

No. 11 Huskers Look To Overcome Top 25 Road Demons

BY ERIC OLSON
AP College Football Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska heads into its most important game to date facing two obstacles.

The first is 22nd-ranked Wisconsin, which is in a three-way tie with the Cornhuskers and Minnesota atop the Big Ten West.

The second is a maddening history of struggling on the road against ranked opponents under coach Bo Pelini.

The No. 11 Cornhuskers (8-1, 4-1 Big Ten) have lost four of their last five on the road against Top 25 teams. Since Pelini took over in 2008, the Huskers are 3-8 in those games.

"It's hard to win on the road against good football teams and tough environments," Pelini said Monday. "I know that those last

five games won't have anything to do with what happens Saturday. The team that executes the best is going to win."

In its only Top 25 road game this season, Nebraska was down 24 points in the fourth quarter to Michigan State before closing to within 27-22. Each of the Huskers' previous three Top 25 road losses was by at least 25 points. The one win in that five-game stretch was 17-14 at Penn State in 2011.

Overall Nebraska is 21-10 on the road under Pelini, a .677 winning percentage that's 11th-best in the Bowl Subdivision, according to STATS.

Safety Corey Cooper said he can't figure out why the Huskers have wilted in the biggest road games.

"It comes down to us showing up ready to play," he said. "It doesn't matter if we're home or away.

It's just a decision we have to make, to come out there and execute and be the more physical team."

Cooper was encouraged by the fourth-quarter comeback bid at Michigan State last month.

"We got down and we didn't give up. We kept fighting," he said. "I can't explain why we start slow sometimes. We can't afford that this weekend."

The Huskers end the regular season with three games against opponents that are closest to them in the standings. After Wisconsin (7-2, 4-1), the Huskers host Minnesota and go to Iowa. The Hawkeyes are alone in fourth in the West, one game behind the leaders.

Since Nebraska joined the Big Ten, Wisconsin has come to symbolize the Huskers' road woes.

The Badgers won the Huskers' inaugural Big Ten game 48-17 in

Madison in a meeting of top-10 teams in 2011. The Huskers won 30-27 in Lincoln in 2012 but two months later lost 70-31 to an unranked Badgers team at the neutral-site conference championship game. Saturday marks the first meeting since that night in Indianapolis.

"You have that in the back of your mind," said offensive lineman Jake Cotton, who was a backup in 2012. "This is a different team, they're a different team. We're going to play the 2014 Wisconsin Badgers and try to get a win up there."

Considering the upsets that happen every week in college football, Pelini said, it would be foolish to put more weight on one game than another.

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USD's Smith Aims High

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — Craig Smith makes no apologies for his expectations.

He came to win Summit League championships.

The first-year men's basketball head coach at the University of South Dakota continually uses the 'cut down the nets' mantra with his players, and it's not a line. He genuinely means it.

"That's what we expect. People look at us like we're crazy that we expect to be in the NCAA Tournament," Smith said at Monday's media day session in Vermillion.

"Is that a lofty goal? Yeah." But it was a reason he was willing to leave Nebraska and the Big Ten Conference — and more money — to come to Vermillion.

Smith, a long-time assistant with Tim Miles, was hired away from the Cornhuskers in March and quickly brought in a whole new coaching staff and eight new players.

The goal, as he said during his introductory press conference, was to revitalize a Coyote program coming off a 12-win season — and another early exit from the Sum-



South Dakota men's basketball coach Craig Smith addresses the media during the team's preseason media day on Monday at the Neuarth Center on the USD campus. USD opens the 2014-15 season, its first under Smith, on Friday at Utah Valley.

JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

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Players' Union Files Grievance Against NFL In Peterson Case

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — The NFL Players Association has filed an expedited grievance with the NFL to reinstate Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson.

The NFLPA cited Monday "explicit language in a signed agreement" from Sept. 18, when Peterson was placed on a special commissioner's exempt list following his indictment on felony child abuse in Texas. Peterson pleaded no contest Tuesday to a lesser charge of misdemeanor reckless assault, freeing him from the court system provided he fulfills the terms of his probation.

The league began a review Thursday of his case under the personal conduct policy, but it said Peterson would remain on paid leave until the process is completed.

That didn't sit well with the union. The NFLPA demanded in a letter to the NFL last week that Peterson be allowed to rejoin the Vikings immediately until any determination of any discipline.

"As of now, they have failed to respond or comply," the NFLPA said. "It is our obligation to protect all players' rights, and we will pursue any and all breaches of any contract between a player and his team or the NFL."

The league said in a statement that it had "received the NFLPA's grievance on behalf of Adrian Peterson."

"We have honored our commitment to Mr. Peterson and the NFLPA not to process or impose any discipline until the criminal charges pending in Texas were resolved," the league said in a statement. "When Mr. Peterson decided not to contest criminal charges, we promptly advised both him and the NFLPA that we were prepared to consider what, if any, discipline should now be imposed under the Personal Conduct Policy."

"We asked Mr. Peterson and his representatives, including the NFLPA, for relevant information. We have not received any of the requested information, but remain prepared to schedule a hearing and make a determination as quickly as possible based on as much information as available."

The Vikings come off their bye week still waiting for the NFL to act but hardly pinning any plans on a possible Peterson return.

"We'd just prepare like he's not going to be here until we hear differently," coach Mike Zimmer said.

The Vikings offered no hints Monday what their plan would be if Peterson is reinstated by the league. They play at Chicago this Sunday, and in a 48-word statement said the team's focus is on preparing for the Bears.

"As an organization, we respect and understand the league's process," the Vikings said.

The league has offered Peterson a hear-

Former Vikings Safety Orlando Thomas Dies Of ALS

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — As ALS began to destroy his body, Orlando Thomas lost his ability to move.

Then he could no longer speak. His wife, Demetra, guided him through every painstaking word.

"She'd have to go through the entire alphabet, and he'd blink his eye. The only muscle that worked was his eyelids, so he would blink at the letter," said Mark Bartelstein, the former agent for the free safety who led the NFL in interceptions as a rookie for the Minnesota Vikings in 1995. "Sentences would take forever."

The effort was worth it for friends and family of the beloved Thomas.

He died Sunday at 42 in his hometown of Crowley, Louisiana, after fighting the fatal amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, the neurodegenerative disease commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, for more than 10 years. The death was confirmed Monday by the Vikings, Bartelstein and Glenn Bouillion, the director of Geesey-Ferguson Funeral Home in Crowley.

The Vikings issued a statement expressing their sadness and condolences to his family.

"He represented the franchise and the state of Minnesota with the utmost dignity and class," the team said. "While his outgoing personality made him a favorite among his teammates, Orlando's involve-

ment in the community made him a favorite outside of Winter Park."

Thomas played seven seasons for the Vikings.

"We use great hyperbole or drama, but there's no way I could even properly describe his courage and his class and his selflessness, just the way he's handled everything," said Bartelstein, who represented Thomas throughout his career. "All he ever worried about was everybody else. Never self-pity. Never woe is me. It was always, 'How are you doing? How's your family? How are your kids?' He never wanted to talk about what he was going through."

Thomas went through a lot. The average survival time, according to the ALS Association, is three to five years. He more than doubled that.

"He was so tough, and that's what allowed him to fight this thing for so long," Bartelstein said.

A hard-hitting overachiever who played for the Louisiana-Lafayette Ragin' Cajuns, then known as Southwestern Louisiana, Thomas was drafted in the second round by the Vikings. He picked off nine passes that year in 1995 and finished with 22 for his career. He scored four touchdowns on returns and was a key player on two Vikings teams that reached the NFC championship game, after the 1998 and 2000 seasons.

Nebraska-Wisconsin Is Latest Big Ten Trophy Game

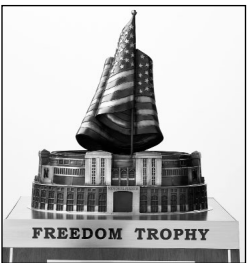
MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Nebraska-Wisconsin is becoming the Big Ten's 17th trophy game in football.

The schools announced Monday that the winner of their game each year will win the Freedom Trophy, starting Saturday in Madison, Wisconsin.

The Freedom Trophy honors veterans who fought in the nation's wars. Wisconsin's Camp Randall Stadium was built on what once was a Civil War training ground. Nebraska's Memorial Stadium was dedicated in honor of veterans.

Nebraska coach Bo Pelini said not enough can be done to pay tribute to people who serve in the military.

Wisconsin athletic director Barry Alvarez said trophy games are part of the tradition of college football and that the Freedom Trophy brings recognition to two historic football venues.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Goalies and coaches from all levels of the Yankton Area Ice Association's hockey program participated in a goalie camp on Sunday, part of a skills development camp that runs through today (Tuesday). Former professional player Jordan Parise, who played for the University of North Dakota, taught the camp through the Legend Hockey program. Participants included (front) Doug Budig, Quentin Franklin, Boone Hollywood, Keenan Wagner, Ryan Eichacker, Christopher Sternhagen, Chad Kapla, (back) Brian Wenisch, Shawn Wagner, Jordan Parise, Isaac Nedved, Caleb List, Sean Garcia, Terry Pedersen and Ryan McClellenn.



P&D FILE PHOTO

South Dakota's Heidi Hoff drives in for a layup during a game against Creighton in the 2013-14 season. Hoff, who was injured midway through the season, returns this year for the Coyotes, who open the 2014-15 season on Friday at Drake.

Hoff Back From Injury For Coyote Women

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — Heidi Hoff was not wearing her championship ring, but trust her, she says, she proudly shows it off whenever she gets the chance.

"At least I still got one," she added, with a smile.

Hoff, a 5-foot-10 junior guard from Brandon, was relegated to the bench with an injury and had to watch her University of South Dakota women's basketball teammates march into the NCAA Tournament last season.

She maintains, though, that the setback has made her a better player and a more mature person.

"It was really tough (to sit), but now looking back, I think it made me stronger mentally," Hoff said during Monday's basketball media day in Vermillion. "It makes me want to win that much more this year."

"At the time it was really tough, and I'm glad to have supportive teammates and friends."

The injury came in USD's 12th game last season, at home against NAIA member College of Saint Mary. Hoff was driving to the basket like she always has, but came down awkwardly on her right knee.

That's when she heard the 'pop' often associated with an ACL tear.

"I've heard a lot of teammates and friends mention that when they tear it, but I was trying to be optimistic," Hoff said. "But in the back of mind, I had a bad feeling."

The news wasn't good. She was going to miss the rest of the season.

And so, gone was Hoff, who at the time was averaging 4.4 points and 4.3 rebounds a game for a Coyote team that hadn't developed into the Summit League contender it would eventually become.

With Hoff having to sit out the final 27 games of last season gave her plenty of chances to not only rehab her knee but find a way to stay positive while not on the court, according to head coach Amy Williams.

"You never really know how a kid will bounce back from something like that, but I've been extremely impressed," Williams said Monday. "Mentally, her approach is unbelievable. She's impacting our team in so many ways."

Perhaps the most noticeable impact with Hoff back is USD's depth at the guard position.

The Coyotes return starters Tia Hemiller (Jr.), Nicole Seekamp (Sr.) and Raeshel Contreras (Sr.), and will have off the bench Taylor Moore (Jr.), Kelly Stewart (Jr.) and Jaylah Jackson (So.).

Hoff is just another weapon at that position for the Coyotes, who open their season Friday at Drake in Des Moines, Iowa.

"The better the depth the better the team is," said Contreras, who averaged 12.8 points a season ago. "It really feels like she never left, she jumped right back in the old Heidi."

"Well, better Heidi, actually."

When Hoff went down last season, Contreras stepped into a starting role, but with both

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Preseason Study Session