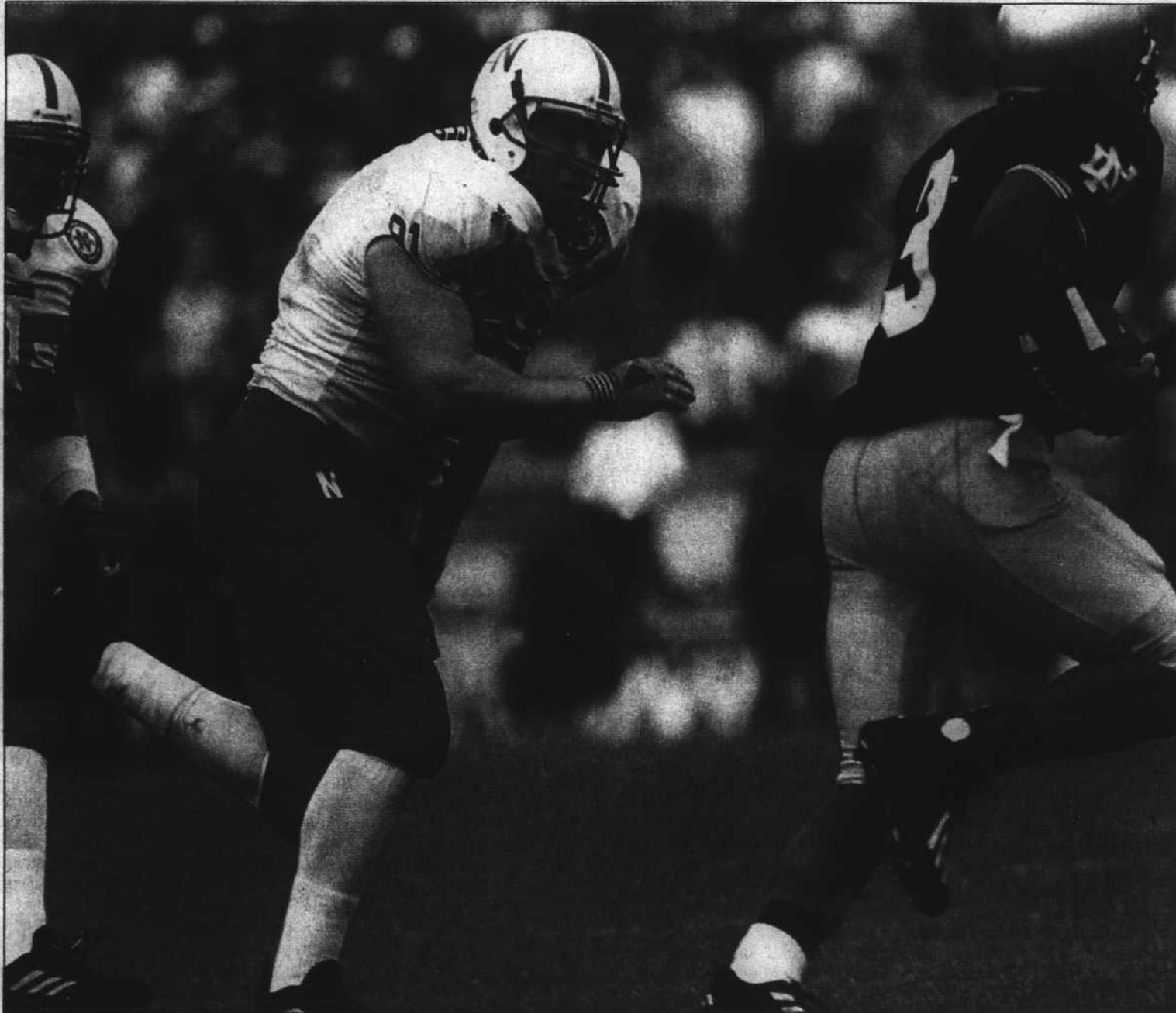
The hair-pulling of Jamrog, new defensive coordinator Craig Bohl and Coach Frank Solich can be attributed to a lot of things, but one thing stands out: the pass rush.

"We're concerned about it," Solich said. "As many throwing teams as we've faced, you need to have a pass rush. Even if you don't have sacks, you need to have hurries. Up to this point, we haven't gotten enough sacks. We haven't gotten enough hurries. We've not gotten enough turnovers."

Bohl said NU threw more than its usual share of blitzes at Mizzou quarterback Kirk Farmer. Farmer responded by throwing for 214 yards, scrambling for 83 yards and even catching a 35-yard pass before going out in the third quarter with a broken clavicle, fittingly after a 33-yard rush.

Farmer was the second consecutive "drop-back" quarterback to have a field day in the first half with a defense that couldn't quite get to him. Iowa quarterback Scott Mullen threw for 153 first-half yards against the Huskers.

After four games, NU has recorded eight sacks - fewer than



Defensive tackle Loran Kaiser chases down Notre Dame quarterback Arnez Battle during Nebraska's overtime victory in South Bend, Ind., on Sept. 9. NU Coach Frank Solich said the Huskers haven't gotten to opposing quarterbacks enough.

half as many as they had last year at this time (17).

It should be no coincidence that the difference in those numbers was made by players on the front seven that are gone - players like All-Big 12 lineman Steve Warren and four battle-tested outside linebackers in Eric Johnson, Julius Jackson, Tony Ortiz and Brian Shaw.

Perhaps the youngsters who have filled those gaps have too much food on their plate, which was evident against Mizzou, Jamrog said.

"We're going to cut back with what we've done defensively, and a lot of that has to do with inexperience at key positions," Jamrog said.

"We're going to simplify, not run as many defenses and coverages and blitzes. Hopefully, we'll get a better effort, because (opponents) are cutting it loose."

Jamrog, like Bohl, said the defense isn't panicking, not even

about the lack of sacks, which he said can be the biggest misnomer as a measurement of effective defense. He said a defense could record eight sacks and still allow over 300 yards passing and a slew of points.

That's why Jamrog, unlike Eric Solich, said he is encouraged by NU's number of hurries and the fact that the last three quarterbacks have thrown less than 50 percent of their passes complete against NU.

He also pointed out opponents are averaging just 18 points per game and NU is keeping teams out of the end zone despite giving up huge chunks of yardage.

But what happens on Saturday, when the Blackshirts face Iowa State, the 11<sup>th</sup>-best offense in the nation? Or what happens down the road when they face No. 10 Oklahoma and No. 4 Kansas State, whose offenses are ranked sixth and eighth,

respectively?

"If we play on the top of our game, we'll play well against anyone," Jamrog said.

"If we don't show the kind of improvement we need, I don't care what team it is against, they're going to move the ball on us because we're not living up to our expectations," he said.

### Monday practice notes:

The now No. 2 Huskers worked out in sweats for about two hours on the grass practice fields at the baseball complex and moved well for a team experiencing some "bumps and bruises" after a "tough stretch of physical games."

In light of speculations about injuries to quarterback Eric Crouch, split end Matt Davison, linebacker Carlos Polk and a few other key Huskers with bumps and bruises, Solich said he would not "name names" or specify injuries until later on in the week

*"We're going to cut back with what we've done defensively, and a lot of that has to do with inexperience at key positions."*

Jeff Jamrog  
NU defensive line coach

when it is clearer who will be healthy for Saturday's 2:30 p.m. game at Iowa State.

Polk was hit in the ankle by a Missouri helmet during Saturday's game. He wore a blue air cast and walked with a limp while sitting out practice on Monday.

**Kansas (2-2; lost 34-16 to Oklahoma; will play Kansas State)**

The Jayhawks jumped out to an early 16-10 lead over the Sooners, only to have OU score 24 straight points.

KU was able to rack up 377 total yards against Oklahoma behind quarterback Dylon Smith, who had 258 yards passing. While Smith dazzled at times, his five interceptions did in his team as the Jayhawks had seven turnovers altogether.

**Oklahoma (4-0; beat Kansas 34-16; will play Texas)**

The Sooners jumped to No. 10 in this week's Associated Press poll behind a passing attack that is averaging 325 yards per game. But OU's defense also has held up its end of the bargain, giving up only 12 points per game.

The Sooner defense looks solid going into the Red River Rivalry after they forced KU's Smith into six turnovers total (one fumble, five interceptions) and sacked the quarterback six times.

Big 12 Defensive Player of the Week honors went to OU's J.T. Thatcher, who had three interceptions in the game.

**Oklahoma State (2-2; lost 42-7 to Texas; will play Missouri)**

After sticking with the Longhorns for the first half, Cowboy coach Bob Simmons said, the story of the game was his team's inability to stop Texas's big-play ability.

The Cowboys trailed only 10-7 in the third quarter, but a 96-yard touchdown pass from Major Applewhite to Roy Williams opened the floodgates for Texas.

OSU's rushing defense entered the game No. 1 in the nation, averaging a stingy 30.3 per game, but gave up 205 yards to UT.

**Kansas State (5-0; beat Colorado 44-21; will play Kansas)**

The Wildcats passed their first real test of the season as they beat Colorado for the fourth straight time after going 0-11-1 in 12 previous meetings against the Buffaloes.

KSU quarterback Jonathan Beasley threw three touchdown passes before the intermission, and the Wildcats held CU to eight second-half points after leading 34-13 at the break.

**Missouri (1-3; lost 42-24 to Nebraska; will play Oklahoma State)**

The Tigers gained a moral victory over the Huskers' out-gaining them 492-484 in total offense.

Missouri's effort proved costly, though, as the team lost starting quarterback Kirk Farmer to a broken clavicle.

**Texas Tech (4-1; lost 33-15 to Texas A&M; will play Baylor)**

Tech coach Mike Leach said the loss to A&M was deceiving because the Aggies put two late scores on the board after only leading 19-15 late in the fourth quarter.

A&M's Ja'Mar Toombs scored twice in the final 6:58 of the final spread.

Tech's Kliff Kingsbury, under the guidance of Leach, looks to be headed in a similar direction to that of OU's Josh Heupel, who excelled under Leach and his aerial attack. Kingsbury has thrown for just under 1500 yards this season and will probably break most of the Red Raider passing records by the end of his career.

**Texas A&M (3-1; beat Texas Tech 33-15; will play Colorado)**

The Aggies slowed Tech's passing attack by intercepting three passes and blocking a punt.

Wide receiver Robert Ferguson continues to torch opposing secondaries. The junior-college transfer has 29 catches for 449 yards and three touchdowns.

**Baylor (2-2; lost 31-17 to Iowa State; will play Texas Tech)**

The Bears trailed 17-3 just 1:37 before halftime, but a late score followed by an interception and another score

## Saunders returns for NU

■ A Nebraska women's soccer player sees action for the first time after a freak accident.

BY JAMIE SUHR

While lying in a hospital bed, all Nebraska soccer player Kori Saunders could think about was getting back on the field.

Saunders' family and friends were worried about more than soccer. On Aug. 10, the first day of practice, the NU sophomore was the victim of a freak accident serious enough to keep her in the hospital for a week.

In between two-a-day practices on that August day, the glass table that Saunders was sitting on collapsed. An 8-inch shard of glass pierced her back, cutting her ureter, puncturing her kidney and chipping a vertebrae.

If the glass had entered Saunders's back a few centimeters to the left or right, the knife-like object may have paralyzed the forward.

But Saunders wasn't thinking about any of that as she lay in that hospital bed. She was wishing that she could put on the Nebraska soccer jersey again, and soon.

Just seven weeks after the accident, Saunders has done just that. She is back with the Huskers, having seen her first game action and recording her



Husker sophomore Kori Saunders is back in action after missing the first half of NU's season following a freak August accident that damaged her ureter and kidney.

first assist against Missouri on Friday.

The sophomore could have redshirted, but the sidelines were hardly better than that hospital bed. The field is exactly where she wanted to be all along.

"I only lost a half a season," Saunders said. "It hurt more to watch the team. I never thought about redshirting. I'm no good on the bench."

Until last week, NU Coach John Walker said he thought the bench was where Saunders would spend the rest of the season. After recovering from the injury, the midfielder and forward still had to get back into soccer shape. Walker said he was

leaning toward a redshirt season for the sophomore.

"Honestly, a couple of weeks ago, I didn't think she'd make it back," Walker said.

Saunders wasn't buying it, though, her coach said.

"I presented her with all the reasons not to come back," Walker said. "She was just so passionate about coming back to play with this team."

Junior midfielder Meghan Anderson said she expected Saunders to bypass the redshirt season.

"I wasn't surprised she came back," Anderson said. "She's a

Please see **SOCCER** on 9

## Rankings add to UT, OU rivalry

■ No. 10 Oklahoma faces No. 11 Texas in the yearly border war at the Cotton Bowl.

BY SAMUEL MCKEWIN

During the Big 12 Teleconference on Monday, Texas Coach Mack Brown uttered two words that unmistakably marks another year of Texas vs. Oklahoma.

Oil business. "It really does transcend state boundaries," said Brown of Saturday's 11:00 a.m. matchup between the No. 10 Sooners and the No. 11 Longhorns. "You got friends in the oil business and real estate who work together that split apart on this one weekend."

There is something a little different about the Red River Rivalry - a type of 10-gallon border war that for several decades wasn't a conference tilt but a knockout game for the national championship.

It's appropriately held in the Dallas Cotton Bowl, as both teams separate the stands in maroon and burnt orange while the Texas State Fair rages outside.

A football carnival of big hair, twangy y'alls and barbecue pits.

"It's like a bowl game in the middle of the season," said OU Coach Bob Stoops, who participated as a coach in the Florida-Georgia rivalry also held for several years in a neutral setting. "It's always about who can play better longer."

The 2000 version has a little hype attached to it as OU and UT arrive in Dallas with their highest combined rankings since the 1984 contest. That contest ended in a 15-15 tie and saw Brown on the Sooner sideline as an assistant coach and a controversial missed call on an Oklahoma interception that hurt the Sooners' chances at a national title later that season.

On paper, Texas (3-1 overall, 1-0 in the Big 12) and Oklahoma (4-0, 1-0) look fairly even. The Sooners, having avoided national television through its first four games, are more of a mystery than the Longhorns. UT's quarterback saga of Chris Simms and Major Applewhite has been a major story in college football all season.

Simms has started every

Please see **RIVALRY** on 9

Please see **NOTEBOOK** on 9