

## Wildcat offense unique, potent

BY JOHN GASKINS

Northwestern senior quarterback Zack Kustok doesn't feel insulted that his team is a two-touchdown underdog to No. 9 Nebraska in the Dec. 30 Alamo Bowl.

Led by second-year Coach Randy Walker, the 19th-ranked Wildcats finished the season 8-3 and tied for the Big 10 Conference Championship at 6-2. They beat Michigan. They have the nation's third-best offense.

Still the same "experts" who picked them to finish last in the Big 10 after winning just one out of 16 league games the previous two seasons tabbed former doormat Northwestern as heavy underdogs against the Big Red.

"We're used to it," said Kustok, who transferred to Northwestern his freshman year from Notre Dame.

"We've been underdogs since the beginning of the season. I remember telling a bunch of media guys last spring I thought we were going to be one of the best teams in the Big 10 and they looked at me like I was from another planet. We've come out and proved people wrong almost every game."

Much of that has to do with the Wildcats' unique and dangerous spread offense, which has amassed 475 yards and scored 38.5 points per game. They do it with both the run (averaging 257 yards per game, eighth in the nation) and the pass (218 yards per game, 50th).

And they do it without a huddle most of the time. It's been enough to throw defenses into panic mode. Some believe the NU Blackshirts - the nation's No. 26 defense, allowing 321.8 yards per game - might fall into that mode.

"They have an offense that has been able to move the ball against everybody they've played," NU Coach Frank Solich said. "It will be no small

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task to try and slow them down."

The Cats use the talent of several receivers, a steely offensive line, and their playmakers - Damien Anderson and Kustok. Anderson has rushed for 22 touchdowns on 1,914 yards while Kustok has thrown for 27 touchdowns on 2,251 yards.

Sometimes the Wildcats use a huddle but not usually. Instead, when a play ends, Kustok immediately darts or looks to the sideline and takes the next play's call from Walker - already considered an offensive genius.

The team lines up - usually with more than two receivers - with plenty of time on the play clock, and Kustok spends several seconds reading the defense. Based on that and Walker's call, Kustok calls the play with his best instincts.

"You definitely have to be smart to run the offense," Kustok said. "When you run a no-huddle offense, you have to make sure everybody's on the same page. You don't have a lot of time to just sit there in the huddle and think about what you are going to do."

What Kustok does a lot is go to Anderson. When he doesn't, he runs the option, throws a pass or throws on the run. It usually works, and it compensates for the Cats' iffy defense, which ranks 89th in the nation and allows 30.4 points per game.

That's why many people will expect a shootout at the Alamo.

"It will be a great opportunity for us," Anderson said. "It's an opportunity to beat one of the nation's quality programs on national TV and put Northwestern football on the map."

With this new-age offense, it already is, even if odds-makers still aren't giving it respect.



Scott McCurdy/DN

Huskers Greichaly Cepero and Lindsay Wischmeier celebrate after a Nebraska kill on Saturday night on the way to defeating Arizona for the NCAA regional championship. The Huskers now move on to the Final Four in Richmond Va., Thursday.

## Pros draft Huskers

FROM STAFF REPORTS

A U.S. professional women's soccer league has the cities, team names and the mascots all lined up.

Now it has players, including several Huskers.

Next year, when the Women's United Soccer Association begins play, two current and two former Nebraska players will find themselves on the rosters.

In the first eight rounds of the draft, Husker seniors Jenny Benson, Karina LeBlanc and former Huskers Sharolta Nonen and Amy Walsh were selected.

"I'm overwhelmed," said LeBlanc, NU's goalkeeper this season. "This is definitely an opportunity that I've been looking forward to. It's such an honor. I'm going to be playing against the best players in the world."

Nonen, a defender, was the first Husker taken in the draft. She was chosen by the Atlanta Beat with the 17th pick. During her career, which lasted from 1996-1999, she was a three-time All-American and Big 12 Player of the Year in 1999.

Benson was selected 18th by the Philadelphia Charge. As a

defender, she was a first-team All-American this year. She also was a four-time All-Big 12 selection. Benson finished her career as the school's all-time assist leader.

Charge Coach Mark Krikorian said he is excited about Benson's talents.

"Benson is a fierce competitor with great speed who can attack out of the backfield," he said.

With the 21st pick, the Boston Breakers selected Husker goalie LeBlanc. She was the second goalie picked in the draft. LeBlanc was a second-team Big 12 selection and a finalist for the Hermann Trophy, which is given to the nation's best soccer player.

Walsh, who played for NU from 1997-1999, went to the Bay Area CyberRays with the 24th pick. Walsh earned All-Big 12 honors her junior and senior years.

Benson was glad to have a chance to play professionally in the U.S.

"I just think that it's a really good opportunity for us to start this league off and get it going," she said. "Hopefully, younger kids will have something to strive for that we didn't have."

The draft will continue today with rounds nine through 15.

# Final Four bound

## No. 1 NU headed for Richmond after three-game victory

BY SEAN CALLAHAN

Coming off a disappointing third-round exit from the NCAA Tournament in 1999 and without the services of redshirting All-American Nancy Meendering, the 2000 Cornhusker volleyball team and the words "Final Four" didn't seem to fit together.

It didn't take too long for first-year Coach John Cook and his team to change that.

By defeating No. 5 Arizona 15-7, 19-17, 15-11, top-ranked NU earned itself a spot in the Final Four held in Richmond, Va., on Dec. 14-16.

The only other time the Huskers (32-0) entered the Final Four undefeated was in 1995 - the year they won their first and only national title.

Nebraska	15	19	15
Arizona	7	17	11

"This is why I came to Nebraska volleyball," Cook said. "Because I knew this team could win a national championship."

Saturday's one-hour, 55-minute match against the Wildcats (28-5) will go down as one of NU's finest.

Coming into tournament play, the Pac-10 champion hadn't even dropped a single game in its previous three NCAA matches.

After being swept, Arizona Coach David Rubio said all he could do was tip his hat to the near-flawless performance by NU.

"This one hurt," Rubio said. "The Nebraska players played extremely well, and we weren't

*"This is why I came to Nebraska volleyball. Because I knew this team could win a national championship."*

John Cook  
NU volleyball coach

able to execute. We couldn't get them into a position where we might be able to pressure them ...

"Tonight, the better team won." After easily dispatching the Wildcats in the first game, NU quickly found itself down 8-4 in the second set. The Huskers clawed their way back and actually had a serve for the game at 14-12.

But the Wildcats wouldn't

give up either and gained the upper hand at 16-15.

In the end, though, NU was a little too much for Arizona in the second set and in the match. The Cats served for the win five times, and five times the Huskers turned them back before stringing together enough points for the 19-17 win.

It was a game that Rubio said

Please see WIN on 11

## Nebraska women get needed win after road swoon

Husker Monique Whitfield is fouled by Beth Ann Dickinson of St. Peter's during the Cornhuskers 83-70 win Sunday.



David Clasen/DN

BY JOHN GASKINS

Right before the second half of Nebraska's 83-70 victory over St. Peter's commenced, an ill Felecia Harris of St. Peter's bent down and vomited into a towel.

Many of the 3,018 in attendance at the Bob Devaney Sports Center could feel the SPC forward's pain. Like Sunday's Lincoln weather and Harris' spillage, the game was not a pretty sight.

However, after the game, Huskers Head Coach Paul Sanderford found one aesthetically pleasing thing about it - an added mark in NU's win column. It was the first one in four games and 14 days.

A reporter asked Sanderford if

Please see ST. PETER on 11

## NU can't win own classic

BY JOSHUA CAMENZIND

This wasn't quite the weekend Barry Collier had in mind for his Nebraska basketball team.

For the second straight year, the Huskers claimed third place in their own tournament by beating Division II Alaska-Fairbanks 84-55 on Saturday night.

But NU came out flat and lost its first round game in the Husker Team Classic - formerly the Ameritas Classic - to the University of Missouri-Kansas City 82-71 on Friday night. UMKC then lost to Pacific in the championship game.

Nebraska's ability to draw even at 3-3 over the weekend did not satisfy Collier or the rest of the Huskers.

"I think we overlooked UMKC to be honest," NU guard Cary

Nebraska	84
Alaska-Fairbanks	55

Cochran said. "I think all 18 guys on our team did. I think that the majority of the fans and the audience did. And with the exception of our coaches, everybody did."

Cochran said the Huskers, who lost to Western Carolina in last year's first round matchup and never led in its game against UMKC, were disappointed in their effort in the opening round.

Collier said NU didn't totally recover against UAF despite shooting better than 50 percent for the fifth time this season.

"I thought our effort was better tonight in the first 12 minutes," said Collier, who earned his 199th career win against the Nanooks.

Please see CLASSIC on 11