

# Nebraska Plans To Lighten Load Of RB Rex Burkhead

BY ERIC OLSON  
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LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Foolish as it might seem, Nebraska coaches plan to cut down on the number of times Rex Burkhead carries the ball.

Seems as if they are going with the less-is-more theory for the senior, who is positioned to finish his career as the Cornhuskers' No. 2 all-time rusher.

"As a competitor, you want the ball in your hands as much as possible, but at the same time you have to understand what's best for you and best for the team," Burkhead said Monday.

The belief is that Burkhead can be just as productive, maybe more, if he is fresher. A year ago a lack of proven depth required Burkhead to run 26 times or more in four games, including 38 against Iowa. By November, he had nagging injuries that

limited his explosiveness. This year, the No. 17 Cornhuskers have potential playmakers in backups Ameer Abdullah, Braylon Heard and freshman Imani Cross.

"Rex wants to play every snap. It's up to us to manage that," coach Bo Pelini said. "At the same time, get the ball in his hands, get him some carries. We have a lot of talent at the running back position, so it'll be in Rex's long-term interest to offset that load some."

Burkhead averaged 22 carries a game while running for 1,357 yards last season. His career total stands at 2,654. He'll join the school's top-10 rushing list with 90 yards in Saturday's opener against Southern Mississippi.

He needs 1,227 to take over the No. 2 spot from Ahman Green, who left after the 1997 season and became the Green Bay Packers' all-time leader. On his way up the

chart, Burkhead would pass his old teammate Roy Helu Jr., who's now with the Washington Redskins, and 2001 Heisman Trophy winner Eric Crouch.

He won't catch all-time leader Mike Rozier, the 1983 Heisman winner who amassed 4,780 yards in three seasons.

Burkhead has proved to be one of the most dependable and durable running backs to come through Nebraska. No one can remember him ever asking to come out of a game for a breather.

"You never see a chink in his armor," offensive coordinator Tim Beck said. "You never know what's too hard for the kid or too much because he never comes out. He comes out Monday (for practice) bouncing around like a 3-year-old who just came out of candy shop."

The 5-foot-11, 210-pound Burkhead isn't the flashiest runner, and he doesn't

have incredible breakaway speed like some of the great Nebraska backs of yesteryear.

His football smarts are well known among teammates and coaches. He spent a lot of time this summer breaking down film of Wisconsin's Montee Ball, just to see if there was something Ball does that he could add to his own game.

Burkhead also prides himself on his accomplishments in the weight room. He's hard to bring down whether he's running up the middle or operating in open field after catching a pass.

"What is it like to tackle Burkhead?"

First, you have to tackle him before I can tell you how it is to tackle him," Nebraska linebacker Alonzo Whaley said with a smile. "He's a power horse. Rex Burkhead is not the type of guy who will completely run you over. But if you don't bring your

feet and keep driving after you hit him, nine times out of 10 he'll get plus yards after contact rather than you taking him back."

Though Burkhead has put up outstanding numbers, his name is not on many short lists of Heisman candidates.

Ball is the Big Ten's top candidate, and rightly so after he ran for 1,923 yards and 33 touchdowns last season. Michigan quarterback Denard Robinson also gets mentioned.

Burkhead, not so much.

"I really don't really care much about that stuff," Burkhead said. "Really what I want is a Big Ten title game. All the individual accolades will take care of itself throughout the year. Those things — I guess the nominations are for the fans and media to decide. My main mission is to win a Big Ten title game this year."

## From Top To Bottom, Changes Abound In Big 12

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — Times are changing in the Big 12.

A new commissioner, two new schools and a batch of new starting quarterbacks bring a distinctly different flavor to the conference this season after a period of turmoil when one-third of the original members left.

Big East champion West Virginia and Mountain West champ TCU will at least partially fill the void left by Nebraska, Colorado, Missouri and Texas A&M scattering to other leagues.

Exactly who will take over the superstar roles filled by Heisman Trophy winner Robert Griffin III and fellow first-round NFL draft picks Justin Blackmon, Ryan Tannehill, Brandon Weeden and Kendall Wright remains to be seen.

It all makes for an unpredictable season. But can it be a great one?

"We don't want the SEC to win another national championship," new commissioner Bob Bowlsby proclaimed Monday during a stop on Oklahoma's campus.

"We think the University of Oklahoma can compete at that level and have a chance, and we think there are several others this year that can do similar."

Defending conference champion Oklahoma State (Wes Lunt), Baylor (Nick Florence) and Kansas (Dayne Crist) will all be breaking in new quarterbacks. And although they're not new to starting college football games, West Virginia's Geno Smith and TCU's Casey Pachall will be new to the Big 12 and trying to continue their championship-winning ways.

"When you're going into a new conference, a new landscape, it's all about finding a way to win," said TCU coach Gary Patterson, who'll wait an extra week to make his Big 12 debut Sept. 8 against Grambling State.

"We've had this plan before. This is not the first time we've changed conferences."

Patterson's Horned Frogs are re-joining some former Southwest Conference foes after hopping to the WAC, Conference USA and Mountain West.

"You've just got to keep growing up. That's what good programs do, and that's what we intend to do here," Patterson said. "It's not going to be a sprint. It's three to five years, and then over the course of 10 years, how do we get as a program as we keep recruiting to the Big 12 to become what we need to become?"

Whoever can overcome all of the changes the best will be crowned the champion in December.

Oklahoma State is attempting to get there with Lunt, who's just out of high school, taking over for the 28-year-old Weeden. Yet coach Mike Gundy says the Cowboys won't be changing their offense up — or relying heavily on the run — to ease Lunt into the college game.

"There'll be mistakes, growing pains," said Gundy, whose Cowboys open the season Saturday against Savannah State.

"We had them with Brandon Weeden here, and he had been in practice and was obviously very mature with his age. ... He'll make mistakes just like any other young player, and you go with it and you keep playing."

Kansas, which didn't win a single conference game last season, is turning to the former Notre Dame connection of Crist and coach Charlie Weis. Weis was brought in to replace Turner Gill, who was fired after two losing seasons, and said his players have been through a "pretty grueling offseason" to try and improve.

"I think they're really looking forward to showing everyone they're not as bad as they were," Weis said.

Bowlsby believes there's depth in the Big 12 from top to bottom that

# Cubs, Tornadoes Open With Wins



Alcester-Hudson's Sierra McConnell, 11, attacks against the defense of Freeman's Shelby Jensen during their volleyball match on Monday in Alcester. Alcester-Hudson claimed a 3-0 victory in the match, which marked the season opener for both teams.

MENNO — The Centerville Tornadoes claimed a back-and-forth 19-25, 25-19, 26-24, 16-25, 15-8 victory over Menno in the volleyball season opener for both teams.

Logan Wieseler had seven kills and Kieran O'Malley had six kills, 11 digs and five ace serves to lead Centerville. Kristine Van Herde had five kills, 10 digs and three ace serves. Gabby Larson posted 11 digs and Brittany Austin added nine digs and five ace serves in the victory.

For Menno, Shelby Huber had five kills, four ace serves and three blocks, and Courtney Schaeffer had seven set assists to lead the way. Ashton Diede posted eight digs and three ace serves for the Wolves.

Centerville hosts Beresford and Menno travels to Tripp to face Tripp-Delmont-Armour today (Tuesday).

Centerville won the JV match 25-14, 25-11.

CENTERVILLE (1-0).....19 25 26 16 15  
MENNO (0-1).....25 19 24 25 8

## Alcester-Hudson 3, Freeman 0

ALCESTER — Shenia Doering and Eva Beeck each had five kills to lead Alcester-Hudson to a 25-18, 25-22, 25-23 sweep of Freeman in prep volleyball action on Monday. The match was the season opener for both squads.

Also for Alcester-Hudson, Courtney McKee posted 14 assists, eight digs and two ace serves. JoAnah Beeck had a match-high three ace serves. Skylar McConnell went 10-10 serving. Jessica Wegh had seven digs and Doering added six digs in the win.

For Freeman, Dina Soulek led the way with seven kills and 25 digs. Nicole Hinkley posted five kills and three blocks. Grace Gerling had 17 assists. Lexi Graber and Shelby Jensen each had 23 digs, with Jensen adding two ace serves for the Flyers.

Both teams are in action today (Tuesday). Alcester-Hudson at Baltic and Freeman at home against Irene-Wakonda.

Alcester-Hudson won the JV match 25-22, 25-23; and the C-match 14-25, 25-17, 15-11.

FREEMAN (0-1).....18 22 23  
ALCESTER-HUDSON (1-0).....25 25 25

## Scotland 3, Canistota 0

SCOTLAND — The Scotland Highlanders swept past Canistota 25-22, 25-21, 26-24 in the volleyball season opener for both squads.

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# JV Gazelles Split At O'Gorman Minn. Coach's Child Porn Case Tests Investigators

SIoux FALLS — The Yankton Gazelles JV softball team split a doubleheader with Sioux Falls O'Gorman at Sherman Park on Monday.

In the opener, O'Gorman claimed an 8-3 decision. For Yankton, Heather Hauer and Brynn Albers each had a double and a RBI, and Bailey Kortan had two hits. Alisa Ruzicka posted a hit and a RBI. Kalyn Peterka, Gabby Hutchison and Mikayla Trenhaile added hits.

Peterka took the loss, striking out five over six innings of work.

In the nightcap, Madison Dangler drove in four runs and picked up the win on the rubber in an 11-3 Yankton victory.

Dangler had a triple, double and single, and Kortan had a double and two singles to lead Yankton. Brynn Albers doubled and singled, driving in two. Ruzicka also had two hits. Hauer, Hutchison, Ellen Anderson and Darian Tramp each had hits in the victory.

Dangler struck out three in the four-inning contest for the victory.

The Gazelles are off until a Sept. 4 doubleheader at Sioux Falls Washington.

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A Minnesota football coach accused of taking pornographic videos of his children is offering a simple explanation: The images are nothing more than innocent family antics, unfairly misinterpreted by authorities as having the darkest possible motive.

That defense, first presented by Todd Hoffner's attorney last week and reiterated by his wife on Monday, will face tremendous scrutiny by investigators in the days ahead and a likely challenge by prosecutors before a jury, experts said.

"Where you draw the line is through investigation," said Meg Garvin, the executive director of the National Crime Victim Law Institute in Portland, Ore. "Because sometimes the pictures you first see in a child pornography case might be very similar to benign family photos, and it takes more investigation to determine that, as well as experts talking to the children. And that's sometimes how we'll find out what's happening."

What they'll discover is nothing illegal, said Melodee Hoffner, whose husband is the football coach at Minnesota State University in Mankato. In the family's first statement since her husband's arrest last week, Hoffner called the charges against her husband "ridiculous and baseless."

"My family does what every family does — we take videos and

pictures of our kids in all their craziness," Melodee Hoffner said Monday.

Hoffner, 46, of Eagle Lake, was arrested last week and charged with two felonies: possession of child pornography and using minors in a sexual performance or pornographic work. Capt. Rich Murry of the Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office said officers seized computers, discs and electronic equipment when they searched the coach's home following his arrest, and that material is being searched for any relevant evidence.

Experts who reviewed authorities' descriptions of Hoffner's videos said to determine the innocent from the nefarious, detectives will try to uncover whether the videos were kept secret or if other adult family members knew of them. While debating whether to file charges, they said, officials often consider whether there are multiple pictures or videos and whether the children are acting naturally for their age.

Marsh Halberg, a prominent defense attorney in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, said such investigations rarely yield close calls. He cited a case in which his client was investigated for taking a picture of her naked toddler on a beach. It was seen by day care workers, who went to authorities. Officials searched his client's home and conducted interviews to

determine the context of the photo, Halberg said. They decided not to charge his client.

"Usually, when I have a child porn case, this hasn't been a gray line," he said.

In Minnesota, the legal definition of child pornography includes performances depicting actual or simulated sexual conduct, and the definition of sexual conduct includes masturbation or lewd exhibitions of the genitals. That's typical of state and federal laws on child pornography, which generally define videos or photos as such if they include images that have the intent of evoking a sexual response, said Parry Aftab, a New Jersey attorney and online child safety advocate.

A naked child in the bathtub is not pornography by itself, she said, but a nude girl with her legs spread or a boy touching his genitals meets that definition.

At a court hearing after Hoffner's arrest, his attorney, Jim Fleming, said the videos show nothing graphic, abusive or exploitive and defended them as "private family moments." Hoffner's wife said Monday the couple's three children love to dance, play and act silly, and to be photographed and recorded.

"I assure you our children have not been exploited or abused — they are healthy physically, mentally and emotionally; and have