

OU's defense gains respect

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

When you think of Oklahoma, inevitably you think of offense—explosive offense.

On average, Josh Heupel and company have put up 46.7 points and 472 yards per game.

But amid all the offensive hoopla, the Oklahoma defense is quietly earning respect as a solid unit of its own. The improved defense, which is allowing 50 yards less per game than a year ago, is a major reason the Sooners are undefeated and ranked third in the country.

"Football is the ultimate team game, and to win these games, we have played well on both sides of the ball," Stoops said.

One had to know that Stoops, a defensive mastermind as an assistant at Florida, was going to leave his mark on the defense soon.

"I would run through a brick wall for this man," said Sooner

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J.T. Thatcher

OU free safety on Bob Stoops

free safety J.T. Thatcher.

Stoops' attitude and the defense's renewed confidence are the main reasons for OU giving up an average of 294 yards and 16 points per game on defense.

These are not spectacular numbers, but Oklahoma's defensive unit makes plays and, most importantly with NU coming to town, gives up only an average of three yards per rush.

Thatcher said much of that has to do with an overlooked defensive line.

"They are real good players," he said. "Without those guys up front, the defensive backs and

linebackers wouldn't have any success."

Overall, OU has 11 interceptions and 18 sacks on the season. Spearheading this attack on opposing offenses are Thatcher and senior linebackers Rocky Calmus and Torrance Marshall.

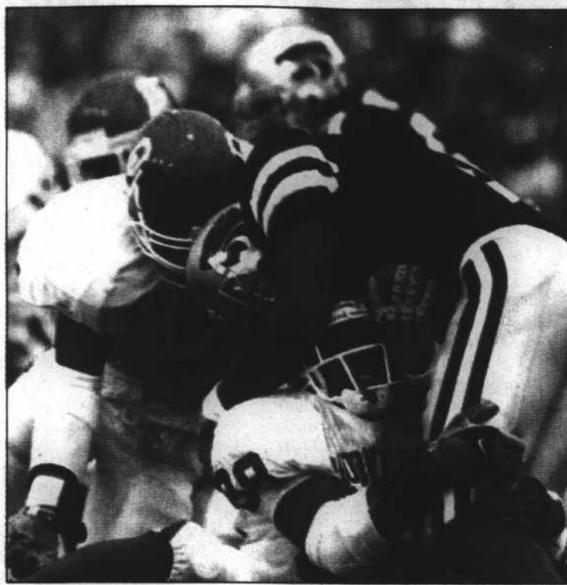
Calmus leads the Sooners with 49 tackles and has three fumble recoveries to go with his two sacks and one interception.

Stoops said having Calmus' leadership stabilizes the defense, much like fellow Butkus candidate Carlos Polk does for Nebraska.

"Rocky is an exceptional player, no question about it," Stoops said. "He does make plays that when you put it up on the board and diagram it, he shouldn't make."

"But he does. He finds a way to get to the ball and has a great

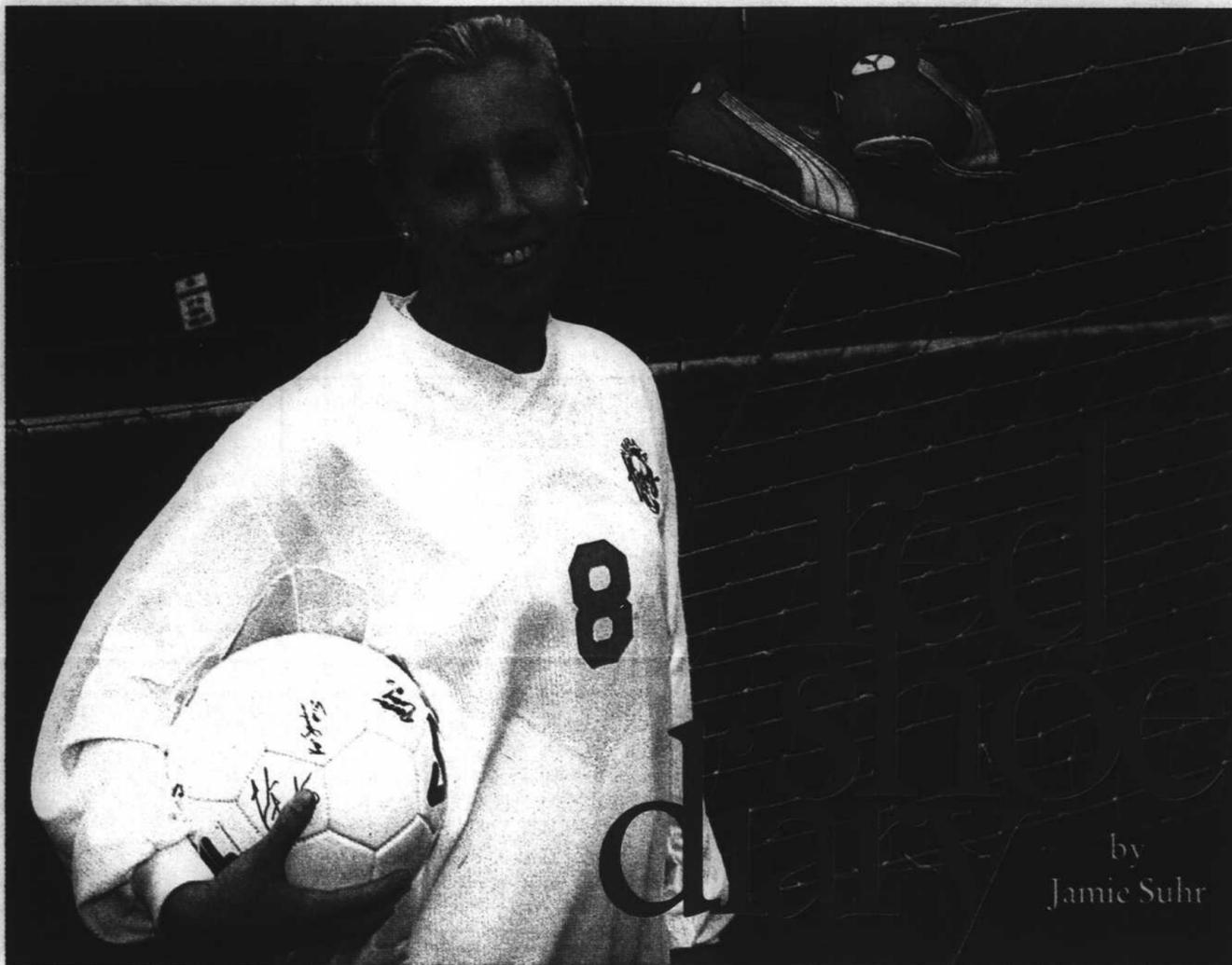
Please see **OU** on 11



Courtesy photo

It doesn't get the headlines, but the solid Oklahoma defense is a major reason the Sooners head into this Saturday's matchup against No. 1 Nebraska undefeated and ranked third in the country. OU is allowing 16 points per game this season.

Senior Jenny Benson has been wearing red cleats for three seasons, the only Husker to do so. Benson, a premier Husker defender, has scored a total of 92 points in her career at Nebraska.



Mike Warren/DN

Jenny Benson's success grows with NU soccer

introducing me to my wife,' but they met 20 years ago."

The fifth-year senior has been on campus since 1996 — the Cornhuskers' third year of existence and first season in the Big 12 Conference.

"I've been here so long, so I've seen pretty much everything that's going to come at us," Benson said.

When Benson first joined the Husker program, NU's combined record was just 24-12. Since then, it has been 97-11-3.

Walker said the program's progress mirrored that of Benson.

"As a freshman, she'd just run around, she didn't know what was going on," Walker

said. "That was like the way the team was in '96. We had no idea how good we'd be."

That was the year the Huskers put themselves on the college soccer map. NU won all 21 of its games during the regular season and won two NCAA Tournament games, ending the season ranked No. 6 nationally.

Playing as a freshman, Benson scored a goal in each of the tournament wins.

Benson played for the Huskers when the team won a double-overtime 1-0 thriller over Texas A&M in 1997 to win the Big 12 Tournament. But Benson hasn't just seen the highs of the Huskers rise to elite status.

In 1999, she watched Notre Dame celebrate at the Abbott Sports complex after a loss to the Fighting Irish in a shoot out.

Benson and the Huskers suffered their first-ever home conference loss when Oklahoma upset NU 2-1 this season. It was only the second home loss the senior has had to endure.

While Benson has grown accustomed to home wins and playing aggressive offense, Walker approached her before the 2000 season began about a position change to defender. The Huskers had to replace All-Americans Isabelle Morneau and Sharolta Nonen.

"It shows how great of an athlete and soccer player she is — the way she has the

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Seniors key in Husker win at MU

BY KRISTEN WATERS

A storm swept through Columbia, Mo., tonight, and it wasn't the weather.

The Missouri Tigers took a back seat to a driven Nebraska volleyball team as the Huskers improved their record to 20-0 (12-0 in conference play) and finished the night with a three-game sweep over No. 25 Missouri (17-4, 8-4).

"It was a big night for the Huskers," NU Coach John Cook said. "We were very focused. It was a hyped-up game with a lot of coverage and the record crowd was electric."

The Huskers had no problem forcing a dead silence over the record-breaking crowd of 2,009 at the Hearn Center in the first game.

Senior Kim Behrends came out swinging hard, slamming down six kills. Meanwhile, sophomore Laura Pilakowski made it impossible for Missouri

to run an offense with three ace serves.

Missouri started to make a comeback late in the first game with six straight points, but the damage by Behrends and Pilakowski had already been done, and NU ran away with a 15-7 first game win.

The Huskers had total control in the second game of the night as Behrends continued to slam down balls, and the Huskers' serves continued to fall on Missouri's court. NU captured a 15-4 win.

Missouri put up a fight in the third game, the tightest game of the night, as the teams battled to a 4-4 tie. But the 14 match kills for Behrends, 10 kills by Pilakowski and eight by sophomore Amber Holmquist made MU unable to keep pace as they fell 15-11 to the Huskers.

Nebraska's seniors stepped up in the team's road games this week as the Huskers defeated Texas in four sets on Saturday

before sweeping Mizzou on Wednesday night.

Behrends' 14 kills vs. MU were a career high, and she added a service ace and five digs.

"Kim was in the zone tonight, especially in the first game," Cook said. "She really stepped up the tempo."

Senior Angie Oxley also set the tempo for the Huskers with a team-high hitting percentage of .429 with six kills, two service aces and eight digs.

"Our goal for tonight was to give Oxley the ball," Cook said. "She got a lot of side outs for us. The seniors really made a statement tonight."

The Huskers will next see action on Saturday night at 7 p.m. taking on Kansas at home.

"We're going to take a day off to relax and recover from the road games, but we'll still do what we have to do to prepare for Kansas Saturday night," Cook said.

ISU's inside-out duo look to lead ballclub

big 12
women's
basketball
BY DAVID DIEHL

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Angie Welle and Megan Taylor will finally be in the foreground for Iowa State, and people are taking notice.

Welle and Taylor, after lurking in the immense shadow of Stacey Frese, the third-highest scorer in ISU history, have been picked as preseason All-Big 12 selections.

Coach Bill Fennelly said the pair will lead the Cyclones in 2000. "With these two, we have one of the better teams in the conference," he said.

Welle, a 6-foot-4 junior, has been selected as the conference preseason Player of the Year by the

coaches and is joined on the All-Big 12 first team by Taylor, a senior guard who has started all 99 games in her career at Ames, Iowa. The inside-out tandem is expected to help Iowa State maintain its national prominence. The team has a record of 77-22 in the last three years. Should that success continue again this year, it will come after losing Frese and forward Desiree Francis, who combined to average 27 points in 1999.

"When you lose two players to the pros and people still pick you to win the league, it says a lot about your team," said Fennelly, who is in his sixth year at ISU. "And it says a lot about Angie and Megan."

The task for the pair will be to

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Daily Nebraskan

Women's Basketball

Rankings

(as compiled by Joshua Camenzind & David Diehl)

1. Iowa State - Lost top two players to WNBA but is still on top of Big 12 thanks to All-Big 12 picks Angie Welle and Megan Taylor. Count on Coach Bill Fennelly's fourth straight 25-win season.

2. Texas Tech - Lady Raiders have won over 20 games in each season of the Big 12, and nothing less is expected in 2000 from the 1998 and 1999 Big 12 Coach of the Year Marsha Sharp and her squad.

3. Oklahoma - Sooners continued their climb under Coach Sherril Coale and won two games in the NCAA Tournament after going 1-15, 4-12 and 8-8 in conference play from '97 to '99.

4. Kansas - Coach Marian Washington begins her fourth decade at Kansas, and forwards Jaclyn Johnson and Brook Reeves will maintain Washington's winning consistency for her 17th winning season out of the last 18.

5. Texas - Longhorns return four starters from 1999 NCAA team but lost the conference's leading scorer in Edwina Brown (21.2ppg). UT will rely on guard Alisha Sare to pick up Brown's slack, and another star must emerge from either bench or newcomers for the 'Horns to excel.

6. Missouri - The Tigers felt their 1999 campaign was solid, ending with an 18-12 record and a postseason appearance in the NIT. But in 2000, Mizzou wants more, and to do that, it must find a way to win away from the Hearn Center in conference play (2-6 last year).

7. Nebraska - Will be Paul Sanderford's toughest test yet at Nebraska. Sanderford said this team is his best defensively thus far, but he returns only one starter and needs to find a consistent scorer after losing four of last year's top five.

8. Colorado - Buffaloes return with all five starters, as well as six reserves from a 10-19 season. Only one senior on roster means young-sters must step up for CU to make a run for post-season play.

9. Baylor - New Coach Kim Mulkey Roberston, a former Louisiana Tech assistant and member of the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, brings a new attitude to Waco as well as preseason Big 12 Newcomer of the Year Sheila Lambert.

10. Oklahoma State - The Cowgirls lost leading scorer Jennifer Crow (21.1ppg), and while gaining a revamped Gallagher-Iba Arena helps OSU's atmosphere on gameday, it will not equal wins.

11. Kansas State - Big questions inside as Wildcats don't have any solid, proven talent under the hoop. Don't look for much improvement on Coach Deb Patterson's 13-17 season in 1999.

12. Texas A&M - Lost two of its three leading scorers from an 11-16 campaign. Two of three conference wins came against Baylor - the only team the Aggies have a winning record against.

Big XII First Team

Angie Welle, Iowa State
Plenette Pierson, Texas Tech
Amanda Lassiter, Missouri
Jaclyn Johnson, Kansas
Stacey Dales, Oklahoma

Coach of the Year

Sherril Coale, Oklahoma

Player of the Year

Welle, Iowa State
Melanie Falk/DN