

Gameday:

NU vs. OU: Game of century?

Forty seconds remained in the first quarter when I began hallucinating.

Nebraska had just scored its 38th point against a Baylor team, which looked right out of the movie Necessary Roughness, and that's when I saw it.

I could describe it much like the night before Christmas — except visions of crimson and schooners



David Diehl

danced in my head. The hallucination was more befuddling and exciting than it was psychedelic.

Barry Switzer was at the reigns of a speeding covered wagon blazing down the field, as if it were a jet named Johnny heading for the end zone.

There was music booming all around my head, although the tune was quite repetitive and became rather maddening, much like a tell-tale heart.

"Boomer Sooner, Boomer Sooner, Boomer Sooner, Boomer Sooner!" Enough already, say something else in the damn song!

After the music, more images and sounds were ablaze inside my head. Triple option, wishbone, Brian Bozworth, Johnny Rodgers, "Man, woman and child! He put 'em in the aisles!"

Owen Field, Game of the Century, smashmouth, in-the-trenches, down-and-dirty, Oklahoma against Nebraska.

All of that, and Nebraska was just in the second quarter playing Baylor. I can't imagine what'll happen Saturday morning.

An infection has risen across the state in the past week and will only be inflamed as Nebraska's most anticipated matchup with Oklahoma in six years approaches. And you better believe Coach Frank Solich was planning ahead to Oct. 28 after the first quarter.

He gave backup quarterback Jammal Lord the most playing time of his young career, as Eric Crouch saw the turf for just one quarter. Giving Crouch the hook may hurt his chances at the Heisman, but Crouch can't beat OU with a broken leg.

"We were able to rest some people, and that came at a very good time for us," Solich said. "If you look at the rest of our schedule it will be a very demanding stretch."

And Solich's plan was a good one. Holding out the starters served two purposes. 1) It avoided any problems the scoreboard operator may have encountered had NU put up triple digits. 2) It let the Big Red heal a little more.

As Solich said, he was trying to let Crouch and receiver Matt Davison, among others, "get back to 100 percent." Even Loran Kaiser, who hasn't played in three games with a sprained foot, was heard telling a reporter he will play against the Sooners.

All of that is just as well because Oklahoma had an off week to soothe any bumps and bruises it may have encountered in its physical 41-31 thumping of Kansas State a week ago.

"The momentum is there for us and for Oklahoma," Solich said. "They should be healthy and rarin' to go."

Even though players will tell you otherwise, it's probably pretty hard not to look forward to a team's biggest game of the year when you're sitting on your helmet, pads long since removed and your team is up 59 points on the Bad News Baylor Bears.

"There wasn't a thought in my mind until the end of the game," Crouch said. And if you'll buy that he'll throw the Golden Gate in free.

Coming at the turn of a new millennium, this Oklahoma-Nebraska matchup couldn't have happened at a better time and been bigger or more important.

After the series' two-year hiatus, the resurgence of crimson-colored blood in Oklahomans, and the serious national title implications, the game has much the same flavor and hype of a Game of the Century.

Good thing it's a new century.



photos by Scott McClurg/DN

ABOVE: Huskers Keyuo Craver and DeAntae Grixby block a punt by Baylor's Adam Stiles which was recovered by Craver for the first Nebraska touchdown less than two minutes into the game.



ABOVE: Senior wingback Bobby Newcombe is tackled by a Baylor defender after a punt return. Baylor was forced to punt 12 times.

RIGHT: Nebraska rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch bats down a pass by Guy Tomcheck. Tomcheck completed only 7 of 26 passes against NU.

