

Pelini Would Rather Skip Games Vs FCS Foes

Nebraska Hosts FCS Idaho State On Saturday

BY ERIC OLSON
AP Sports Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska coach Bo Pelini says up front that he'd rather not play Idaho State.

Cornhuskers fans aren't excited about it either, though out of habit they'll show up 85,000 strong Saturday for Memorial Stadium's 321st straight sellout.

Even the most optimistic Idaho State fan probably doesn't hold out much hope the FCS-level Bengals (1-1) can keep up with the No. 25 Huskers (2-1).

The Bengals will take their lumps and go back to Pocatello with a \$600,000 check and memories of playing in one of the bastions of college football.

"One of the great things in America is going to Yellowstone Park, or going to Mount Rushmore, or going to Nebraska for a football game," Idaho State coach Mike Kramer said. "We are not necessarily going as tourists, but we will enjoy

the trip and enjoy the process."

Idaho State-Nebraska is among more than 100 games this year matching a team from the Football Championship Subdivision against one from the big-boy Football Bowl Subdivision.

In one afternoon the Bengals will earn 5 percent of the \$12 million annual budget for their 13-sport athletic department.

"Games like this have become, if you allow me to say it, a necessary evil," Idaho State athletic director Jeff Tingey said.

Nebraska, for its part, gets a seventh home game. Athletic director Tom Osborne has said that's the number needed to balance the \$83 million budget for his 23-sport department.

This is the third straight year Nebraska will play an FCS opponent.

"I'm not big on playing these games," Pelini said. "I'd rather play all I-A opponents. I'm not sitting here trying to talk bad about Idaho State. I'm talking about

what we like to do as a football program. There are a lot of scheduling difficulties. You look across the country and you see a lot of them, and you talk to a lot of coaches and a lot of them aren't real fond of playing these games."

The number of FCS-FBS games has increased sharply since 2006, when the NCAA began allowing teams to schedule 12 regular-season games.

Some of the games are downright ugly (see Oklahoma State 84, Savannah State 0).

Yes, there have been memorable upsets (see Appalachian State 34, Michigan 32 in 2007).

Usually the games are forgettable, though there have been a couple surprises this year with Youngstown State upsetting Pittsburgh and Sacramento State toppling Colorado.

Sacramento State is, along with Idaho State, a member of the Big Sky Conference, which is 4-12 this season against FBS teams.

Idaho State played its opener at FBS-level Air Force and lost 49-21. Bengals re-

ceiver Derek Graves said the three touchdowns his team scored against Air Force's No. 1 defense, plus the success of other Big Sky teams against FBS opponents, motivates him for the Nebraska game.

"We're trying to go in there and win," Graves said. "That's the only reason why you play the game. If you're not playing the game to try to win, there's no point in playing. We might as well stay at home."

Idaho State's win this season is against Division II Black Hills State — a South Dakota school whose name Pelini couldn't remember during his weekly news conference.

The Bengals have one of the most explosive offenses in the FCS. Graves caught 15 passes in each of their two games. Kevin Yost has completed 74 percent of his passes for 401.5 yards and four touchdowns.

Their defense, however, gave up 484 yards rushing and 626 total to Air Force.

With most FBS teams looking for home games, Idaho State and other FCS

programs have become accustomed to fielding scheduling inquiries.

Tingey said Idaho State had lots of options for this Saturday. When he was finalizing the Bengals' schedule last November, he narrowed the choices to Nebraska and Colorado State. Then he went to Kramer and asked which opponent he would prefer.

Colorado State was willing to pay only about half as much as Nebraska, but the Rams are in a down cycle and nowhere near the level of the Huskers.

Tingey said he was surprised when Kramer told him he wanted to play the Huskers and let his players experience Memorial Stadium and the history a program that has won five national championships.

"I said, 'Coach, are you kidding me? You want to go to Nebraska?'"

"He said, 'Oh, yeah. We don't want to go to Fort Collins. That's boring. There's nothing fun about that. We're going to lose anyway, so let's go to a place with heritage and tradition like Nebraska.' "

VB: Wakefield Edges Allen

ALLEN, Neb. — Wakefield battled past Allen 25-23, 24-26, 20-25, 25-21, 15-11 in prep volleyball action Tuesday night.

Leading Allen was Brittany Sullivan with 18 kills and 21 digs. Lindsey Jones finished with 16 kills and 22 digs. Rachel Finnegan posted 10 kills, three ace serves, two blocks and 22 digs. Lindsey Sullivan had 31 assists and a team-high 23 digs in the effort.

Wakefield, 10-4, hosts Ponca today (Thursday). Allen, 7-5, plays in the Scribner-Snyder Invitational on Saturday.

WAKEFIELD (10-4).....	25	24	20	25	15
ALLEN (7-5).....	23	26	25	21	11

Creighton 3, O'Neill 0

O'NEILL, Neb. — Rebecca Eggerling had 11 kills, three blocks and three ace serves to lead Creighton to a 25-20, 25-20, 25-21 victory over O'Neill in prep volleyball action on Tuesday.

Shelby McManigal and Maddi Oltjenbruns had six kills apiece for Creighton. Jessica Zimmerer posted 22 assists and nine digs. Valerie Martin had 10 digs and Jessica Grager had four ace serves in the victory.

Creighton travels to Wausa today (Thursday). O'Neill is off until a Sept. 27 trip to Ainsworth.

O'Neill won the JV match 20-25, 25-23, 25-18. Creighton won the C-match 25-13, 25-20.

CREIGHTON (4-8).....	25	25	25
O'NEILL (0-11).....	20	20	21

Cedar Catholic 3, Pierce 0

PIERCE, Neb. — Hartington Cedar Catholic improved to 14-4 on the season with a 25-23, 25-19, 25-20 victory over Pierce in Mid-State Conference volleyball action on Tuesday.

Katelyn Dickes led a balanced Cedar Catholic attack with 11 kills. Lexi Steffen had nine kills and two blocks. Emily Schrempp posted 27 assists. Karly Noecker and Liz Steffen each had two ace serves. Kallie Leise added 11 digs in the victory.

Cedar Catholic travels to Randolph today (Thursday). Pierce, 6-7, plays in the Wisner-Pilger Invitational on Saturday.

CEDAR CATHOLIC (14-4).....	25	25	25
PIERCE (6-7).....	23	19	20

Crofton 3, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge 0

LAUREL, Neb. — The Crofton Lady Warriors improved to 6-5 on the season with a 25-18, 25-9, 25-13 sweep of Laurel on Tuesday night in Nebraska volleyball action in Laurel.

Maria Wortman led the Lady Warriors with 13 kills, 12 blocks and 11 digs. Alex Allen added 18 digs while Kaylee Hoffman had 11 digs.

For LCC, Audra Corbit, Kelsey Dietrich and Ellie Arduser each had three kills. Cameron Eddie finished with 10 assists. Arduser also had a team-best eight digs.

Crofton travels to Battle Creek today (Thursday) to play Battle Creek and Wisner-Pilger. Laurel-Concord-Coleridge plays at West Holt today.

CROFTON (6-5).....	25	25	25
LAUREL-CONCORD-COLERIDGE (5-7).....	18	9	13

CWC Tri.

CHAMBERS, Neb. — Niobrara-Verdigre went 0-2 in a volleyball triangular hosted by Chambers-Wheeler Central on Tuesday.

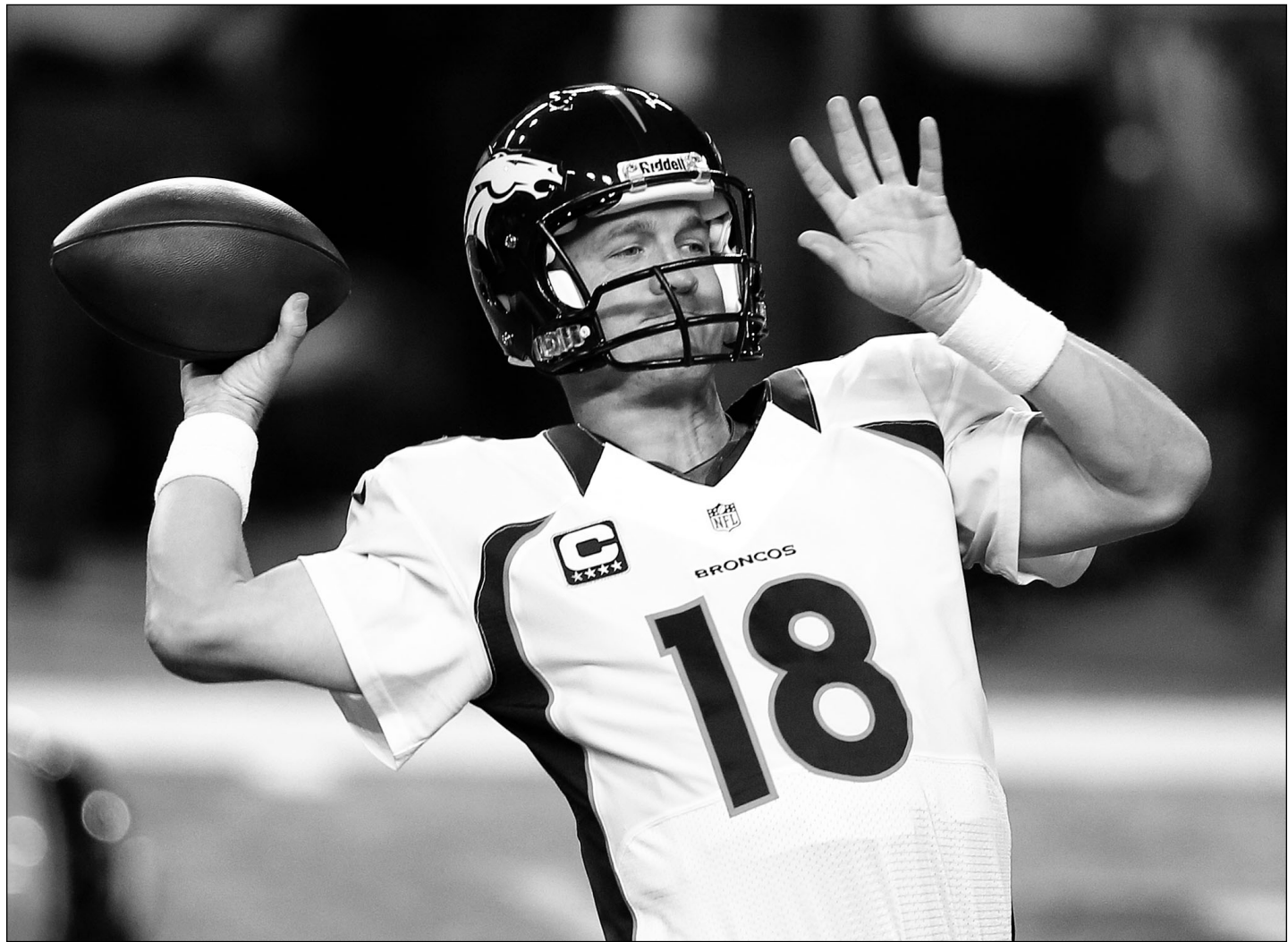
The Cougars lost a pair of 2-0 decisions to nine-win teams, Stuart and host CWC. Niobrara-Verdigre hosts another tough team, 10-1 Ewing, today (Thursday).

CWC DEF. NIORARA-VERDIGRE 25-17, 25-12: McKayla Eisenhauer had four kills and Shelby McCordle had four assists and three ace serves to lead NV.

STAUPT DEF. NIOBRARA-VERDIGRE 25-11, 25-15: Tessa Ives had three kills and six digs, and McKayla Eisenhauer had three kills to lead Niobrara-Verdigre. Shelby McCordle had four assists. Ives also had two ace serves and six digs in the effort.

Gvl-Volin 3, Canistota 1

CANISTOTA — Gayville-Volin bounced back from a slow start to beat Canistota 24-26, 25-14, 25-17, 25-13 in prep volleyball action on Tuesday.



CURTIS COMPTON/ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/MCT
Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning throws a long pass as he prepares to play Matt Ryan and the Atlanta Falcons at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Ga., on Monday. Denver lost 27-21 and faces the 2-0 Houston Texans this coming week.

Manning Remains Confident After Loss In Atlanta

BY EDDIE PELLIS
AP National Writer

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP) — If Peyton Manning is sore, he's not saying.

If his arm is less than it used to be, well, he said, "It is what it is."

Done with his first practice following his first loss as a Denver Bronco, Manning spoke the words of a quarterback who simply wants to move on.

Did the nine hits he took in the 27-21 loss to Atlanta leave him sore as he prepares for the Houston Texans on a short work week?

"I don't really get into that," Manning said Wednesday. "I've never really answered that question before. So, I'm full participation in practice."

What about the strength of his arm, which has been discussed and debated by everyone from John Elway — who last week told The Associated Press it's getting stronger but "probably not where he wants it

to be" — to the fan in the top row at Sports Authority Field?

"I am what I am, it is what it is, whatever expression is appropriate for that," Manning said. "So, I don't know what to tell you."

As for those three interceptions he threw in the first quarter against the Falcons — well, Manning says, these things happen, but they certainly didn't diminish his confidence.

"It's not deterred at all, if you're insinuating that," he said. "We're still learning about each other. We're playing different opponents each week, live bullets, different types of defenses. The key is, you want to win games as you are continuing to learn."

That won't be easy this Sunday.

The Texans (2-0) have allowed a total of 248 passing yards, 392 total yards and 17 points over their first two games — all league-leading statistics at this early point in the season.

Not exactly the type of team the Broncos (1-1) want to face on a short week after Manning got sacked three times and knocked down six more.

But instead of dwelling on the minuses from the last game, Manning took solace in the fact that the Broncos bounced back from a 20-0 deficit to get within a score late. They lost by six points on the road despite committing four turnovers and creating none.

Manning took umbrage to any thought that he looked dejected on the sideline at the end of the game.

"I think it was more of a determined look," he said. "When you get off to a slow start, you're determined. Dejected means you go out there, you lay down, you get beat 35-0. So, determined, I think, would be the more appropriate terms, and hopefully, we can build off that."

Famous are the stories of Manning spending extra time on the practice field working on routes and building chemistry

with receivers Reggie Wayne and Marvin Harrison in Indianapolis. He's got a couple of hard workers in Eric Decker and Demaryius Thomas, but there's a difference between the eight to 10 years he spent with the Colts receivers and the six months he's spent in Denver.

"There is a process there," Manning said. "I do think there's offseason work and there's in-season work, going against different defenses."

Also moving on is coach John Fox, who repeated the mantra that Manning's return to the NFL is a long-term project, not a two-week deal.

"I don't think we're a finished product yet, by any stretch, when you consider this is the first year that he's played in this offense and with these teammates," Fox said. "There are going to be some growing pains and it doesn't happen overnight."

MANNING | PAGE 10

Lancers Fall At Dordt

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa — Dordt improved to 13-3 overall, 3-0 in Great Plains Athletic Conference volleyball, with a 27-25, 25-15, 25-13 victory over Mount Marty Wednesday.

For Mount Marty, Amanda Dirksen posted six kills and eight digs. Lexie Branson had five kills and two blocks. Emily Schurrer also had five kills. Caitlyn Illg had 22 assists and Courtney Miller had 10 digs for the Lancers.

Dordt hosts Nebraska Wesleyan and MMC travels to Midland on Saturday.

Knuckleball Royalty Comes Together At Mets' Citi Field

BY MIKE FITZPATRICK
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — R.A. Dickey's face lit up when he saw Phil Niekro and Tim Wakefield, and the New York Mets' ace greeted both with a big hug in front of the dugout.

The next thing they knew, the mini-fraternity of major league knuckleballers was talking shop and trading barbs.

"We get giddy when we get around each other. We're like teenagers," Dickey said Wednesday at Citi Field. "It's an instant bond, because we know how hard it is."

All three pitchers are featured in a documentary film called "Knuckleball," which premieres in New York City on Thursday night. The Mets were supposed to be off and Dickey had planned to attend, but unfortunately he won't be able to anymore because they have a makeup game against Philadelphia after getting rained out Tuesday night.

Dickey is having an outstanding season and many fans have become familiar with his feel-good story of faith and perseverance that's taken him from first-round draft pick to big league cast-off and now National League All-Star.

The 37-year-old right-hander is 18-6 with a 2.67 ERA and 205 strikeouts, making him a leading contender for the Cy Young Award.

"He's making us all proud,"

KNUCKLE | PAGE 13

Bush Tries To Lead Dolphins Out Of Wilderness

DAVIE, Fla. (AP) — Miami Dolphins practice had ended and the field was mostly deserted Wednesday when coach Joe Philbin lined up for a lunch buffet in the team dining room, glanced outside and noticed one of his players still doing drills.

It was Reggie Bush.

Once all glitz and glamour in Los Angeles and New Orleans, Bush now enjoys a reputation as a hardworking, blue-collar running back eager to break tackles and shoulder the load while leading the Dolphins out of the NFL wilderness.

"I like the way he comes into the building," Philbin said. "He doesn't say a whole lot, and he seems to be serious about his trade. He's a diligent worker."

Bush is also supremely talented, and the Dolphins' new coaching staff is eager



JIM RASSOL/SUN SENTINEL/MCT
Reggie Bush of Miami celebrates his first touchdown in the third quarter. The Miami Dolphins defeated the Oakland Raiders, 35-13, at Sun Life Stadium in Miami Gardens, Fla., on Sunday, Sept. 16.

VOLLEYBALL | PAGE 10

BUSH | PAGE 10