

University of Nebraska

Osborne's Nebraska champs remain the team to beat



Photo courtesy of Nebraska Sports Information
Nebraska defensive end Jared Tomich was an All-American last year.

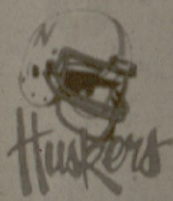
By ROSS HECOX AND
WESLEY POSTON
THE BATTALION

The University of Nebraska sits quietly on Interstate 80 in the extreme eastern corner of Nebraska.

Quietly, that is, until six select autumn afternoons during the football season come around.

That's when the Nebraska Cornhuskers, the two-time defending national champions, take the field and Memorial

University of Nebraska



Location: Lincoln, Neb.

Founded: 1869

Enrollment: 25,000

Coach: Tom Osborne

Colors: scarlet and cream

Stadium: Memorial Stadium. Seats 72,700.

1995 record: 12-0

Lettermen returning: 60

Lettermen lost: 22

Returning starters: 14

Titles won: four national titles and 41 Big 8 titles

Stadium fills with so many crazed fans that it becomes the third-largest collection of people in the state, behind the cities of Omaha and Lincoln.

Fresh off a 62-24 trouncing of Florida in the 1996 Fiesta Bowl, the Cornhuskers are poised to make yet another run at the title, and their student body of 23,854, stands fully behind them.

The university's size has grown leaps and bounds since it was founded in 1869 in the state capital of Lincoln. Since then, the University of Nebraska campuses have started in Omaha and Kearney, but the main campus remains the state's only land-grant university.

Football is by far the most popular event in the state, hands down. The Cornhuskers have sold out 208 consecutive home football games.

While Texas A&M's first view of Nebraska won't come until September 29th when the Lady Aggie Soccer Team takes on the Lady Cornhuskers in Lincoln, the Aggies can catch a glimpse of the Huskers' football dominance in the headlines.

And Nebraska is once again expected to top the headlines during the upcoming season.

When the Big 8 Conference closed its doors for good, Nebraska held a firm grip on the last five conference championships and a 25-game winning streak.

For Nebraska to three-peat as national champs, it must overcome six teams that played in a bowl game last year, and the loss of dynamic quarterback Tommie Frazier.

The Cornhuskers will also

miss outstanding backup quarterback Brook Berringer, who tragically died last April in an airplane crash.

Five starters return on offense, while junior quarterback Scott Frost, who transferred from Stanford for the 1996 season, is expected to take over the Multiple-I offense.

Running back Lawrence Phillips opted for the NFL draft, but the backfield will remain strong with sophomore Ahman Green. Last year's Big 8 Newcomer of the Year ran for 1,086 yards, averaging 7.7 yards per carry and scoring 13 touchdowns.

The Cornhuskers lost three starting receivers, but senior split end Brendan Holbein and senior wing back Jon Vedral are experienced veterans.

The offensive line lost All-American center Aaron Graham, so All-Big 8 junior Aaron Taylor will move from guard to center. Taylor, senior guard Chris Dishman, and junior tackle Eric Anderson are all possible All-Americans.

The Nebraska 4-3 defense will return seven starters, including senior middle linebacker Terrell Farley, an All-American and Butkus Award Candidate.

Seniors Jamel Williams and Jon Hesse round out a fast and athletic linebacker unit.

Defensive ends Jared Tomich and Grant Wistrom were both All-Americans last year. Tomich recorded 10 sacks and 12 tackles for losses, while Wistrom gathered four sacks and 15 tackles for losses.

The secondary loses two starters, but returns senior strong safety Mike Minter and senior cornerback Michael Booker.

University of Missouri

Tigers reach for first winning season since 1983

By MICHAEL LANDAUER
THE BATTALION

The Big 12 Championship game may determine the best team in the conference, but with two divisions, there may be no way to figure out which team is the worst. For the University of Missouri Tigers, picked to finish last in the north division of the new super conference, that may be for the best.

Considered a "public ivy," Missouri's emphasis is securely based on academics. Founded in 1839, Missouri was the first public institution of higher education

west of the Mississippi.

But despite a strong academic focus, Missouri has also won 500 football games, including eight bowl victories in 19 appearances. Unfortunately, recent history has not been so kind.

In his third year at the helm, Head Coach Larry Smith looks to turn around a program that hasn't had a winning season since 1983.

The effort has focused on major weaknesses of the past — a defense that couldn't make the big plays and a lackluster running attack.

The Tigers' young secondary could be one of the nation's best in years to come, but Smith is looking to complement that strength by refitting the defensive line and overcoming a lack of depth at linebacker.

With two returning linebackers and an all-American safety prospect on the rehab list, the Tigers' defense may need some time to develop its depth.

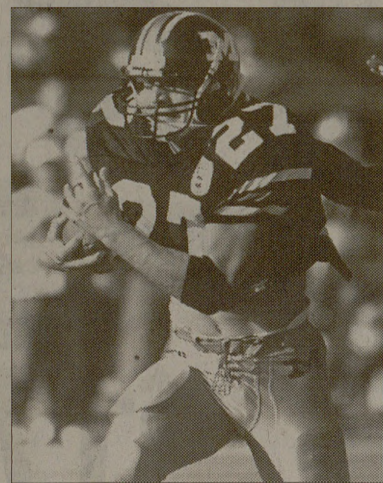
Tailback Brock Olivo is the Tigers' big gun, with 985 yards rushing and six touchdowns last season. Only a junior, Olivo has 1,700 career yards.

But Olivo is not alone in the Tigers' rushing arsenal. Almost all of the team's running game from last season is returning to improve its 200 yards per game average behind a more experienced offensive line.

Although 10 of 11 offensive players are returning, the Tigers' offense lacks a clear leader. Sophomores Corby Jones and Kent Skornia have emerged with the best chance of leading the attack.

Jones started the last five games at quarterback for Missouri. He added an option threat to the offense and ran for 368 yards, the third-highest ever for a Tiger freshman.

Skornia is a proven passer, with 230 passing yards and a pair of touchdowns in limited action last year. His height (6 feet, 4 inches)



Tailback Brock Olivo

gives him an advantage over Jones (6 feet, 1 inch) in the pocket, but he weighs in 17 pounds lighter than Jones and needs to improve as a runner.

In its rebuilding stage, Missouri probably won't get much of the attention showered on the nation's newest premier conference. But a low profile, has not stopped Missouri from trying to play the role of spoiler to the country's best teams.

Missouri's most recent claim to fame is their infamous 1990 game against Colorado.

Near the end of the game, the Tigers led 31-27, but Colorado had a first-and-goal from the three-yard line. After a run up the middle to the one-yard line, Colorado took a time out, but the referees failed to change the down marker. Three plays later, on a now-famous "fifth" down, Colorado won the game on a one-yard quarterback sneak.

Although a winning record may not be in the cards, with an experienced team, the Tigers' could still be a spoiler. And Missouri's chances to play that role may improve significantly with good officiating.

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