

Nebraska Out To Break Defensive Slump Against Buckeyes

BY ERIC OLSON

AP Sports Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Defensive coordinator Carl Pelini said last spring that this could be the best of the four defenses he has coached at Nebraska.

Right now, it is on track to be his worst.

The 14th-ranked Cornhuskers (4-1, 0-1 Big Ten) go into Saturday night's game against Ohio State (3-2, 0-1) putting up numbers similar to those of the porous 2008 defense and well off those of the dominant 2009-10 units.

Nebraska is allowing 27 points and 377 yards a game. The Huskers have had an opposing running back go over 100 yards in three games and are giving up 152 yards on the ground. They've surrendered 10 touchdown passes, made four interceptions and allowed 224 yards a game through the air.

The same unit Pelini praised for its speed, physicality and leadership has been sporadically aggressive, occasionally confused and reliant on arm tackling.

Coach Bo Pelini, Carl's younger brother, said the pitfalls of youth and immaturity showed up last week on the big stage in a 48-17 loss at No. 4 Wisconsin.

"It's one thing to do it in practice and another when the bullets are flying," Bo said. "You have to do it. At the end of the

day, we were in position. We just didn't make a play. It's not magical."

The defense has an opportunity to get well at home against the Buckeyes, who are struggling on offense and reeling from a series of off-field problems involving several players.

Ohio State center Mike Brewster said he's not fooled by Nebraska's defensive statistics.

"I know they've got some great guys over there," he said. "I know their big thing is the Blackshirts. They take a lot of pride on the defensive side. They've got Jared Crick who is highly touted and (Baker) Steinkuhler who's a really good guy and (Lavonte) David at linebacker. It's going to be a battle and those guys are coming to play, and we've got to be ready."

Ohio State is trying to sort out its quarterback situation and ranks 108th in total offense, averaging 308 yards per game. Its line allowed nine sacks in last week's 10-7 loss to Michigan State, though the Buckeyes get back suspended left tackle Mike Adams for the Huskers.

Suspensions, however, have been extended a game for last year's leading rusher, Daniel Herron, and the top returning receiver, DeVier Posey. The Buckeyes also will be without starting receiver Verlon Reed, who tore a knee ligament against Michigan State.

"It doesn't change anything," Carl Pelini said. "Truthfully, the team we've been breaking down for four weeks didn't have Posey and Herron. We're preparing for the team we're watching on film. If they were playing, it might have made us look more toward last year and see how they were using those guys."

The Huskers have found it difficult to replace secondary members Prince Amukamara, Eric Hagg and DeJon Gomes, all of whom are in the NFL. The Pelinis have started four different combinations in the secondary and have had their lack of depth exposed at linebacker. They're also struggling to get consistent play from the front four.

The coaches are turning up the intensity this week with longer and more physical practices. The No. 1 offensive and defensive units also have been matched against each other more than usual.

Bo Pelini said he won't make drastic changes on defense and said he will keep moving players in and out of the lineup until he finds the right combination.

"You make subtle changes. You don't overhaul," he said. "You keep working to get better. It is about execution, technique and fundamentals. You stay the course."

AP Sports Writer Rusty Miller in Columbus, Ohio, contributed to this report.

AP Source: Missouri Wanted Big 10 Invite Most

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Missouri is hoping to join the Southeastern Conference but would have preferred an offer from the Big Ten that never came, a university official said Wednesday.

Missouri hoped to join the Big Ten last year but the league instead chose Nebraska. The university official said the Big Ten remains Missouri's top choice but that conference "has no interest."

"That's what's left," the official said, referring to the SEC. The official, who is familiar with school discussions involving conference affiliation, spoke on condition of anonymity because the school has not commented publicly about its intentions.

Missouri curators agreed unanimously Tuesday night to give Chancellor Brady Deaton the authority to look elsewhere rather than immediately commit to the reeling Big 12. Just one day earlier, Deaton and other Big 12 chancellors and presidents agreed to equally share revenue from the conference's most lucrative television deals if member schools agree to give those top-tier rights to the league for at least six years.

The agreement is subject to approval by university governing boards. It was a step Missouri curators don't want to take until the school is able to "fully explore options for conference affiliation ... which best serve the interests of the University of Missouri," board

chairman Warren Erdman told The Associated Press.

The Big 12 is down to 10 members and will lose Texas A&M to the SEC next year after the departures of Colorado (to the Pac-12) and Nebraska.

SEC athletic directors and Commissioner Mike Slive met Wednesday in Birmingham, Ala., to discuss the logistics of Texas A&M's arrival. Mississippi State athletic director Scott Stricklin said there were no discussions about a 14th team, though Slive has not ruled out further expansion.

Sticking with the Big 12 remains an option, Deaton said Tuesday, and the costs of leaving could prove troublesome — Missouri is likely to forfeit most of its annual conference revenues.

The revenue-sharing plan approved Sunday by the Big 12 board of directors — a move designed to keep Missouri and other potential stray members in the fold — would give each school an estimated \$20 million in June.

And that figure is expected to grow by 2013 when the league's new 13-year contract with Fox Sports kicks in, according to two people with knowledge of the deal and ties to the Big 12. They spoke only on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the revenue-sharing plan.

Soccer

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defense in the middle and give our offense some opportunities, we should be in the game."

Vermillion Girls

The Vermillion Tangers fought through injuries to get to the Class A girls' tournament. Now that they're there, the Tangers have a chance to run the table and win a state title, according to head coach Dave LaCombe.

"We're in a great position to win state as a seventh seed," he said. "We won't see the number one seed until the championship. We're playing Harrisburg, who we lost to 3-1 in the regular season and tied 1-1 last year and, with the realignment of our defense, our girls will be more experienced and more hungry than they were last time."

"We feel we have an excellent chance to beat Harrisburg."

The Tangers are anchored defensively by a returning all-state goalkeeper, Katie Wasley.

"She's had a phenomenal year," LaCombe said. "Her leadership in keeping the defense in line has helped prevent a number of goals that could have been scored against us."

Seniors Shelby Gregoire and Christine Epping have also done well for the Tangers.

"Shelby has played well in the midfield, and has played through injury," LaCombe said. "Christine is finishing strong and is one of our leading goal scorers."

The defense outside of the net consists of Autumn Barnett, Hailey Friedel, Cheyenne Mallory, Kelsey Meadows, Alexis Reich, Cheyenne Steemken, Kayla Stam-

mer and Kortni Walker.

"Our defense is young and somewhat inexperienced," LaCombe noted. "Our seniors have helped these girls to be stronger, to be able to understand the tactical and technical aspects of the game."

Shelby Gregoire and Mackenzie Gale anchor the midfield.

"They are my quarterbacks," LaCombe said. "They not only have to play defense, they have to distribute the ball and be a scoring threat."

Tori Gregoire leads the Tangers in assists from her left outside midfield position. Shantel French, Alyssa Soesbe and Sophia Taggart have also performed well in the midfield.

Allison Mockler and Teddi Setles have been leaders at striker for Vermillion, with Katie Kost and Sowmya Ragaathan also contributing at the offensive front.

The Tangers, coming off their third shutout of the season, will need to continue the strong defensive effort to make a run at Mitchell.

"We have to have confidence in our defense," LaCombe said. "We need to step up and defend that third of the field, take the pressure off Katie. If we can score two goals, it will also take the pressure off the defense."

Class A Boys

Vermillion and Freeman Academy have both qualified for the Class A boys' portion of the tournament.

Vermillion takes an 8-2-1 record into the tournament. The fifth-seeded Tangers face Grotton, a team that beat them 4-1 on Aug. 27.

Freeman Academy, 6-5, draws second-seeded Sioux Falls Christian in the opening round. The teams did not meet during the regular season.

NLDS

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Oswalt argued with home plate umpire Angel Hernandez, asking for no pitch. Phillies manager Charlie Manuel also argued without success and Schumaker, flied out to center on the next pitch.

In Game 3 Tuesday, a squirrel was seen scampering in foul territory along the third base line.

Five pitches into the game, the Phillies had a 2-0 lead with an assist from the late-afternoon playing conditions.

Jay, standing in bright sunshine while shadows, took one step in on leadoff man Jimmy Rollins' drive on the first pitch of the game and retreated too late for a ball just over his glove that bounced over the wall for a ground-rule double.

Utley tripled just inside the first-base line three pitches later and Pence lined an RBI single on the next pitch.

NOTES: 2B Schumaker was

taken out with a left hamstring cramp after a flyout in the fifth — the same at-bat the squirrel made its appearance. After disrupting play, the squirrel scampered through the stands. Schumaker is 5 for 8 in the series. ... Rollins doubled and had an infield hit his first two trips and has nine hits in the series. He has 14 multihit games in the playoffs, passing Howard for most in franchise history.

Ralph

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involved," he said. "It's not simply operating a facility. It's fulfilling Mr. Engelstad's vision and trying to make his dream come true. That certainly separates it from a typical naming rights deal."

What Engelstad did was more than just give UND an opulent hockey arena. Hodgson described it as a gift that keeps on giving.

"He was smart enough to see the arms race that was going on in terms of Division I athletics," Hodgson said. Universities with nice arenas made money for their athletic programs and helped recruit players and

coaches, he said.

The Ralph, in that context, gives UND a continuing competitive advantage, he said. That Engelstad paid for the whole thing makes a big difference, too, according to Hodgson.

"There isn't a businessman in the world that could make this building work if they had to service the debt in a traditional way," he said.

Just running the facility costs more than \$1 million a year, Hodgson said.

Not all of Engelstad's legacy has endured as well.

His love of his alma mater and all the traditions entwined with it made him a formidable supporter of the controversial Fighting Sioux nickname, which the NCAA and some American Indian activists consider racist. On opening day, about 300 protest-

ers marched across campus to oppose the continuing use of the nickname and logo as part of a conference on Indian nicknames held at UND.

Engelstad felt strongly enough about the nickname that, in January 2001, when he'd sunk \$35 million into the project, he threatened to call it quits and walk away because then-UND President Charles Kupchella seemed about to change the nickname.

In his opening day statement, after he'd explained his desire to help UND, Engelstad went on to admonish nickname opponents as iconoclasts out to destroy a beloved tradition. "Those who frequent this street for the sake of destruction fail to recognize that traditions are a vital social value," he said.

Ten years later, after a pro-

tracted legal struggle that involved everyone from the NCAA to the state's two Sioux tribes, the nickname is all but done for. The State Board of Higher Education has given up the fight and the state Legislature, reluctant at first, appears likely to let the board do that.

Hodgson said a lot of people have asked him what he thinks Engelstad would do if he were alive today. He said nobody can really speak for Engelstad, but Engelstad was certainly no fool and would have reacted appropriately.

At the Ralph, management wants to do what it can to preserve the tradition in some fashion. Hodgson said they still have a responsibility "to carry the torch in his honor."

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