

# No. 17 Huskers Bank On Beck To Get Offense Going

BY ERIC OLSON  
AP Sports Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The offense is Tim Beck's baby, and Nebraska expects a big growth spurt soon.

"A baby grows remarkably from age 1 to age 2," running backs coach Ron Brown said. "The first year seems like you're bobbling things all over the place. After that, you develop much more expertise. You see a lot of growth that second year."

There was lots of bobbling in Beck's first season as an FBS-level offensive coordinator. Hamstrung by penalties, turnovers and a limited playbook, the Cornhuskers ranked 66th nationally in total yards. They were 44th when coach Bo Pelini fired former coordinator Shawn Watson after the 2010 season.

Quarterback Taylor Martinez is entering his third season as the starter but, more important, his second in the same system. The top four rushers, including 1,300-yard workhorse Rex Burkhead, and seven of the top eight receivers also are back.

Though much of the spread-option offense will continue to go through Burkhead, Beck plans to have backups like Ameer Abdullah and Imani Cross to carry more of the load. Fullbacks could become more involved carrying the ball. More formations and personnel groupings are in the works.

Martinez can tie it all together if he becomes a sharper passer — he completed 56 percent last season — and better decision-maker.

The No. 17 Huskers want to get closer to a 50-50 run-pass split after running on two-thirds of their plays.

Beck used only a fraction of his repertoire last season for fear of overwhelming his players. He said he remembers introducing certain plays at practice and not feeling comfortable calling them in a game until several weeks later.

The Huskers averaged 43 points and 439 yards while winning their first four games. The production fell to 24 points and 366 yards against Big Ten opponents.

"Guys spent a lot more time focusing on

their role and how they fit into the offense as opposed to the bigger picture," tight end Ben Cotton said. "I think guys are figuring out how it fits in the bigger picture now. It's going to be a lot more fluid, a lot higher tempo, a lot faster pace. It's going to look a lot more like we want it to look."

Most of the playbook will be available for the Sept. 1 opener against Southern Mississippi, Beck said, though he'll hold back as much as possible until the bigger games in October and November.

"The good thing is that I don't see those bewildered looks on their faces, like, 'I'm lost, what do I do now?'" Beck said. "I see a lot more, 'Yeah, coach, I got you.'"

Beck, the running backs coach his first three years at Nebraska, also has a better understanding of his job. He said he expects to mature as a play-caller.

Beck remembered installing a quarterback-keeper play for last year's opener against Chattanooga. The Huskers weren't executing it well, and Chattanooga's defense was lined up to stop it. Martinez lost yards

on three straight runs and on four of his first seven.

Nebraska won the game easily, but Beck said he realized while watching the film that play-calling like that against better opposition would get the Huskers beat.

"I kept running it, going, 'Damn it, we're going to keep running it until I'm happy,'" Beck said. "I'd get stubborn and hard-headed and there were certain things I sometimes wanted to do, and I was going to do it. If it wasn't working, I'd get mad and want to hit it harder with a bigger hammer as opposed to moving on with the next thing."

Beck had his shining moments. He adjusted in the second half against Ohio State, spreading the field with more receivers. That, along with a physical running game, helped Nebraska overcome a 21-point deficit to win 34-27 in the biggest comeback in school history. He called a masterful third

HUSKERS | PAGE 9A



Commentary | Fall Sports

## And So It Begins Again ...

School Sports  
Seasons Start In  
Earnest Today

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK  
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And so it begins again.

OK, technically the fall sports season began on Aug. 13 when the Yankton Bucks boys' golf team first took to the course. Tennis and soccer have also begun competing. But today (Friday) is when things begin in earnest.

My staff and I have spent the last few weeks putting together our annual fall sports preview, which you will find inside today's edition.

**ON THE COVER:** We have done a lot of cross country covers in recent years, and for good reason. The Yankton Gazelles and Bucks have been the dominant force in South Dakota Class AA, and for several reasons.

One of those reasons is the team's training regimen. Yankton cross country has been utilizing the horse trails on the west end of Lewis & Clark Lake for their hill workouts, a weekly challenge that has helped build the team



JAMES  
CIMBUREK

— for example, the six-time Nebraska champion Crofton girls have used the "Kube Hills" around Crofton to train since CHS was winning titles back in the 1980s.

**YANKTON:** One thing about the Bucks and Gazelles is that they are traditionally solid and stable. This year is no different.

There is just one new head coach among the high school sports, dance coach Tiffany Mueller. While both club soccer coaches are different this year, neither is new — both boys' coach Warren Brenner and girls' coach Dave LaCombe have headed Yankton's programs before.

PREVIEW | PAGE 9A

both in body and in camaraderie.

The idea to do a feature on this part of Yankton's routine has been around a while. It's also one we could have done with other teams



P&D FILE PHOTOS

**TOP:** The Yankton Gazelles cross country team is one of the area teams defending state titles this fall. The Yankton cross country program, which also won the combined team title last fall, is the subject of the cover story in this year's Fall Sports Preview, which came out in today's edition.

**BOTTOM:** Joe Glenn has returned to Vermillion as the University of South Dakota head football coach. His return and the Coyotes' debut in the Missouri Valley Football Conference are among the top stories for Coyote football entering this season. We preview the Coyotes and South Dakota State, and have capsules on the other MVFC teams in the preview section.

## Mathieu Will Sit Out Season

(AP) — Tyrann Mathieu's father says the former LSU star will not play football this season.

Tyrone Mathieu tells ESPN his son is focused on working out his personal problems with former NBA coach and player John Lucas at the Right Step recovery center in Houston. Lucas battled drug and alcohol problems during his career and now counsels others.

Tyrone Mathieu told ESPN on Thursday that "Tyrann is working on discipline, maturity and character. He's making life adjustments."

Tyrann Mathieu, a Heisman Trophy finalist last season, was kicked off the team at LSU two weeks ago, reportedly for failed drug tests, and considered transferring. But with the season a week away, it now seems likely that he would not be able to enroll in a new school in time to play.

## USADA To Ban Armstrong For Life, Strip Titles

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — U.S. Anti-Doping Agency chief executive Travis Tygart says the agency will ban Lance Armstrong from cycling for life and strip him of his seven Tour de France titles for doping.

Armstrong on Thursday night dropped any further challenges to USADA's allegations that he took performance-enhancing drugs to win cycling's premier event from 1999-2005.

Armstrong says USADA doesn't have the authority to vacate his Tour titles. However, Tygart told The Associated Press that USADA can do it.

Tygart called the Armstrong case a "heartbreaking" example of a win-at-all costs approach to sports.

## Adams Seeks Her Olympic Gold

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — Valerie Adams is the only champion from the London Olympics who never received a gold medal — and she's going to see about that Friday.

The shot put winner said Thursday she will hand over her silver at the International Olympic Committee headquarters in Lausanne, and find out about getting the gold that was taken by disgraced rival Nadzeya Ostapchuk.

Ostapchuk tested positive for a banned steroid and was disqualified in the biggest doping scandal at the London Games.

However, the Belarus athlete has pledged to appeal, making Adams wait for her prize.

"I don't care what she does. I'm giving back my silver medal to get the gold," Adams told reporters after winning her event at the Athletissima Diamond League event, close by the IOC offices.

"It's been a roller-coaster ride for me since London. It's been not the easiest," the 27-year-old New Zealander acknowledged.

Adams went to the Olympics strongly favored to defend her title, and as a three-time world champion.

## Panama, Calif. Advance At LLWS

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. (AP) — Hance Smith's eyes widened in the dugout as he watched Quinton Gago send a homer well over the left-field fence.

The boys from Petaluma, Calif., are packing quite the punch from the plate at the Little League World Series.

Smith hit two homers, including a first-inning grand slam, and California pounded out 12 hits in an 11-1, five-inning victory over San Antonio on Thursday night to reach the U.S. championship game.

California will play Goodlettsville, Tenn., on Saturday.

Smith, 13, is trying to remember to keep his hands out in front of his body before every at-bat.

"With that thought in mind, I keep going to the plate," the power-hitting shortstop said. "It's been working out so far."

Smith finished 3 for 3 with five RBIs, and Gago had two hits and two RBIs.

Starter Danny Marzo, already a California hero for hitting a game-ending homer this week, came up big on the mound with 11 strikeouts in five innings.

He was gracious on the mound, too, after Texas' Jordan Cardenas went deep in the third. The 12-year-old Marzo greeted Cardenas with a high-five with his glove hand as Cardenas jogged down the third-base line.

Earlier, Aguadulce, Panama, edged Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, 2-1 to advance to the international final against Japan.

California didn't have quite as difficult a time against Texas, the

game ending in the bottom of the fifth due to Little League's 10-run rule.

"Runs early help," said California manager Brad Smith, Hance's proud father. "It gives confidence to our pitcher and just makes everything a little easier."

The Petaluma boys managed just two hits off Texas pitching in the decisive six-run first — but both balls landed over the outfield fence.

California loaded the bases on three walks. A wild pitch brought home the first run, and the bases were loaded again after Austin Paretti reached first on a dropped third strike.

Smith then hit a 2-2 pitch that just cleared the wall in left-center 225 feet away.

"Petaluma! Petaluma!" shouted California's fans.

Two pitches later, Quinton Gago went deep, too, and left no doubt about his shot. It easily cleared the wall in left and landed amongst fans perched on the grassy hill beyond the outfield.

It was such an impressive shot that even Smith stopped to admire the blast from the dugout as the ball carried under the night sky.

But Smith wasn't done himself.

Another homer to left in the third earned the 13-year-old slugger another set of pats on the helmet from happy teammates who greeted him at the plate.

And to think, Smith has been borrowing teammate Andrew White's bat.

He may not ever give it back the way he's hitting.

Marzo allowed just two hits and a walk, and retired the last seven batters he faced.

California has a chance to avenge its only loss in South Williamsport — a 9-6 defeat to the Tennessee crew from Goodlettsville on Sunday. Texas was eliminated.

Texas manager Jack Wideman Jr. gathered his players in a circle in left field after the game for one final team meeting as the players' families and friends waited in the stands.

"We ran up against a great team ... One through 12, every one of them can put the ball in play," Wideman said. They were just smashing the ball."

In the early game, 12-year-old Edisson Gonzalez had 11 strikeouts and James Gonzalez provided the offense with a two-run homer in the first to lift Panama.

Another rematch in on top in the international final. Tokyo beat Panama 4-1 on Wednesday night.

Mexico starter Ramon Ballina struck out 12, but allowed James Gonzalez's big blast.

Panama manager Luis Gonzalez is also a proud uncle after his 12-year-old nephew hit the homer.

"It was a difficult game, but our pitcher did his job," Luis Gonzalez said through a translator. "One pitch decided the game."

Mexico scored in the fifth on Marcelo Perez's RBI single, and had the tying run at second with two outs in the sixth.

LLWS | PAGE 9A

## What's Next For The Vandals As WAC Era Closes?

BY NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS  
Associated Press

MOSCOW, Idaho (AP) — The losses kept piling up for the Idaho football team, even during the off-season.

Both the Mountain West and the Sun Belt conferences rejected the Vandals' request for membership. Meanwhile, other football programs bailed out of the Western Athletic Conference.

That left the future of the Idaho football program uncertain, as after this season the WAC football roster would consist only of the Vandals and New Mexico State.

Idaho coach Robb Akey is tired of the whole process.

"We are the unwanted red-headed stepchild, no offense to any redheads," Akey said. "Nobody seems to want the Vandals right now."

"I promise you that's got a chip on my shoulder," Akey said.

Idaho officials last week announced that the Vandals will remain in the top division of college football, but after this season will compete as an independent. Athletic director Rob Spear acknowledged the challenge that poses in scheduling games, and said he hoped it only lasted for two years before the Vandals were invited to join a conference.

With a tiny television market, a tiny fan base and little success since moving up to the FBS in 1996, it's not a surprise that the wholesale shuffling of the college football landscape has left the Vandals on the outside.

They are located in Moscow, a town of just over 20,000 in the remote Idaho Panhandle. Even in their own neighborhood the Vandals play second fiddle to the Pac-12's Washington State, located just eight miles away in Pullman.

More galling to Vandals fans has been the rise of Boise State football, 300 miles south in the state capital. The Broncos have enjoyed national success for a decade and in recent years abandoned the WAC for the Mountain West and will soon be bound for the Big East. The future of the Idaho-Boise State rivalry game is in doubt.

Moscow is in the Spokane, Wash., television market, and the 1.5 million households in that market were not enough for the Mountain West, Idaho athletic director Rob Spear said.

Then there's Idaho's poor record since moving up to the FBS. The Vandals have had just four winning seasons and 12 losing campaigns under coaches such as Chris Tormey, Tom Cable, Nick Holt and Dennis Erickson.

That has fueled talk in some quarters that the Vandals should return to the FCS-level Big Sky Conference, where they were once a power.

But Idaho administrators insist they are committed to the FBS.

This year, the WAC football roster consists of Idaho, New Mexico State, Utah State, San Jose State, Louisiana Tech, Texas-San Antonio and Texas State. All but Idaho and New Mexico State are scheduled to leave after this season, and league officials have said the WAC's days as a football conference are numbered.

The Vandals were 2-10 last season, and are picked by coaches to finish fifth in the seven-team league

Akey, entering his sixth season, said he believes Idaho will be competitive this year.

"We want to win the last WAC championship," Akey said.

He acknowledged it has been tough watching former WAC teams like Boise State, Nevada and Fresno State get scooped up by other leagues while the Vandals are turned away.

"I'm kind of tired of people telling me we're not good enough, we're not wanted, we're not going to do this, we're not going to do that," Akey said.

Things were not always so bad for the Vandals. The school was a member of the Pacific Coast Conference, a precursor to the Pac-12, from 1922 to 1958. For three decades it was a member of the Big Sky.

But the decision to follow Boise State into the FBS found Idaho in the Big West and then the Sun Belt Conferences before the Vandals appeared to find a stable home in the WAC in 2005. The explosion of conference realignments in recent years changed that.

Spear has urged Vandals fans to remain hopeful.

"We are going to land on our feet," Spear said. "Whatever the outcome, the University of Idaho is going to be fine."