

Buck solid through NU career

It seemed fitting. Lost beneath the snow, sleet and the many small pieces of Nebraska's shattered national-championship dreams, there was the ninth leading rusher in the Huskers' storied rushing history.



Gabriel Stovall

Senior I-back Correll Buckhalter needed just five yards against Kansas State on Saturday to pass former Husker and NFL star Roger Craig and occupy the No. 9 spot on the all-time rushing charts.

He got 12 – and it took six carries to do so. No fanfare. No boisterous commentary from the media. Just 12 yards on six carries, and the native from Collins, Miss., climbed one notch higher in the NU football history books.

It was quiet. Ordinary, to say the least. But nevertheless, an extraordinary feat and a fitting way for him to achieve it.

Despite the yards, Buckhalter's NU career has most commonly been described as "quiet."

Members of the Husker Faithful and members of the media will remind you he's just an ordinary back.

They'll tell you he doesn't have Lawrence Phillips' elusiveness or Calvin Jones' speed. And it goes without saying that he doesn't have Mike Rozier's Heisman.

Buckhalter says he's heard it all, though. It doesn't bother him. But you would expect him to say that, right?

Well, the talk shouldn't bother him. Not after passing up such Husker household names as former quarterbacks Steve Taylor and Tommie Frazier, option-running gurus of their time.

And what's more, such self-serving talk shouldn't bother him when he knows in his own heart he has given his all on the football field for his coach and his team.

"When I go out there I give my 110 percent to help the team," Buckhalter said. "Nothing less."

Sure it sounds cliché, but I still can't help but be refreshed by it.

College football is now in an era of stat-padding and Heisman ballots being cast for players who still have the smell of their high school lunchrooms' milk on their breath.

People have forgotten these athletes aren't just mindless robots thrown into the Husker Power assembly line to entertain the Saturday morning armchair I-back. They're college kids just like every non-athlete at NU.

They are people who are trying to find their ways in this unpredictable box of chocolates we call life.

God forbid someone would consider me a failure if I don't make as much money as Johnny Carson just because we both attended NU.

With 2,454 career yards, several Big 12 championships and one national crown on his mantle, what man, woman or child can look at Buckhalter's Husker career as a disappointment?

People come to play for the Big Red for a variety of reasons, and believe it or not, every Husker's not unsatisfied with his career just because his name isn't in lights.

"I think any player that's come through here wishes they could have done some things better," Buckhalter said.

"I'm pleased, though, with my career. God led me here to play and to fight through some ups and downs. I've done that, and I'm satisfied."

He is satisfied as the ninth leading rusher indeed, as would any NU running back. But the Buck won't stop here, he said.

The NFL does await for him, he said. And as crazy as it may seem to some, Buckhalter said he is confident his hard work ethic and reliability will make him successful in the real football world.

Say what you want about the guy's speed and quickness, but his presence for the Huskers has almost always been a constant.

And out of all our endless adjectives that tell about a football player's worth, the word "reliable" is the one he wants us to remember him by.

I'd say it is only fitting.

Crouch banged up against K-State

■ NU quarterback aggravated a shoulder injury against KSU, but says it doesn't excuse poor play.

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

For the second straight year, the losing quarterback from the Nebraska-Kansas State matchup has come down with the injury bug following the game.

Cornhusker Coach Frank Solich revealed on Monday's Big 12 Teleconference quarterback Eric Crouch was bothered by an injured shoulder in NU's 29-28 loss to KSU.

Crouch completed only two of 13 passes in the loss Saturday – NU's second of the year.

Solich said after Tuesday's practice that Crouch had been hindered by the injury which was suffered during the Iowa State game Oct. 7.

But Crouch did practice Tuesday after the whole team took Monday off, Solich said.

"He did more than I thought he would be able to do," Solich said. "We did throw some today with him and went through all of the running game."

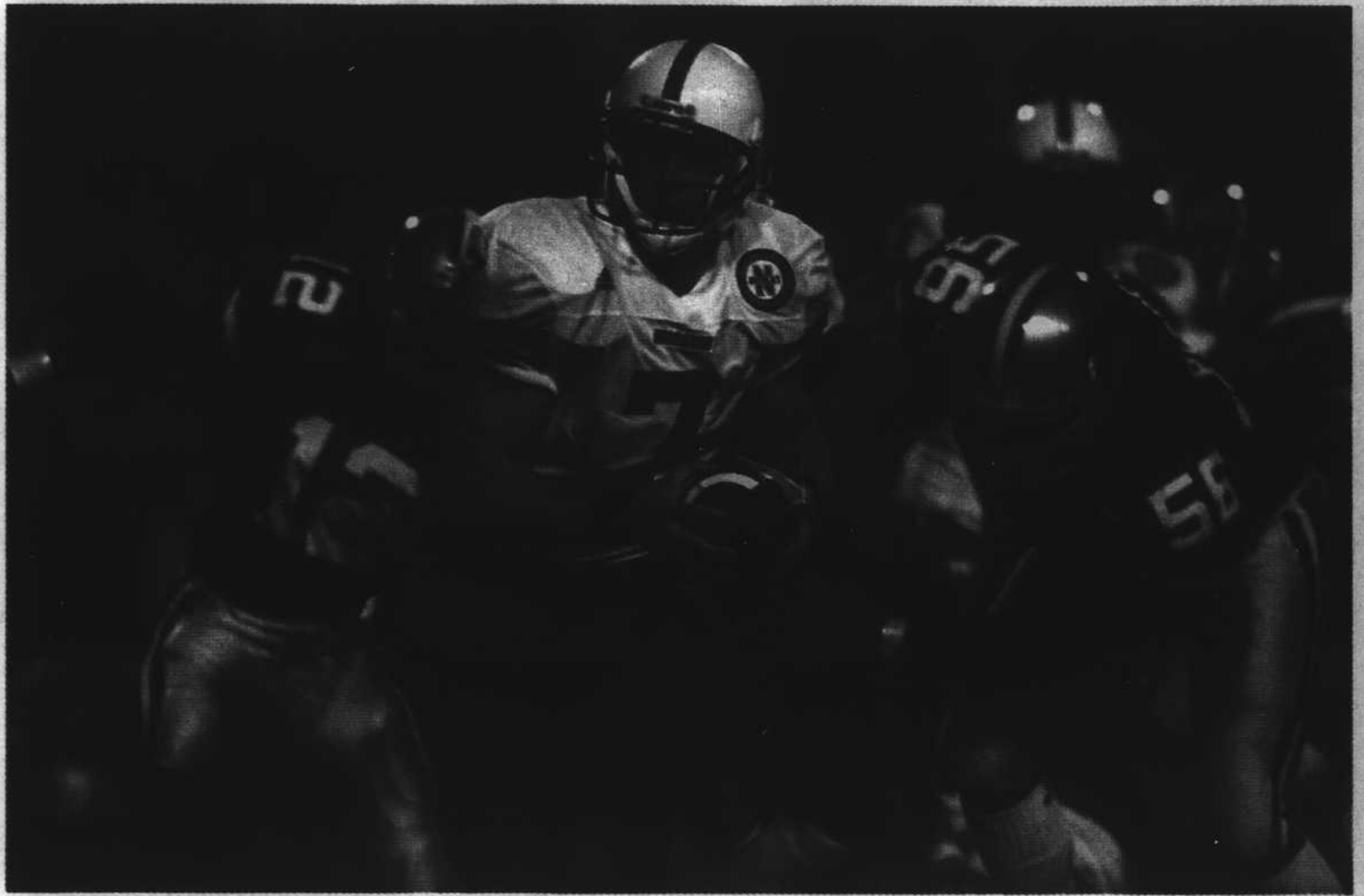
Crouch said he did not practice at full speed – something he had not been able to do all year.

And he said he wasn't using his injured shoulder, which is not related to off-season surgery he had last season, as an excuse.

"For the most part, I felt pretty good today," Crouch said. "Of course my shoulder is a little sore and I have a sore leg, but those are not excuses for losses."

"I have played hurt all year and have played hurt all my career."

Crouch, who looked much like KSU's Jonathan Beasley, who



DN File Photo

NU Coach Frank Solich reported Monday that quarterback Eric Crouch had been playing with an injured shoulder for the past five weeks. Crouch aggravated the injury against Kansas State but practiced Tuesday.

completed only three of 19 passes against NU last year with a hurt shoulder, said his shoulder didn't matter in the outcome.

"I don't think that was a huge factor why I went two for 13," he said. "We threw a lot of deep balls and just didn't connect on any of them."

Crouch said he aggravated the injury in the first or second quarter against the Wildcats when his shoulder was driven into the ground on a run.

The junior said traction on Wagner Field was hard to come by, which hindered Nebraska's option game.

"We got our power running game going there and probably should have come back to it earlier than we did," Crouch said.

Solich said Crouch's injury would most likely not require surgery and would heal with time.

NU Notes: Solich said some coaches would go on the road at

the end of the week with the Huskers having Saturday off in preparation for the Nov. 24 matchup with Colorado. Solich also said pro scouts would be allowed into practices this week in accordance to team policy which allows scouts around the team only on bye weeks.

Huskers: There will be life after BCS bid

BY DAVID DIEHL

A second quarter field goal attempt nearly kisses the upright but passes by on the outside.

A purple fullback nearly gets dragged down, but breaks loose continuing a charging offense to a game-winning score.

A fourth quarter, last-gasp pass is just a bit high, held on to for a split second before falling uselessly to the snow-covered turf.

All are instances portraying how close Nebraska was to finishing on top. Instead, the Huskers pulled up just short in the end against Kansas State and, ultimately, for the 2000 season.

But Nebraska still has to show up for the rest of its games and the players said they are still looking to salvage something

from the rest of the year.

"The season didn't pan out the way we planned it," senior co-captain Carlos Polk said. "But at the same time, we just can't pack our bags and go home. We still have two games left, and we have to make the best out of them."

Polk, who had a team-high 17 tackles against the Wildcats, had a chance to halt KSU's game-winning drive and maybe send the rest of NU's season in a different direction.

The middle linebacker broke into the backfield and crashed into fullback Rock Cartwright, seemingly forcing K-State into a long yardage situation. But Polk lost his grasp on tackle No. 18, and Cartwright ran loose for 13 yards. The Wildcats then drove to the game winning score.

Polk said his missed tackle, and the other memorable near-

"You always want that national championship and that Big 12 Championship, but it's a part of life. You don't always get what you want."

Eric Crouch
NU quarterback

misses against the Wildcats, weren't the deciding factor in the loss.

"One play like that fullback play didn't win or lose the game for us," he said. "It takes more than one play to lose a game. We felt like we didn't execute well enough to win that game."

That leaves Nebraska, a program that has won three national titles in the past six seasons, looking to salvage something from the rest of the season when a national championship is nowhere in sight.

"If we finish the rest of the

season the way we want and win the rest of our games, we had a good season," quarterback Eric Crouch said.

"You always want that national championship and that Big 12 Championship, but it's a part of life. You don't always get what you want."

Because of that, Nebraska fans probably aren't booking many flights to Miami for the Orange Bowl.

Assuming NU beats Colorado on Nov. 24, specula-

Please see SEASON on 9

Volleyball looks to clinch title

■ NU goes for the Big 12 title against hapless Iowa State, who has only two wins.

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

The last three times a Nebraska volleyball team has played Iowa State the Cornhuskers have outscored the Cyclones 135-22.

Tonight's match-up between the Clones (2-24, 0-17) and Huskers (24-0, 16-0) looks no different than the last three except for one thing – NU can guarantee itself a Big 12 title with a victory.

Clinching the conference crown isn't the only important business NU has against Iowa State, Coach John Cook said. Tonight's game is the first step in a stretch the Huskers hope lead to bigger titles.

"I think the next two weeks are critical for us to get a good rhythm, to understand the mentality we have to play with and to finish the Big 12 season on a strong note," Cook said. "We want to head into the NCAA tournament with a great seed, a chance to host a regional and the mentality to win a national championship."

Nebraska has had plenty of time to get ready for the final stretch. The team hasn't played a game since its four-game victory at Texas A&M on Nov. 8, a win that snapped A&M's 28-match home win streak.

After the emotional victory, and with a bye date last Saturday, Cook said he decided to give his team three days off this week.

The rest period is something Cook thinks will help give his team some mental time off.

Giving a team that many days off this late in the season might be a concern for some coaches, but Cook said his team's ability to perform takes away any concern for a let down.

"As a coach you never know if that's a positive or if that's going to backfire on us," he said. "My gut feeling with this team is the rest and the break mentally will really set us up to have a

Please see CYCLONES on 9

Final exhibition is laughter for Huskers

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

It's been a while since the Bob Devaney Sports Center has seen tension like it saw Tuesday night.

When Yugoslavia Select forward Predrag Kovacevic let a three-point bomb fly as the game-ending horn sounded, every student in the building eyed it all the way to the hoop, screaming loudly, as if their shrieks would somehow reject the shot.

The score stood 89-49 Nebraska, but if the shot would fall, Yugoslavia would surpass 50 points. If the Yugoslavians scooted past 50, there would be no free six-inch Blimpie sandwich for poverty-stricken college students.

"There was some pride out there in trying to get a stop," Nebraska Coach Barry Collier said, recalling the dramatic last defensive stand.

Collier's team got the stop as the shot clanked off the rim. Fans reveled in their free sandwich certificates while the Cornhuskers reveled in a confidence-boosting 40-point rout.

The Huskers finished its exhibition season at 1-1. The real thing begins Saturday when NU travels to Oral Roberts.

"I thought we played much better tonight," Collier said. "It's tough to evaluate playing against a team that was probably worn down on their trip. But we played better, and I thought our concentration was better."

NU was led by the hot shooting of senior guard Cookie Belcher, who overcame last week's first-game jitters with a 13 for 15 shooting effort, leading all scorers with 31 points.

"It felt good out there tonight," Belcher said. "I've been waiting for this for a long time."

Belcher scared the 4,476 in attendance when he was undercut on a first-half dunk, causing him to land on both of his wrists. It was a right-wrist injury that kept him off the floor last season.

"I was shaking on the floor," Belcher said. "I



Scott McClurg/DN

Husker guard Cary Cochran steals the ball from Yugoslavia Select's Aleksander Golubovic in the first half Tuesday evening at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Cochran had 15 points in NU's 89-49 blowout.

was almost scared to get up." Belcher sat out for only a few minutes before returning to the game, but the Huskers flourished with whomever they put on the floor.

Yugoslavia struggled against the Husker man-to-man defense, compiling only a 35-percent field goal rate, knocking down 26 percent

Please see BASKETBALL on 9