

Holiday Bowl unlikely; Cotton or Sugar possible

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drive to Dallas just for the game, rather than take four- or five-day vacations as might be the case with other bowls, Anderson said.

While rumblings around the state have some Nebraska fans dreading a 10 a.m. start on New Year's Day in a city that doesn't offer tropical heat or Bourbon Street, Baker said it hasn't hindered the bowl the past two seasons with Texas participating both years.

"That's not something that we can control," Baker said. "We've been in Dallas for 65 years, and we are proud of our city."

Baker said the Cotton Bowl, which is the predicted destination for the Huskers by abc-sports.com, cbssportline.com and CNN.com, has narrowed its choices down to four teams.

Nebraska, Kansas State, Louisiana State and Tennessee are on Baker's final list, but the Volunteers are an unlikely participant based on playing NU two out of the past three years in the Orange and Fiesta Bowls.

The Citrus Bowl, which gets to pick first over the Cotton in the Southeastern Conference, is expected to pick Tennessee, leaving the Cotton Bowl with the 7-4 Tigers to play either NU or K-State.

Baker said a meeting has been scheduled at 3 p.m. on Sunday, and the Cotton Bowl would select its teams shortly after.

The BCS will select its teams at 2 p.m. on Sunday, said Sugar Bowl Executive Director Paul Hoolahan.

Hoolahan is forced to select the winner of Saturday's SEC Championship between Florida and Auburn, while taking a back seat to the Fiesta Bowl, which gets to select its match-up first because the Sugar Bowl played host to last year's national championship game.

If the Fiesta Bowl selects Notre Dame, as is expected, and another at-large team, the Sugar would be forced to take Miami as the Big East Champion. Should the Fiesta opt for two at-large teams, the Irish and another, Hoolahan and the Sugar Bowl would be free to select from a pool that includes Oregon State, Virginia Tech and Nebraska.

But that is only possible if Oklahoma beats Kansas State. If OU loses, K-State goes to the Fiesta Bowl on Jan. 1 as Big 12 champ, and the Sooners would likely fall to the Jan. 2 Sugar Bowl with Miami facing Florida State in the Orange Bowl.

Hoolahan said he saw advantages to selecting NU over the Beavers and the Hokies — both of whom have one loss to the Huskers' two.

"It is a little bit of a stretch to go all the way to Oregon State for geographical reasons," he said. "There are a lot of different variables, including Virginia Tech playing here in the national

championship last year."

Byrne is optimistic about NU gaining an at-large berth.

"I think our chances of going to the Sugar Bowl will be good if the Fiesta Bowl decides to pair Notre Dame and Miami," he said.

Hoolahan, as well as Baker, said they have had contact with Byrne, who will be in New Orleans today to lobby Sugar Bowl officials.

"That is the name of the game at this point right now," Hoolahan said.

According to the Nebraska players themselves, the name of the game is finishing on a high note and going out winners in whatever game they might play in.

"There's no preference," junior Eric Crouch said. "We'll play as hard as we can against whoever we play, wherever we play. My goal remains the same, and that is to win by as much as we can and finish out in the best place we can as far as the ratings are concerned."

But as far as money goes, Nebraska's bowl destination does matter.

It could mean the loss of as much as \$10 million to the Big 12, which distributes its bowl money evenly among all members.

"Anytime you get past the BCS, it is a drop-off in dollars," Byrne said.

The Sugar Bowl has a payout of \$11-\$13 million, while the Alamo's payment is \$1.2 million.

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LeBlanc one of five for soccer's Heisman trophy

BY DAVID DIEHL

Nebraska goalkeeper Karina LeBlanc, after posting 14-and-a-half shutouts and a .40 goals against average, has been named as one of five finalists for the Hermann Trophy, college soccer's equivalent of football's Heisman.

LeBlanc helped lead Nebraska to a 22-2 record and a berth in the NCAA tournament for the fifth straight year while giving up just nine goals in 24 games.

The senior's .54 career goals against average ranks seventh in NCAA Division I history.

"For me, it's one of the greatest honors," said LeBlanc, who also competes for the Canadian National team. "Unfortunately, the team didn't get as far as it wanted."

The Cornhuskers were upset 1-0 in the second round of the NCAA Tournament by Connecticut.

For her career, LeBlanc is NU's winningest goalkeeper, and her 60-6-3 career record is second-best

in Big 12 Conference history.

LeBlanc was nominated for the Hermann trophy even though the Big 12 coaches only placed her on the conference's second team, behind Baylor keeper Dawn Greathouse.

"I don't think I got snubbed," LeBlanc said about the second-team appointment, "because Dawn Greathouse is a great keeper."

LeBlanc speculated that coaches may not have understood her distinctive style of play. She employs a "sweeper-keeper" style where she plays farther out as an extra attacker at times. She credited her experiences as the Canadian National team's goalkeeper with improving her game in college. She said international competition has taught her a lot.

"You're playing with the best players in the world," she said, "and you make mistakes and you learn from them. You have to do that quickly."

Huskers get another test with Badgers

BADGERS from page 10

Nebraska in the finals of the Cable Vision Classic 92-85. All-time Wisconsin is 3-0 against the Huskers.

Leonhardt said last year's loss won't play a factor in the team's motivation this year.

"We are focusing on this year," she said. "Sure, we weren't happy about last year, but that is in the past. We just want to come out of Wisconsin 5-0."

The game will be broadcast on NETV, channel 12.

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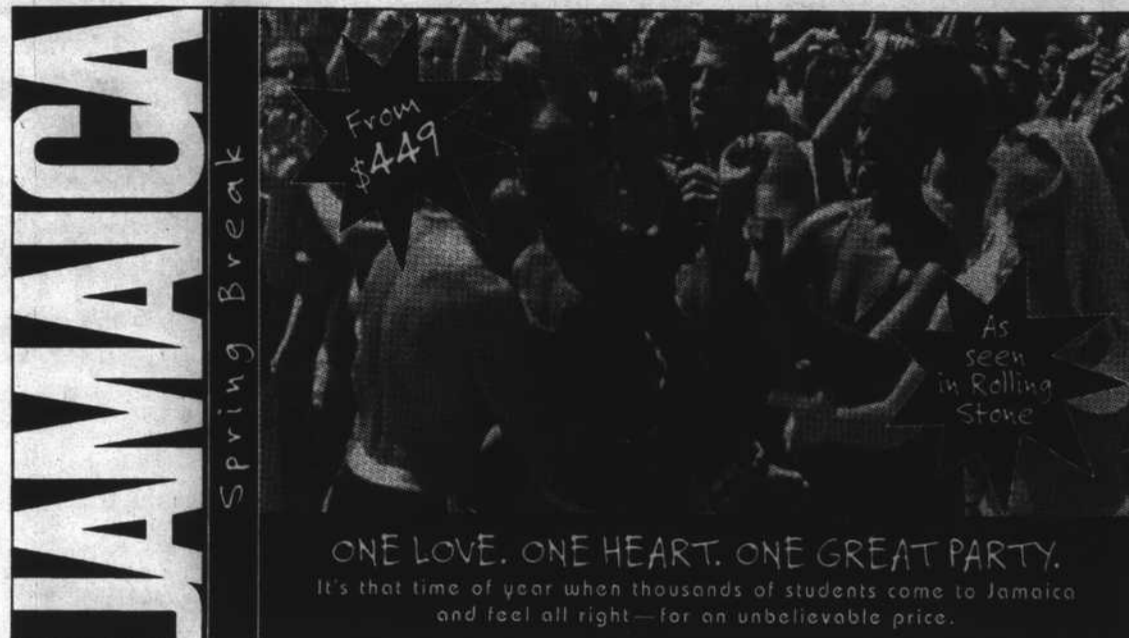
War Eagle explains everything

EAGLE from page 10

roaded by Nebraska. Miami, guaranteed a spot, will drop down to play Notre Dame in La Fiesta, leaving NU and Vick Tech.

What a conundrum ... But, under the War Eagle Theory, the Sugar Bowl has no

reason to invite Vick back to New Orleans for a repeat performance because he can do no more for his reputation there. And there is the 50,000 Relocated Nebraskans Clause, a tough sell for Vick Tech to match because to ask the same fans to return to the same city to play a poorer team isn't easy.



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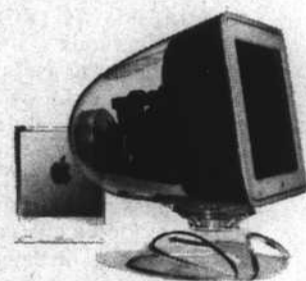
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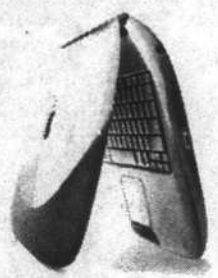
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