

The biggest reason the Huskers have a chance in 2022 P.6

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HUSKERS

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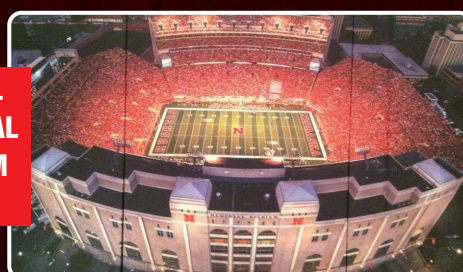


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Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis is the hoped-for destination of the Huskers at the end of the season.

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More Than A Magazine

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Divine Intervention

Huskers' Road to Success Became Smoother Thanks to Transfer Portal

Opinion • By Thad Livingston

Who says the football gods have turned their backs on Nebraska?

At just the right moment, a glorious beam from the football heavens has shined down on the program on the Plains, where the once-content fans have been in an extended kerfuffle over bad breaks, bad plays and just plain bad football for what seems an unfairly long time.

That heavenly light? Call it the transfer portal.

In one cycle, the portal has pumped more tangible reason for hope into the moribund Husker program than a new coach, a new athletic director or a new recruiting class ever has.

What's more, Scott Frost – by divine coincidence? – has managed to combine all of those potential program-changing ingredients into a single off-season: new offensive assistants, a real special teams coordinator, an involved AD with loads of Husker football savvy and a new recruiting class, all while opening the spigot to the portal that poured 15 fully formed and seasoned football players into the mix.

Think about it. For Husker fans who turned on the television last fall and watched other teams around the country make plays and execute sound football and asked, "Why can't the Huskers be like those guys?" Well, a lot of "those guys" are now "your guys," including some of the coaches.

Another positive: The portal sucked up one of the main Husker bumblers and deposited Adrian Martinez at Kansas State.

A low blow at an "amateur athlete"? Not in the age of the portal, when NIL opportunities make big-time college sports akin to a professional free agency, particularly at the high-profile position of quarterback. Besides, it's not like whatever is said here will ever deny Martinez opportunity. He was granted dozens of chances to win at Nebraska and consistently failed, often in mind-numbing fashion. And he'll get more chances at Kansas State. Perhaps a change of scenery will make a difference, so good for him.

Nevertheless, Martinez is an example of how the portal cuts both ways. But, at least this year, the damage to Nebraska was a mere paper cut, while a veritable airdrop of first aid plopped down on Lincoln.

Hallelujah.

Naysayers can make the case that a need for so many transfers is an indication of earlier recruiting misses. There's something to that. But the world of college football has changed before our eyes. Suddenly, if you are not a portal-plus



Casey Thompson

program, you are likely to be a portal-minus program, meaning you are simply developing players for someone else to scoop up and leave you high and dry – like a junior college in some ways.

Athletes have always been able to transfer, but the portal, around since 2018, streamlined the transfer process in favor of the athletes, who previously had to seek permission from their school – the “permission to contact model,” which brought the institution, AD and coaching staff into the

*Now, a football player
can transfer once without sitting.
Throw in some NIL money
and it's a feeding frenzy.*



Ochaun Mathis

process. Nowadays, the AD and coaches may not even know a student-athlete wants to transfer. An athlete simply can file a “notification of transfer” to enter his or her name into the transfer portal. Once a name is in the

portal, the athlete can talk to any school that reaches out. This is why schools usually assign someone on staff to scour the portal often. What has made the portal an even hotter way to rebuild a team is the “one-time transfer exception.” Previously, in most cases, a football trans-



Isaiah Garcia-Castaneda



Trey Palmer

15

PORTAL PLAYERS

Hunter Anthony

Offensive Line - Oklahoma State

Timmy Bleekrode

Place-Kicker - Furman

Omar Brown

Cornerback - Northern Iowa

Brian Buschini

Punter - Montana

Devin Drew

Defensive Line - Texas Tech

Isaiah Garcia-Castaneda

Receiver - New Mexico State

Tommi Hill

Cornerback - Arizona State

Ochaun Mathis

Defensive Line - TCU

Trey Palmer

Receiver - LSU

Chubba Purdy

Quarterback - Florida State

Casey Thompson

Quarterback - Texas

Marcus Washington

Receiver - Texas

Kaine Williams

Safety - Alabama

Kevin Williams

Offensive Line - Northern Colorado

Stephon Wynn

Defensive End - Alabama

fer had to sit out a year because the one-time transfer exception did not apply to football, basketball, baseball or hockey. The NCAA changed that for the 2021-22 academic year. Now, a football player can transfer once without sitting. Throw in some NIL money and it's a feeding frenzy.

Eat or be eaten.

Let's use the all-important defensive line as an example. Why? I believe you can have enough four-star backs, receivers and quarterbacks to burst a grain bin, but without going two-deep with hosses along the defensive line, you have no chance to win in the Big Ten. That's why after the spring game in April, savvy Husker fans were nervous, and most of it was due to the transfer portal.

"our top 10 or 20 guys."

For whatever reason, Nebraska was a slow learner in the Big Ten, although it has gotten better under Frost at developing and stacking mature bodies along both lines. That's why it was a bit unsettling to realize its predicament after the spring game. There were some big, strong bodies on display, for sure, but the phrase "glacial speed" kept popping up in conversation.

Suddenly a position that had grown into a respectable Big Ten unit the last couple years was thin. NU could push some youngsters ahead of their time – a recipe for disaster at that position – or turn to transfers.

Frost, to his credit, was ahead of



Tommi Hill

needed to add "another body."

Remember, by that point Nebraska had already reeled in some splash portal transfers: quarterbacks Casey Thompson and Chubba Purdy; receivers Trey Palmer and Isaiah Garcia-Castaneda; offensive linemen Hunter Anthony and Kevin Williams; defensive backs Omar Brown and Tommi Hill; and punter Brian Buschini.

During the subdued spring game that brought new meaning to the word "thud" for many Nebraskans, the youngsters on the D-line were under a microscope, but perhaps the lineman who drew the most eyes was in street clothes visiting with Trev Alberts. That was Ochaun Mathis, a 6-5, 260-pound edge rusher from TCU, the target of every



Brian Buschini



Hunter Anthony

A steady Deontre Thomas (6-foot-2, 285 pounds) had eligibility left, but decided not to use it. Big-bodied Jordon Riley (6-6, 310) entered the portal and landed at Oregon. While not a star, Riley was no pushover, playing in 10 games in 2021. Then, after the spring game, Casey Rogers (6-5, 295) jumped into the portal and also ended up at Oregon. Rogers more than held his own when not injured. He made plays and was among Nebraska's top players – not my opinion, Frost's opinion. After the spring game he lamented that Rogers was not able to practice in the spring while listing him among

the problem.

He was a bit coy about it, but said this after the spring game when answering a question about depth on the defensive line: "We are going to look to add pieces if the right ones are available, and whatever positions a good player there is certainly some that we think we could use another body and we will pay more attention to those positions."

A bit of a word salad there, but two things were clear. One, Frost knew they were going to work to add defensive linemen "if the right ones were available." Two, there were other positions to which NU



Omar Brown



Kevin Williams

school in the country in need and the likes of whom hasn't suited up for Nebraska since probably Randy Gregory.

Problem: Texas was on Mathis hard and his former head coach at TCU was now a Texas assistant.

To the chagrin of the Longhorns, Mathis eventually picked the Huskers. Then, just a few days later, another Big 12 defensive lineman decided to play in Lincoln. Devin Drew, a 6-2, 280-pound Kansas City native who started 12 games for Texas Tech the last two seasons, announced he'd be joining Nebraska.

So Nebraska had two Big 12 starters, one a bona fide Big 12 star, in the barn by the time Alabama backup defensive lineman

Stephon Wynn, all 6-4, 308 pounds of him, announced he'd be joining the mix in Lincoln.

Wynn played in seven games for the Tide last year, but the theory goes that a 'Bama backup is as good if not better than most starters in other conferences.

At first blush that might seem ridiculous, but ask yourself how many Nebraska players would start at Alabama? I'll wait ...

Yep, that's what I think, too. And that's why Nebraska is thrilled to have Wynn, not to mention his teammate, Kaine Williams, a 6-2, 203-pound backup safety, who also left Alabama for Nebraska.

In the end, Nebraska lost Riley and Rogers to Oregon and Thomas

gave up a ridiculous 539 rushing yards to Wisconsin in the Big Ten championship game. Although the defense played well for most of that season, there just weren't enough big bodies on the defensive line to withstand the constant pounding of a league where "finesse" is not in the dictionary.

So, thanks to the portal – and undoubtedly some NIL money – Nebraska has a chance up front – a better chance than it would have had if it had just been dabbling in the portal as in previous years. Suddenly, dare I say, things look promising.

Place kicking a problem? Enter Timmy Bleekrode from Furman who was 9-for-9 under 40 yards in 2021. Star receiver left the team?



Timmy Bleekrode



Stephon Wynn

decided to hang up his cleats – clear hits to the defensive line – but added Mathis, Drew and Wynn.

At least on paper, the three newcomers are an obvious upgrade, the defensive line suddenly looks more than solid with decent depth and the youngsters in the pipeline will have another year to not necessarily get bigger – size is not the problem – but gain speed and lateral movement.

Remember, the Nebraska defense doesn't have to be the '85 Bears for the team to do well in the Big Ten. It just can't be the 2012 Blackshirts, who, after an injury or two up front,

Bring in Marcus Washington, a former starter at Texas.

Some will say that it will be hard to mesh all of these players together. That it will be hard for the new coaches to make it all work.

Maybe.

Recently, USA Today named Alabama, USC and Nebraska as schools who bolstered their rosters through the portal and said NU's odds "look much better with the additions ..."

I like that company.

Thanks to the portal – and a mix of other things – Nebraska has a chance. Can I get an Amen?



Devin Drew

THE LONG ROAD TO

Nebraska



Dublin, Ireland

8,096 Miles

It's about 4,000 miles from Lincoln to Dublin, Ireland. Based on Nebraska's performance in recent years, the distance between Nebraska and a Big Ten title is even farther. Might that perception change this season? It's possible. But first the Huskers must get off to a good start, and that means flying those 4,000 miles and beating Northwestern in the season opener.

Beat the Wildcats, and the Big Ten might be on the verge of getting its first real taste of Nebraska football – a confident team with depth, talent and top-notch coaching. It's been a long time.

After the Dublin trip, Nebraska has North Dakota and Georgia



Ann Arbor, Michigan

1,498 Miles



Iowa City, Iowa

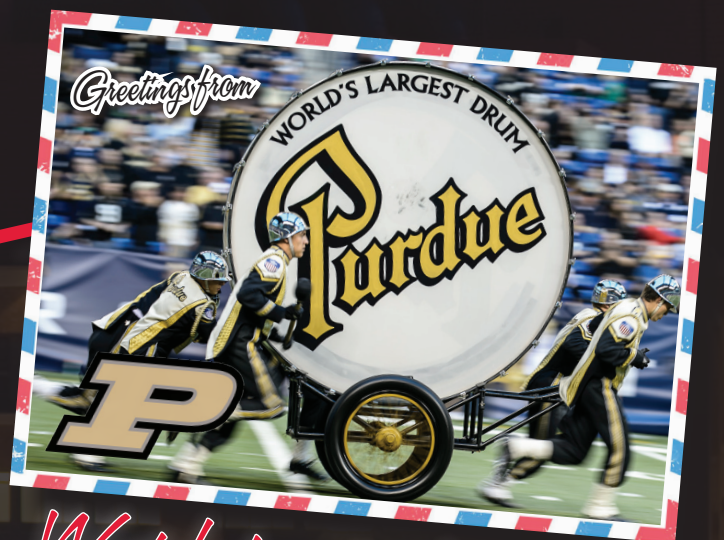
606 Miles

Round trip to the BIG Championship Game
15,374 Miles

Indianapolis

Southern. If Nebraska is 3-0 when Oklahoma comes to Lincoln, the Huskers will be in position to change the national narrative. The NCAA transfer portal has brought a load of new talent, and there are new offensive assistants and a new coordinator of special teams, which have been an embarrassment in recent years.

With the expected improvement and a few breaks, the road to the Big Ten championship in Indianapolis suddenly isn't as bumpy as in past seasons. A good start will make all the difference.



West Lafayette, Indiana
1,252 Miles



Piscataway, New Jersey
2,592 Miles



Indianapolis, Indiana
1,330 Miles

N 2022 FOOTBALL ROSTER

NO.	NAME	POS.	HT.	WT.	YEAR	HOMETOWN / PREVIOUS SCHOOL	NO.	NAME	POS.	HT.	WT.	YEAR	HOMETOWN / PREVIOUS SCHOOL
0	Tommi Hill	CB	6-0	190	So.	Orlando, Fla. / Edgewater HS / Arizona State	32	Brody Belt	WR	5-9	185	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. / Millard West
0	Jaquez Yant	RB	6-2	245	So.	Tallahassee, Fla. / Amos P. Godby	33	Javin Wright	S	6-4	210	So.	Chandler, Ariz. / Hamilton
1	Tyreke Johnson	CB	6-1	190	Jr.	Jacksonville, Fla. / Ohio State	34	Simon Otte	OLB	6-2	205	Jr.	York, Neb. / York
2	Isaiah Garcia-Castaneda	WR	6-0	185	Jr.	Twentynine Palms, Calif. / New Mexico State	34	Beau Psencik	RB	6-0	205	R-Fr.	Houston, Texas / Lutheran South Academy
2	Caleb Tannor	OLB	6-3	225	Sr.	Stone Mountain, Ga. / Miller Grove	35	Derek Branch	DB	5-11	175	R-Fr.	Lincoln, Neb. / Southeast
3	Trey Palmer	WR	6-1	190	Jr.	Kentwood, La. / Kentwood HS / LSU	35	John Bullock	OLB	6-0	215	So.	Omaha, Neb. / Creighton Prep
4	Alante Brown	WR	5-10	185	So.	Chicago, Ill. / St. Thomas More (Conn.) Prep	35	Trevin Luben	RB	5-11	200	R-Fr.	Wahoo, Neb. / Wahoo
4	Myles Farmer	S	6-1	200	So.	Atlanta, Ga. / Westlake	36	Blake Closman	DB	5-10	190	R-Fr.	Elkhorn, Neb. / Millard North
5	Omar Manning	WR	6-4	225	Sr.	Lancaster, Texas / Lancaster HS/TCU/Kilgore College	36	Chase Contreras	PK	6-1	180	Jr.	Missouri Valley, Iowa / Iowa Western CC
6	Quinton Newsome	CB	6-1	185	Jr.	Suwanee, Ga. / North Gwinnett	36	Taveon Thompson	WR	6-4	200	R-Fr.	Lincoln, Neb. / Southeast
6	Chubba Purdy	QB	6-2	210	R-Fr.	Queen Creek, Ariz. / Perry HS / Florida State	37	Isaiah Harris	RB	5-8	190	R-Fr.	Omaha, Neb. / Millard South
7	Tamon Lynum	CB	6-2	180	R-Fr.	Orlando, Fla. / Evans	37	Phalen Sanford	CB	5-11	200	Jr.	Benkelman, Neb. / Hastings College
8	Jaeden Gould	CB	6-2	190	Fr.	Somerset, N.J. / Bergen Catholic	39	Matthew Schuster	RB	5-10	190	R-Fr.	Ashland, Neb. / Ashland-Greenwood HS
8	Logan Smothers	QB	6-2	195	So.	Muscle Shoals, Ala. / Muscle Shoals	40	Darius Moore	DB	6-1	185	Sr.	Tiffin, Iowa / Iowa Western CC
9	DeShon Singleton	S	6-3	205	So.	Amite, La. / St. Helena / Hutchinson (Kan.) CC	41	Elliott Brown	WR	6-1	180	R-Fr.	Omaha, Neb. / Elkhorn South
10	Jimari Butler	OLB	6-5	245	R-Fr.	Mobile, Ala. / Murphy	41	Christian Lilienkamp	DB	6-0	170	R-Fr.	Bellevue, Neb. / Bellevue West
10	Heinrich Haarberg	QB	6-5	200	R-Fr.	Kearney, Neb. / Catholic	41	Garrett Snodgrass	ILB	6-3	225	So.	York, Neb. / York
11	Braxton Clark	CB	6-4	200	Jr.	Orlando, Fla. / Dr. Phillips	42	Nick Henrich	ILB	6-3	225	So.	Omaha, Neb. / Burke
11	Casey Thompson	QB	6-1	200	Jr.	Oklahoma City, Okla. / Newcastle HS / Texas	43	Michael Booker III	DB	6-1	195	R-Fr.	Grand Prairie, Texas / South Grand Prairie
12	Marques Buford Jr.	DB	5-11	190	So.	DeSoto, Texas / St. Thomas More (Conn.) Prep	44	Garrett Nelson	OLB	6-3	245	Jr.	Scottsbluff, Neb. / Scottsbluff
13	Omar Brown	CB	6-1	200	Jr.	Minneapolis, Minn. / North HS / Northern Iowa	44	Aiden Young	RB	5-9	175	R-Fr.	Omaha, Neb. / Elkhorn
13	Kamonte Grimes	WR	6-3	200	R-Fr.	Naples, Fla. / Palmetto Ridge	45	Truitt Robinson	WR	6-0	190	R-Fr.	Gilbert, Ariz. / Higley
14	Mikai Gbayor	ILB	6-2	220	R-Fr.	Irvington, N.J. / Irvington	46	Grant Buda	LB	6-0	205	R-Fr.	Lincoln, Neb. / Southwest
14	Rahmir Johnson	RB	5-10	185	So.	Oradell, N.J. / Bergen Catholic	46	John Goodwin	TE	6-2	255	So.	Lincoln, Neb. / Lincoln High
15	Richard Torres	QB	6-5	210	Fr.	San Antonio, Texas / Southside	48	Evan Meyersick	TE	6-5	185	R-Fr.	Omaha, Neb. / Millard West
16	Ernest Hausmann	ILB	6-3	220	Fr.	Columbus, Neb. / Columbus	49	Nate Boerkircher	TE	6-4	220	R-Fr.	Aurora, Neb. / Aurora
16	Jarrett Synek	QB	6-0	190	R-Fr.	Hastings, Neb. / Hastings	50	Sam Hoskinson	OL	6-0	245	R-Fr.	Omaha, Neb. / Elkhorn South
16	Zach Weinmaster	WR	5-10	190	So.	Loveland, Colo. / Loveland	50	Jailen Weaver	DL	6-8	320	R-Fr.	Antioch, Calif. / Antioch
17	Ty Hahn	WR	6-2	195	R-Fr.	Johnson, Neb. / Johnson-Brock	51	Braden Klover	ILB	6-2	230	R-Fr.	Wymore, Neb. / Southern
18	Matt Masker	QB	6-2	220	Jr.	Kearney, Neb. / Kearney Catholic	52	Mosai Newsom	DL	6-4	285	So.	Waverly, Iowa / Waverly-Shell Rock
19	Seth Malcom	ILB	6-4	210	R-Fr.	Tabor, Iowa / Fremont-Mills	53	Jake Archer	ILB	6-1	215	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. / Skutt Catholic
19	Barron Miles Jr.	WR	5-10	170	R-Fr.	Montreal, Quebec, Canada / Chandler (Ariz.)	53	Riley Moses	OL	6-2	305	So.	Fairmont, Neb. / Fillmore Central
21	Noa Pola-Gates	S	6-0	180	So.	Gilbert, Ariz. / Williams Field	54	Bryce Benhart	OL	6-9	330	So.	Lakeville, Minn. / Lakeville North
22	Gabe Ervin Jr.	RB	6-0	215	R-Fr.	Buford, Ga. / Buford	54	Ryan Schommer	OLB	6-5	260	Jr.	Norfolk, Neb. / Norfolk
22	Eteva Mauga-Clements	ILB	6-1	220	Sr.	Pleasant Hill, Calif. / Diablo Valley CC	55	Brady Weas	LS	6-2	260	Sr.	Whitefish Bay, Wis. / Whitefish Bay / Georgetown
23	Isaac Gifford	S	6-1	205	So.	Lincoln, Neb. / Southeast	56	Grant Tagge	ILB	6-1	205	So.	Omaha, Neb. / Westside
23	Anthony Grant	RB	5-11	210	Jr.	Buford, Ga. / New Mexico Military Institute	57	Ethan Piper	OL	6-3	305	So.	Norfolk, Neb. / Norfolk Catholic
24	Thomas Fidone II	TE	6-6	235	R-Fr.	Council Bluffs, Iowa / Lewis Central	58	Ian Boerkircher	OL	6-6	280	Jr.	Aurora, Neb. / Aurora HS / Nebraska-Kearney
25	Javier Morton	DB	6-2	185	So.	Atlanta, Ga. / Garden City (Kan.) CC	59	Henry Lutovsky	OL	6-6	330	R-Fr.	Crawfordsville, Iowa / Mount Pleasant
26	Koby Bretz	DB	6-2	195	R-Fr.	Omaha, Neb. / Westside	62	Noah Stafursky	OL	6-4	330	So.	York, Neb. / York
28	Luke Reimer	ILB	6-1	225	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. / North Star	63	Ru'Quan Buckley	DL	6-5	290	R-Fr.	Wyoming, Mich. / Godwin Heights
29	Ashton Hausmann	DB	5-11	215	R-Fr.	Roca, Neb. / Norris	63	Nouredin Nouili	OL	6-4	315	Jr.	Frankfurt, Germany / Norris HS / Colorado State
29	Cooper Jewett	RB	5-10	190	So.	Omaha, Neb. / Elkhorn South	65	Teddy Prochazka	OL	6-9	305	So.	Elkhorn, Neb. / Elkhorn South
30	Randolph Kpai	ILB	6-2	210	R-Fr.	Sioux Falls, S.D. / Washington	66	Ezra Miller	OL	6-6	315	So.	Holstein, Iowa / Ridge View HS / Iowa
30	Markese Stepp	RB	6-1	230	Jr.	Indianapolis, Ind. / Cathedral HS / USC	67	Joey Mancino	OL	6-3	300	R-Fr.	Holmdel, N.J. / Holmdel
31	Chris Kolarevic	ILB	6-1	230	Sr.	Traverse City, Mich. / Northern Iowa	69	Turner Corcoran	OL	6-6	300	So.	Lawrence, Kan. / Free State

NO.	NAME	POS.	HT.	WT.	YEAR	HOMETOWN / PREVIOUS SCHOOL
71	Hunter Anthony	OL	6-6	320	Jr.	Tuttle, Okla. / Tuttle HS / Oklahoma State
71	Keegan Menning	OL	6-5	335	R-Fr.	Fremont, Neb. / Fremont
72	Nash Hutmacher	DL	6-4	325	So.	Oacoma, S.D. / Chamberlain
73	Broc Bando	OL	6-5	315	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb. / IMG Academy
74	Brant Banks	OL	6-7	305	So.	Houston, Texas / Westbury Christian
75	Trent Hixson	OL	6-4	320	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. / Skutt Catholic
76	Beau Schaller	OL	6-2	265	R-Fr.	Waukee, Iowa / Waukee
76	Eli Simonson	OL	6-5	295	R-Fr.	Fremont, Neb. / Archbishop Bergan
77	Michael Lynn	OL	6-6	295	So.	Greenwood Village, Colo. / Cherry Creek
78	Kevin Williams Jr.	OL	6-5	330	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. / North HS / Northern Colorado
79	Alex Conn	OL	6-6	300	R-Fr.	Derby, Kan. / Derby
80	Shawn Hardy II	WR	6-3	190	R-Fr.	Kingsland, Ga. / Camden County
80	Jacob Herbek	TE	6-5	265	So.	Grand Island, Neb. / Central Catholic
81	James Carnie	TE	6-5	230	R-Fr.	Roca, Neb. / Norris
82	Chancellor Brewington	TE/WR	6-3	185	Sr.	Chandler, Ariz. / Northern Arizona
82	Colton Feist	DL	6-2	280	Jr.	Yutan, Neb. / Yutan
83	Travis Vokolek	TE	6-6	260	Sr.	Springfield, Mo. / Kickapoo HS / Rutgers
84	Alex Bullock	WR	6-2	190	R-Fr.	Omaha, Neb. / Creighton Prep
85	Wyatt Liewer	WR	6-4	195	Jr.	O'Neill, Neb. / O'Neill
86	AJ Rollins	TE	6-6	230	R-Fr.	Omaha, Neb. / Creighton Prep
87	Chris Hickman	TE	6-5	215	So.	Omaha, Neb. / Burke
88	Victor Jones Jr.	WR	6-2	190	Fr.	Orlando, Fla. / Olympia
89	Oliver Martin	WR	6-1	200	Sr.	Coralville, Iowa / Michigan / Iowa
90	Jacob Hohl	P	6-2	220	So.	Lincoln, Neb. / Nebraska Wesleyan
91	Cameron Pieper	LS	6-3	260	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. / Southwest
92	Brendan Franke	PK	6-3	215	So.	Gretna, Neb. / Gretna HS / Morningside
93	Gabe Heins	PK	6-0	185	So.	Kearney, Neb. / Kearney
94	Cade Mueller	LS	6-0	220	Jr.	Gretna, Neb. / Gretna
95	Brian Buschini	P	6-0	215	So.	Helena, Mont. / Capital HS / Montana
95	Grant Detlefsen	P	6-3	210	So.	Lincoln, Neb. / Southeast
96	Marquis Black	DL	6-3	315	R-Fr.	McDonough, Ga. / Eagle's Landing
96	Camden Witucki	LS	6-2	225	R-Fr.	Grand Blanc, Mich. / Grand Blanc Community
97	Blaise Gunnerson	OLB	6-6	255	R-Fr.	Carroll, Iowa / Kuemper Catholic
99	Ty Robinson	DL	6-6	305	So.	Gilbert, Ariz. / Higley
	Ajay Allen	RB	5-11	185	Fr.	Monroe, La. / Neville
	Chase Androff	TE	6-6	230	Fr.	Lakeville, Minn. / South
	Jake Appleget	OLB	6-4	210	Fr.	Lincoln, Neb. / Southeast
	Timmy Bleekrode	PK	5-8	190	So.	Atlanta, Ga. / Maris / Furman
	Janiran Bonner	WR	6-3	200	Fr.	Ellenwood, Ga. / Cedar Grove
	Decoldest Crawford	WR	6-2	190	Fr.	Shreveport, La. / Green Oaks
	Justin Evans-Jenkins	OL	6-2	280	Fr.	East Orange, N.J. / Irvington
	Malcolm Hartzog	CB	5-10	175	Fr.	Silver Creek, Miss. / Jefferson Davis County
	Cooper Hausmann	QB	5-11	185	Fr.	Roca, Neb. / Norris
	Emmett Johnson	RB	6-0	185	Fr.	Minneapolis, Minn. / Academy of Holy Angels
	Luke Lindenmeyer	TE	6-4	250	Fr.	La Vista, Neb. / Papillion-La Vista
	Jalil Martin	S	6-3	190	Fr.	Chicago, Ill. / Kenwood Academy

NO.	NAME	POS.	HT.	WT.	YEAR	HOMETOWN / PREVIOUS SCHOOL
	Ochaun Mathis	DL	6-5	260	Jr.	Manor, Texas / Manor / TCU
	Blake Miller	DB	6-1	195	Fr.	Nebraska City, Neb. / Lourdes Central Catholic
	Gage Stenger	S	6-2	200	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. / Millard South
	Brodie Tagaloa	TE	6-4	260	Fr.	Pittsburg, Calif. / De La Salle
	Charlie Weinrich	PK	5-11	185	Fr.	Leawood, Kan. / Blue Valley

NAME

Scott Frost	Head Coach
Erik Chinander	Defensive Coordinator
Mark Whipple	Offensive Coordinator
Bryan Applewhite	Assistant Coach - Running Backs
Sean Beckton	Assistant Coach - Tight Ends
Bill Busch	Special Teams Coordinator
Mike Dawson	Assistant Coach - Outside Linebackers
Travis Fisher	Assistant Coach - Defensive Backs
Mickey Joseph	Associate Head Coach - Wide Receivers/Passing Game Coordinator
Donovan Raiola	Assistant Coach - Offensive Line
Barrett Ruud	Assistant Coach - Inside Linebackers
Zach Duval	Head Football Strength & Conditioning Coach
Matt Davison	Senior Associate AD - External Engagement
Joni Duff	Football Administrative Assistant
Andrew Sims	Director of Football Operations
Austin Herink	Associate Director of Football Operations
Vince Guinta	Senior Director of Player Personnel & Recruiting
Sean Dillon	Director of Player Personnel
William Prince	Director of Player Development
Andrew Strop	Assistant Football Strength Coach



2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 27	Northwestern	Dublin, Ireland
Sept. 3	North Dakota	Lincoln
Sept. 10	Georgia Southern	Lincoln
Sept. 17	Oklahoma	Lincoln
Oct. 1	Indiana	Lincoln
Oct. 7	At Rutgers	Piscataway, N.J.
Oct. 15	At Purdue	West Lafayette, Ind.
Oct. 29	Illinois	Lincoln
Nov. 5	Minnesota	Lincoln
Nov. 12	At Michigan	Ann Arbor, Mich.
Nov. 19	Wisconsin	Lincoln
Nov. 25	At Iowa	Iowa City, Iowa

Quarterbacks

By Shawn Ekwall • Photos by Jimmy Rash

For the first time in Scott Frost's tenure, the quarterback room will have a new look. Four-year starter Adrian Martinez hit the transfer portal and is using his final year of eligibility at Kansas State. While wins under Martinez were few, he threw for more than 2,000 yards in a season twice and had 45 TD passes during his NU career. Martinez battled injuries and

a shortened 2020 season due to COVID-19 but still put up solid numbers. However, it seemed as if a crucial mistake loomed around every corner. Ball security was an issue, and Martinez's 10 interceptions in 2021 were a career high.

Enter Texas transfer Casey Thompson, who hit the transfer portal in December and committed to Nebraska in early Janu-

ary. Thompson's father, Charles, an option-quarterback at Oklahoma during the 1987 and 1988 seasons, is familiar with the Huskers and new receivers coach Mickey Joseph. Charles Thompson led second-ranked OU to a 17-7 win in Memorial Stadium over No. 1 Nebraska in 1987.

Charles Thompson said Nebraska appealed to his son right away. The oppor-

IMPACT NEWCOMERS

Casey Thompson is the obvious choice here, but fans shouldn't overlook a healthy Chubba Purdy, especially if the Texas transfer gets off to a slow start.

Bringing Power Five experience to the table is of high value. Thompson's resume is solid. He played in 19 games over four seasons with the Longhorns, including 10 starts. His 24 touchdown passes led all Big 12 quarterbacks in 2021. He threw six TD passes in the Longhorns' 57-56 OT loss to Kansas. He's 23 years old with two years of eligibility remaining.

What stands out most to many are Thompson's leadership qualities. He's a constant in the film room and a sponge when learning new schemes from Mark Whipple. Returning veteran receiver Oliver Martin described Thompson this way:

"He's a very vocal leader and guys really rally around that. And it's not a forced leadership. It's pretty natural. That's even better. Guys rally around that and then he puts in a ton of time studying film, knowing the playbook. So he can come out and execute plays well and he's asserted himself as the quarterback."

With so many offseason changes in the NU program, a stabilized quarterback position is something Frost and Husker fans would cherish in 2022. With seven quarterbacks filling the room, competition for the starting job will be there. And coach Scott Frost and Whipple will not only help the team, but do Thompson a favor by keeping competition ongoing into fall camp before naming a starter prior to the season-opener against Northwestern in Dublin, Ireland.



Casey Thompson led the Big 12 with 24 touchdown passes and connected on 63.2% of his throws while at Texas in 2021.

tunity to showcase his strengths as well as demonstrate his ability to run the ball were factors in the decision.

Thompson will have to adjust to a slightly different offensive system. Texas coach Steve Sarkisian's offense was RPO (run, pass option) heavy. Mark Whipple, the new offensive coordinator, uses a more combo/West Coast offensive scheme. Whipple likes to stress opponents' back-end safeties while using multiple routes at different levels.

Thompson appears to be a good fit. He led the Big 12 in touchdown passes (24) and completed 63.2% of his throws in 2021. He had five or more TD throws in three games. He brings Power Five experience to NU and is a seasoned 23 years old. His maturity and leadership will be something to keep an eye on as the Huskers hope to develop a more consistent offensive unit with big-play capability while cutting down on turnovers.

While Thompson appears to be the clear front-runner heading into fall camp, several others are nipping at his heels. Chubba Purdy, a redshirt freshman transfer from Florida State, is still battling a few nagging injuries to his shoulder and foot, but when he reaches 100% he will be a factor in the race as a true dual threat QB. His older brother, Brock, was the starter at Iowa State and was drafted with the final pick in the NFL Draft by the 49ers.

Purdy has the skill set to be "the guy" in Whipple's offense. He was ranked as the No. 6 dual threat quarterback coming out of high school, according to 247Sports Composite rankings. He appeared in four games over two seasons with the Seminoles, throwing for 317 yards and completing 32 of 58 passes. He has four years of eligibility remaining.

Logan Smothers will also factor in the

quarterback race. The sophomore from Muscle Shoals, Alabama, played in six games in 2021, but got big-game experience with a start in the season finale against Iowa. He rushed for 64 yards and two touchdowns while throwing for another 198 against one of the Big Ten's top defenses.

QUARTERBACKS

Matt Masker, 6-2, 220, junior
Casey Thompson, 6-1, 200, junior
Logan Smothers, 6-2, 195, sophomore
Heinrich Haarberg, 6-5, 200, redshirt freshman
Chubba Purdy, 6-2, 210, redshirt freshman
Jarrett Synek, 6-0, 190, redshirt freshman
Richard Torres, 6-5, 210, freshman



Florida State transfer Chubba Purdy, a redshirt freshman, played in four games over two seasons with the Seminoles.

Whipple is high on Smothers not only for his athleticism but his intelligence.

"When you make a mistake and you don't know why you made a mistake, that's what concerns you. But he knows," Whipple said of Smothers during spring drills.

Highly touted signee Richard Torres adds intrigue to an already competitive position.

The Southside High School product from San Antonio had his 2021 senior season cut short due to a knee injury. He threw for 912 yards and 12 touchdowns in his shortened season. As a junior he amassed 1,149 yards and 18 TDs. Torres sat out spring practice while continuing rehab on his knee.

Redshirt freshman Heinrich Haarberg, who has an NFL body, can both run and throw and remains an intriguing prospect as time moves forward.

Late in spring practice, Whipple seemed pleased with the progress of all the QBs and their improvement in ball security.

"They are taking care of the ball better, which I thought we were a little loose with the ball earlier," Whipple said. "We are getting more work in the red zone, which will help us in the tight windows and third downs and things like that."

"Casey has done well. Logan has done well. Chubba has been working a little bit more, so it has been good to see him."

Regardless of how things shake out come fall, the quarterback position will have a new face and feel to it. And as Husker fans can attest, there's no guarantee of success via the transfer portal. All one has to do is peek back to Arizona State transfer Sam Keller and the 2007 season. While Keller was highly regarded and optimism overflowed, things didn't pan out the way Keller or NU fans envisioned, and Keller gave way to Joe Ganz late in the season.

Frost is counting on continued work over the summer and fall camp to help fine-tune the quarterbacks and the changes in the offense he and Whipple plan to incorporate.

"I've seen good progress from that position," Frost said of his quarterbacks after the spring game. "And we've got to make up a lot more ground in the summer."

Offensive Line

By Steve Beideck

Before April's spring game, a primary concern of pundits and Husker fans alike was the level of talent and depth on the defensive line.

But then a strange thing happened. The defensive line seemingly dominated the offensive line in the public scrimmage. Almost immediately, the uneasy feelings among the populace flipped to the other side of the ball.

It's now the offensive line feeling the onus of getting things up to par by the Aug. 27 season opener against Northwestern in Dublin, Ireland.

While NU's offense moved the ball well in 2021 – it was the 20th most productive

offense in the country and averaged 448 yards a game – it seemed that whenever it stubbed its toe, which was often, it was caused by an offensive line blunder or a quarterback gaffe.

There are new quarterbacks in charge now, so what about the offensive line?

Enter new offensive line coach Donovan Raiola. He likes his guys, and there are a lot to like with 23 offensive linemen on the official roster. There is good depth and experience returning. What it lacked previously was discipline and a hard-nosed mentality.

One way to fix both is to shift into attack mode.

Close observers in the spring heard phrases like “coming off the ball,” “attacking” and “more aggressive.” Seemingly “finesse” is out the window.

So that's the narrative with Raiola in charge. Tough, disciplined and smash mouth, which Nebraska basically invented but ceded to others somewhere along the way.

In spring practices under Raiola, smash mouth was showing signs of a rebirth, according to some of the coaches.

“The first thing is they're just coming off the ball,” coach Scott Frost said. “That's been something that I've been frustrated with for a long time. Shoot, when I was



KEN JUSZYK/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Teddy Prochazka played in five games in 2021 with two starts before suffering a season-ending injury against Michigan. Prochazka did not participate in spring practice but is expected to be ready this fall.

playing here, guys looked like they were in 40-yard dashes when the ball was snapped.

“That wasn’t up to the standard that I wanted. That’s the first thing. Protection has been better, too. I think Donny’s just done a good job with those guys’ mentality and technique, and I can’t wait to watch them keep improving.”

And there was this from tight ends coach Sean Beckton: “The best thing I’ve seen is the physicality on both sides. It’s been a real chippy spring ball. That’s what you need for being able to prepare yourself for the Big Ten. Guys are physical, fighting and finishing on both sides of the ball up front. We’re a lot more physical, a lot more passionate on each play.

“We move the ball pretty much in the run game, every practice on the run plays this year. I don’t think the defense has got the better hand of us in the running game all spring. That kind of shows you what we’re doing up front.”

It just didn’t look that way in the spring game. Remember, Raiola had a limited number of practices to implement the new approach, and when the top units played in public, the game was in “thud” mode – basically glorified touch football.

If not for that bizarre affair, fans very well may be excited about the offensive line. There are players there.

Two of the top contenders at tackle – sophomore Turner Corcoran (6-foot-6, 300 pounds with 11 starts in 2021) and sophomore Teddy Prochazka (6-9, 305, two starts) – were still recovering from injuries and didn’t participate in spring practices. Both are expected to be ready for fall, and both appear to have bright futures.

At center, senior Trent Hixson (6-4, 320), who had two starts at left guard in 2021, will likely battle it out with sophomore Ethan Piper (6-3, 305), who had three starts at left guard a year ago.

And at the guard position, junior Nouredin Nouili (6-4, 315), who started the final seven games in 2021, has a leg up on one of the spots.

All of the players mentioned above have experience and versatility.

And Raiola has a lot of other names who will compete.

Bryce Benhart (6-6, 330) is still only a sophomore and started 10 games at

IMPACT NEWCOMERS

Hunter Anthony and Kevin Williams are the clear choices here. Anthony comes with solid Power Five credentials at Oklahoma State, and Williams is said to have performed well when his FCS Bears played teams like Colorado and Washington State. At best, they both will compete for a starting guard spot. At worst, they will add solid depth to the two-deep, vital to success in a long season.



Portal transfer Kevin Williams, right, will battle for a starting spot at guard.

right tackle in 2021. Redshirt freshman Henry Lutovsky (6-6, 330) is a highly regarded interior lineman who played in two games at guard as a freshman.

Sophomore Brant Banks (6-5, 305) played in nine games a year ago with one start at tackle, and senior Broc Bando (6-5, 315) played in nine games in 2021.

And then there are the portal transfers, Kevin Williams and Hunter Anthony.

Williams (6-5, 330) will be a senior who played at Northern Colorado where he saw action at left guard and left tackle. Anthony (6-6, 320) is a junior who spent four seasons at Oklahoma State and played in 23 games with five starts for the Cowboys.

While Raiola has a lot of work to do, he also has a lot of players, many of whom – at least on paper – have much potential left to fulfill. Could a coach ask for anything more?

OFFENSIVE LINEMAN

Broc Bando, 6-5, 315, senior
Trent Hixson, 6-4, 320, senior
Kevin Williams, 6-5, 330, senior
Hunter Anthony, 6-6, 320, junior
Ian Boerkircher, 6-6, 280, junior
Nouredin Nouili, 6-4, 315, junior
Brant Banks, 6-7, 305, sophomore
Bryce Benhart, 6-9, 330, sophomore
Turner Corcoran, 6-6, 300, sophomore
Michael Lynn, 6-6, 295, sophomore
Ezra Miller, 6-6, 315, sophomore
Riley Moses, 6-2, 305, sophomore
Ethan Piper, 6-3, 305, sophomore
Teddy Prochazka, 6-9, 305, sophomore
Noah Stafursky, 6-4, 330, sophomore
Alex Conn, 6-6, 300, redshirt freshman
Sam Hoskinson, 6-0, 245, redshirt freshman
Henry Lutovsky, 6-6, 330, redshirt freshman
Joey Mancino, 6-3, 300, redshirt freshman
Keegan Menning, 6-5, 335, redshirt freshman
Beau Schaller, 6-2, 265, redshirt freshman
Eli Simonson, 6-5, 295, redshirt freshman
Justin Evans-Jenkins, 6-2, 280, freshman

Running Backs

By Shawn Ekwall

With a mix of returning veterans and newcomers, running back is one of the more intriguing positions to keep an eye on during fall camp.

Speed, power, vision and pass-catching ability are all attributes possessed by several candidates vying for playing time in a crowded room for new running backs coach Bryan Applewhite.

Applewhite, who replaced Ryan Held, comes to NU from TCU where he spent the previous two seasons. He also has experience at Colorado State, Louisiana-Monroe, Montana State, Wyoming and Northern Colorado.

Under Applewhite the Horned Frogs ranked in the top 30 nationally in rushing, averaging 214.7 yards per game in 2020 and 196.3 in 2021.

Husker coach Scott Frost calls Applewhite a “great addition to the staff,” and said “the running back room will benefit from his knowledge and experience.”



JEFF BUNDY/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Running backs coach Bryan Applewhite was previously at TCU.

Sorting through the options will be a challenge for Applewhite. Several questions linger entering fall camp. Let's take a deeper dive.

- Can Rahmir Johnson be an every-down back? His 185-pound frame isn't ideal to take the weekly pounding from opposing Big Ten defenses. Could NU utilize him more in a running back/receiver hybrid role? His ability to get behind the defense, catch balls and show off his speed was evident in a 41-yard TD catch



REGGIE RYDER/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Rahmir Johnson gained 74 yards and scored two TDs against Northwestern in 2021.

out of the backfield against Michigan. He ran a nifty wheel route, hauled in a perfect throw from Adrian Martinez, then beat Wolverines' linebacker Joss Ross with his speed to the pylon.

“He has all the tools you're looking for in a back his size,” Applewhite said about Johnson at the start of spring practice. “He's got speed, feet, hands and he's got want-to.”

Johnson knows the playbook well, and has a proven history. He ran for 495 yards and four touchdowns in 2021, but was

banged up in both the Minnesota and Ohio State games. It will be interesting to see where he fits in Mark Whipple's offense.

- Will Gabe Ervin Jr. be fully healthy? Ervin looked the part prior to his season-ending ACL injury against Oklahoma last September. He rushed for 56 yards in a win over Buffalo and coaches love his versatility and his knack for being a terrific pass-blocker on third down.

If Ervin is at full speed come fall camp, it's a huge boost for NU. Known also for his

tenacious weight room workouts, as well as his vision and good hands, Ervin brings a lot of assets to the table.

- Can Jaquez Yant develop the week-to-week consistency he showed at times in 2021? The 245-pound Yant has the strength and power to be the guy who can run it between the tackles in the Big Ten. Who can forget his electric performance against Northwestern? The sophomore from Tallahassee, Florida, diced up the Wildcats defense for 127 yards on 13 carries.

But inconsistency and discipline issues hindered Yant. If those areas are cleaned up, Yant has the tools to raise his game to another level. Coaches like his frame and ability to get yards after contact.

- What happened to Markese Stepp? Stepp remains a wildcard in the rotation. He entered 2021 as a touted transfer from USC. Stepp's lingering foot injury, which occurred at USC, could explain why he didn't see the field more. If he's completely healthy, there's no question he has the tools to be a showcase back. One has to wonder why he didn't see the field more in 2021.

- Could the transfer portal be the answer at RB? The Huskers picked up a top JUCO player in Anthony Grant back in January. Grant, who started his career at Florida State in 2018, was recently named the NJCAA male student-athlete of the year while attending New Mexico Military Institute and helped lead them to a national championship.

Grant is described by coaches as "very quick, and sees the field well." Coaches love his vision and if he grasps the playbook early on, he could see the field immediately.

Frost weighed in late in spring practice on Grant and the overall competition at the position.

"Anthony's in the process of learning, but he's doing some really good things," Frost said. "He's really quick. He can make people miss in the hole, and has really good vision. I expect that running back battle to continue through fall."

- Is there an incoming freshman who could make an early splash? NU was able to steal the top prep player from Minnesota in Emmett Johnson. The 185-pound freshman

from Minneapolis was named Mr. Football by the Minnesota Football Coaches Association in 2021. Johnson rushed for more than 2,500 yards and 42 touchdowns his senior season at the Academy of Holy Angels.

It may take time for Johnson to adjust to the college game in a Power Five league, but it's obvious the talent is there. Fans should be excited about his ceiling.

Finally, the addition of Applewhite helped NU flip the commitment of Monroe, Louisiana, native Ajay Allen, who previously committed to TCU and changed his choice to Nebraska once Applewhite took the job in Lincoln. Allen, nicknamed "Quick 6" for his ability to find the end zone at any time, ran for more than 2,200 yards and tallied 34 TDs his senior season.

With multiple options for Applewhite and Whipple, fall camp promises to be competitive, and movement could be seen day to day and week by week. Clear as mud? We figured so. Stay tuned, because how this position plays out could go a long way in determining the success of the Huskers in 2022.



Nebraska's "big" back, Jaquez Yant, will add a touch of speed and elusiveness to his game in 2022.

Running Backs



Anthony Grant was Florida State's top kick returner out of high school.



Markese Stepp, a transfer from USC, has been slowed by a foot injury while at Nebraska.

IMPACT NEWCOMER

Nebraska landed a big fish in the transfer portal in Anthony Grant. He was rated the No. 1 JUCO running back by 247Sports, and his numbers backed it up. In two seasons at New Mexico Military Institute, Grant amassed 2,549 yards rushing and 28 touchdowns. He averaged 7.1 yards per carry and had four games of more than 200 yards on the ground.

Grant, who comes from Buford High School in Georgia, also brings Power Five experience to the table, starting his career at Florida State, where he was the primary kick returner his freshman season in 2018.

Bryan Applewhite is familiar with Grant, as he spent time on the recruiting trail trying to land him while at TCU.

"He has on film what you're looking for," Applewhite said. "He was tough. He didn't shy away from contact. He had a burst to get away from people. He had a very good tendency to run behind his pads and he was explosive on film. You could see that."

Reading into comments from coach Scott Frost and Applewhite following spring practice, if Grant can master the new schemes and playbook, don't be surprised to see him emerge from a crowded field to the top of the depth chart.

RUNNING BACKS

Anthony Grant, 5-11, 210, junior
 Markese Stepp, 6-1, 230, junior
 Cooper Jewett, 5-10, 190, sophomore
 Rahmir Johnson, 5-10, 185, sophomore
 Jaquez Yant, 6-2, 245, sophomore
 Gabe Ervin Jr, 6-0, 215, redshirt freshman
 Isaiah Harris, 5-8, 190, redshirt freshman
 Trevin Luben, 5-11, 200, redshirt freshman
 Beau Psencik, 6-0, 205, redshirt freshman
 Matthew Schuster, 5-10, 190, redshirt freshman
 Aiden Young, 5-9, 175, redshirt freshman
 Ajay Allen, 5-11, 185, freshman
 Emmett Johnson, 6-0, 185, freshman

Lingenfelter Farms

We are a proud supporter of Nebraska Athletics and have a rich tradition of family members playing Husker football beginning with brothers Raymond and Virgil in 1940.

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Ben Lingenfelter

2017-2020 | Riley, Frost

Luke Lingenfelter

2007-2011 | Callahan, Pelini

Newton Lingenfelter

2002-2006 | Solich, Callahan

Sean Putnam

1984-1988 | Osborne

Bruce Lingenfelter

1978-1980 | Osborne

Bob Lingenfelter

1972-1976 | Osborne



Tight Ends

By *Scottie Spinazola*

Quarterbacks and receivers have received most of the publicity in the offseason, but with offensive coordinator Mark Whipple in charge, fans might be best advised to watch the tight end group.

At Pitt, a Whipple trademark was running two tight end sets, and it's not a stretch to foresee tight ends being heavily involved in both the running and passing game this season.

But first, everyone needs to get healthy.

The tight end group was hampered during the spring, particularly at the top, with Travis Vokelek and Thomas Fidone being sidelined.

"Every year there is one position that seems like you get hit by the injury bug and



JIMMY RASH/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Redshirt freshman Nate Boerkircher made his first career catch against Northwestern in 2021.

that was kind of our position this spring,” coach Scott Frost said after the spring game. “That is kind of one of the reasons we had to go offense versus defense and not just split up into two teams but it is good that those (younger) guys are getting reps because we are going to need to count on them sooner or later.”

Vokolek, a 6-foot-6, 260-pound senior, is the most experienced, and Fidone, a 6-6, 235-pound redshirt freshman, is the most intriguing. If both can get healthy, the tight end position will be a definite weapon for Whipple.

Vokolek missed the spring with a shoulder injury. He caught 11 balls last season for 127 yards, but his ability as a blocker was his strong suit. He was able to stay mentally sharp and pick up some of the new offense in the spring.

“I think there is always room for improvement, always room for growth so get-

ting the mental reps I don’t think I can get enough of,” Vokolek said in April. “I’ve really been trying to focus on that and lock in on the play that we are running and imagining myself out there and what I would do.”

Vokolek is expected to be fully healthy by fall and seems to be the top option at the position.

Fidone won’t be far behind. The precocious youngster came to the Huskers with a trophy case full of accolades but tore an ACL and saw little action as a freshman.

Recruiting services listed Fidone as the top tight end in the 2021 class, and his strength is his speed and receiving ability, making him a good fit opposite Vokolek in two-tight end sets.

But there is depth, and other names will figure into the mix.

They include:

Nate Boerkircher, a redshirt freshman, who was a main contributor in the spring.

Boerkircher (6-4, 220) has only played in three games, but spring was a confidence-booster and he received a lot of time with the new quarterbacks and new offense.

Chancellor Brewington, a senior, who was a key part of goal-line packages in 2021. Undersized at 185 pounds, Brewington packs a surprising punch and likely will find a role.

AJ Rollins, who was a fan favorite in the spring. At 6-6 and 230 pounds, the redshirt freshman showed his athleticism by making a catch between two defenders in the spring game. As with Boerkircher, Rollins has benefited from a lot of work in the new offense.

Chris Hickman, a sophomore, began his Husker career as a wide receiver. After some time transitioning to a tight end this could be the year Hickman (6-5, 215) showcases his talents.

TIGHT ENDS

Chancellor Brewington, 6-3, 185, senior
 Travis Vokolek, 6-6, 260, senior
 John Goodwin, 6-2, 225, sophomore
 Jacob Herbek, 6-5, 265, sophomore
 Chris Hickman, 6-5, 215, sophomore
 Nate Boerkircher, 6-4, 220, redshirt freshman
 James Carnie, 6-5, 230, redshirt freshman
 Thomas Fidone, 6-6, 235, redshirt freshman
 Evan Meyersick, 6-5, 185, redshirt freshman
 AJ Rollins, 6-6, 230, redshirt freshman
 Chase Androff, 6-6, 230, freshman
 Luke Lindenmeyer, 6-4, 250, freshman

IMPACT NEWCOMER

Freshman Chase Androff (6-6, 230) is one of the bigger tight ends on the roster and comes advertised as “having a high motor” and as “aggressive at the point of attack.”

Androff is a three-star recruit who ranked in the top 50 high school tight ends nationally. In a run-heavy high school offense, he was not asked to do much as a receiver – the team had 32 completions all season. He finished his senior campaign with 10 receptions for 171 yards and two touchdowns.

Like all freshmen, he will face a big adjustment, but blocking ability and tenaciousness are valuable commodities and they will give him a chance to see the field quicker than one might think.



KEN JUSZYK/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Senior Travis Vokolek missed the spring due to a shoulder injury but is expected to be full speed for the first game.

Wide Receivers

By *Scottie Spinazola*



REGGIE RYDER/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

At 6-foot-4 and 225 pounds, Husker receiver Omar Manning is a handful for opposing defensive backs.

Who will have the greatest impact among the receivers for the Huskers in 2022? A few names come immediately to mind, but it's hard to make any definite forecasts. And that's not a bad thing.

The possibilities are numerous, and the talent is enticing.

The spring game left few clues with the passing game rarely on display.

But there was this, from quarterback Casey Thompson: "As spring ball progressed, we have had some of our best practices the last few weeks. Routes have improved every day. We have done a really good job at one on ones at the wide receiver position."

The passing game is sure to be different than in recent seasons, now under the direction of offensive coordinator Mark Whipple who ran an NFL-style attack at Pitt that ranked eighth nationally with 337.4 passing yards per game.

It should be noted that that offense had Jordan Addison, one of the best receivers in college football, and quarterback Kenny Pickett, a first-round NFL draft pick now with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

By comparison, the Huskers are a work in progress with Whipple and Mickey Joseph, the associate head coach and wide receivers/passing game coordinator, molding the new attack.

Joseph knows receivers. At LSU in 2019, his top three were Ja'Marr Chase, Justin Jefferson and Terrace Marshall.

Not bad.

At Nebraska, Whipple and Joseph do have some material with which to work, with several strong returnees mixed with portal transfers and incoming recruits.

Some of the returning receivers are senior Omar Manning, senior Oliver Martin, junior Wyatt Liewer and sophomore Alante Brown. Junior Brody Belt also made some

waves in the spring.

Manning and Martin are known commodities. Manning has all the tools and was the third leading receiver on the team in 2021 with 26 catches for 380 yards. At 6-foot-4 and 225 pounds, he's a physical force. Martin (6-1, 200) brings experience and athleticism, catching nine balls for 147 yards in 2021.

Brown (5-10, 185) appears poised for a breakout season after catching only three passes in 2021. He also returned five kicks for 77 yards.

Liewer (6-4, 195) offers solid experience and good size, starting four games in 2021.

Belt (5-9, 185) has grown into an interesting option, spending time at both running back and receiver. Last year he collected six passes for 68 yards and carried the ball 10 times for 48 yards. He made news in the spring when Joseph proclaimed him "the best player on this team." Perhaps

it was a way to send a message to some of the other receivers, but then Joseph doubled down: “When you talk about a football player, he’s a football player,” Joseph said. “He’s smart, he’s got a high football IQ.”

As with other positions on the team, the portal was kind to the receiving room bringing three additions: Trey Palmer (LSU), Isaiah Garcia-Castaneda (New Mexico State) and Marcus Washington (Texas).

The speedy Palmer (6-1, 190) collected 41 receptions for 458 yards across three seasons with the Tigers. He also returned kicks and punts.

Palmer, a junior, said in a spring press conference that Joseph, formerly at LSU, “is like a father” to him and that they are both still learning the new system together and that it is helpful to

have each other.

Garcia-Castaneda (6-0, 185), a junior, could become an interesting option for the Huskers if he is able to stay healthy. He played 12 games in two years for New Mexico State, catching 42 balls for 639 yards and four touchdowns.

Washington (6-2, 191) is coming off a 2021 season where he started seven games and caught 18 passes for 277 yards and two touchdowns. Playing with Casey Thompson at Texas certainly won’t hurt his transition to Nebraska.

Some other scholarship youngsters who could shake things up include redshirt freshmen Kamonte Grimes and Shawn Hardy and incoming freshmen Victor Jones, Janiran Bonner and Decoldest Crawford.

WIDE RECEIVERS

Omar Manning, 6-4, 225, senior

Oliver Martin, 6-1, 200, senior

Brody Belt, 5-9, 185, junior

Isaiah Garcia-Castaneda, 6-0, 185, junior

Wyatt Liewer, 6-4, 195, junior

Trey Palmer, 6-1, 190, junior

Marcus Washington, 6-2, 191, junior

Alante Brown, 5-10, 185, sophomore

Zach Weinmaster, 5-10, 190, sophomore

Elliot Brown, 6-1, 180, redshirt freshman

Alex Bullock, 6-2, 190, redshirt freshman

Kamonte Grimes, 6-3, 200, redshirt freshman

Ty Hahn, 6-2, 195, redshirt freshman

Shawn Hardy II, 6-3, 190, redshirt freshman

Barron Miles Jr., 5-10, 170, redshirt freshman

Truitt Robinson, 6-0, 190, redshirt freshman

Taveon Thompson, 6-4, 200, redshirt freshman

Janiran Bonner, 6-3, 200, freshman

Decoldest Crawford, 6-2, 190, freshman

Victor Jones Jr., 6-2, 190, freshman



JIMMY RASH/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Oliver Martin dealt with injuries in 2021 but still managed to catch nine passes for 147 yards and one touchdown.

IMPACT NEWCOMERS

Where do you start? There is a grab bag of new talent from which to pick.

Trey Palmer is coming off a season where he caught 30 passes for 344 yards and two touchdowns. LSU was not as dominant as it has been in recent years, but he was able to

post those numbers in the SEC. In his short period of time at Nebraska, Palmer has displayed one trait publically: confidence.

In April, Palmer said, “You gotta be a dog in this sport, and I am just that dog. It’s just in me, not on me.”

Marcus Washington has done some good work, too, against good competition, plus

he has lots of experience with presumed starting quarterback Casey Thompson.

Both will be highly motivated to succeed at Nebraska after leaving high-profile programs.

Fans should prepare for a battle royale for playing time at receiver.

Defensive Line

By Thad Livingston

Looking for a barometer of how close Nebraska's games will be this season? Watch the defensive line. In the Big Ten, a functional group up front can play a big part in keeping games tight, and Nebraska did that in 2021.

Led by mainstay Ben Stille and Damion Daniels, who grew into the nose tackle spot, the Huskers were solid a year ago. Add behemoth Ty Robinson and Casey Rogers, two talented youngsters, and depth provided by Deontre Thomas, Jordon Riley and Colton Feist, Nebraska had enough talent, size and depth to play with three down linemen or four, and often did a reasonable job stuffing the run, finishing in the top half of the league in rushing yards allowed.

And just when the Huskers appeared ready to take another step forward in 2022, things fell apart. As expected, Stille and Daniels were off to the NFL (as free agents), but Thomas decided to leave football and Riley and Rogers transferred to Oregon.

Fortunately, before the month



Ty Robinson closes in on Michigan quarterback Cade McNamara. Robinson, at 6-foot-6 and 305 pounds, was a redshirt freshman starter in 2021.

of June rolled around, three new players arrived via the transfer portal: Ochaun Mathis (6-5, 260), Devin Drew (6-2, 280) and Stephon Wynn (6-4, 308).

And Nebraska was back in business up front, no longer having to rely on a bevy of untested youngsters. With the newcomers, Nebraska now appears to go two-deep and has a host of others who can play spot duty, which is where a team needs to be to not only hold up for an entire game, but to be in position to make plays that can disrupt an offense, something that has been a Blackshirt weakness in the statistical categories of sacks and turnovers. If the Blackshirts can begin to stack those up, close losses will become wins.

Enter Mathis, a second-team All-Big12 player at TCU each of the past two seasons. In 2020, he led the Big 12 and ranked 12th nationally in sacks per game, averaging nearly one per game. He slowed down a bit last season (four sacks and seven tackles for loss) but that's possibly because offenses avoided him or double-teamed him. In other words, he changed how offenses played, and that creates opportunities for other players.

One of those other players at Nebraska could be outside linebacker Garrett Nelson, who likely will line up as the end on the other side of Mathis in Nebraska's four-man fronts. A bigger, stronger, faster Nelson (6-3, 245) looked ready to be a difference-maker during the spring game.

With Mathis and Nelson crashing the

ends – or Caleb Tannor, Blaise Gunnerson or Jimari Butler – passing downs could become an opportunity for Nebraska, something to which NU fans are not accustomed.

"We want those brushes off the edge," Nelson said after terrorizing Husker QBs in the spring game. "We want those interior sacks. ... Defensive line and edge guys together, getting the balls out. We need more turnovers. We don't want to lose by one possession or one point anymore."

The two-deep at the middle two tackle positions has some promise with the arrival of Drew and Wynn. They appear to be in position to rotate inside with returning starter Robinson (6-6, 305) and Nash Hutmacher (6-4, 325), both sophomores. Robinson is a star-in-the-making, and Hutmacher could be by this time next year. Add Feist, a junior at 6-2, 280, who played in eight games in 2021, and sophomore Mosai Newsom (6-4, 285) and the Huskers appear solid up front, with a host of younger players still maturing.



Devin Drew



Stephon Wynn



Ochaun Mathis

IMPACT NEWCOMER

Ochaun Mathis might be the player Nebraska has been unable to develop for years. If he comes as advertised, the Blackshirts could turn into a defense that wins games instead of setting the bar at being a solid unit that keeps games close for the offense to hopefully make some game-winning plays. There is nothing wrong with the latter – if the offense can score – but the former makes life a whole lot better.

How many times in recent years did a quarterback complete a third-down pass to keep a drive alive that eventually doomed Nebraska? A player like Mathis might get to that quarterback a second earlier or demand a double team that enables a teammate to pressure the quarterback. Maybe the quarterback fumbles, or throws a bad pass under pressure that is intercepted. Maybe momentum falls on Nebraska's side.

Another thing to consider: Mathis could have gone anywhere after leaving TCU. Opportunity and NIL money were undoubtedly factors, but winning had to play a part, too. He liked what Nebraska had and who he'd be playing with. Take that as a good sign.

DEFENSIVE LINEMAN

Devin Drew, 6-2, 280, senior
 Stephon Wynn, 6-4, 308, redshirt senior
 Colton Feist, 6-2, 280, junior
 Ochaun Mathis, 6-5, 260, junior
 Nash Hutmacher, 6-4, 325, sophomore
 Mosai Newsom, 6-4, 285, sophomore
 Ty Robinson, 6-6, 305, sophomore
 Marquis Black, 6-3, 315, redshirt freshman
 Ru'quan Buckley, 6-5, 290, redshirt freshman
 Jailen Weaver, 6-8, 320, redshirt freshman
 Brodie Tagaloa, 6-4, 260, freshman



JIMMY RASH/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Monstrous redshirt freshman Nash Hutmacher, at 6-4 and 325 pounds, played in 11 games in 2021 but is likely to find a bigger role in 2022.

Linebackers

By Thad Livingston



Inside linebacker Luke Reimers, a junior, lead the Huskers with 108 tackles in 2021.



Inside linebacker Nick Henrich makes one of his 14 tackles against Purdue. He was second on the team in tackles with 99.

Purdue came into Lincoln a year ago and stole a 28-23 win. But don't blame NU's inside linebackers.

Luke Reimers made 19 tackles that day, the seventh-most in a game in school history and the most since Lavonte David had 19 in a game in 2010.

When Reimers wasn't hauling down a Boilermaker, fellow inside 'backer Nick Henrich was. Henrich had 14 tackles.

Nebraska gave up 349 total yards to the Boilers – good enough to win. But an offense that threw four interceptions, two in the fourth quarter, spoiled the day.

The good news is that those two Nebraska linebackers are back for another season. While neither is particularly big – Reimer is 6-foot-1, 225, and Henrich 6-3, 225 – both are heat-seeking missiles when it comes to tracking the ball in the chaos of a play – a la David – and both know what to do when they find it.

The duo led the team in tackles in 2021, Reimer, now a junior, with 108, and Henrich, a sophomore, with 99. While that is how the defense is designed, both are primed for another big year behind what is shaping up to be a defensive front that will preoccupy offensive lines and enable the inside linebackers to make stops.

Behind the two returning starters is senior Chris Kolarevic (6-1, 230) who arrived last year through the portal from Northern Iowa. In his first year as a Husker, he brought a hard-nosed demeanor and recorded 27 stops while playing in every game. Kolarevic's destiny might be at nickel. Also in the mix is blossoming sophomore Garrett Snodgrass (6-3, 225), who began to see time as 2021 moved along, and senior Eteva Mauga-Clements (6-1, 220), who was singled out by some portal newcomers as the hardest hitter on the defensive side in the spring.

It will probably take time for a promising group of scholarship freshmen and redshirt freshmen to contribute, but on paper the group looks good and comes with solid credentials. They include Mikai Gbayero (6-2, 220), Seth Malcom (6-4, 210), Randolph Kpai (6-2, 210) and Ernest Hausmann (6-3, 220).

The outlook at outside linebacker is a bit more dubious. There is talent, starting with fiery junior Garrett Nelson (6-3, 245), who was fourth on the team in tackles last season with 57, and veteran Caleb Tannor (6-3, 225), who compiled 33 stops a year ago but needs to be more productive as a senior.

Nelson appeared to have made great strides in the spring game. He was notice-

ably bigger and faster and appeared all but unblockable in the scrimmage, getting to the quarterback at will. It was a good sign for what Nebraska could unleash when Nelson moves down to the line of scrimmage in four-man fronts with newcomer Ochaun Mathis lining up at the opposite end spot. Look for Nebraska's sack numbers to increase in 2022.

More good news from the spring game was the emergence of redshirt freshman Jimari Butler (6-5, 245), who showed good speed and strength off the edge. Look for Butler to make some waves in 2022.

Blaise Gunnerson (6-6, 255) is also an up-and-coming redshirt freshman who will be heard from in 2022 after being slowed by injuries since high school.

Losing Pheldarius Payne (19 stops in 2021) to Virginia Tech through the portal did not help the depth situation, and coach Scott Frost knows it.

"We are really thin at that position right now," he said after the spring game. "We do not have bodies.

"That being said, I have seen improvement from Garrett (Nelson) and improvement from Caleb (Tannor) and Jimari (Butler) and Blaise (Gunnerson). Those guys have really taken a giant leap forward."

INSIDE LINEBACKERS

Chris Kolarevic, 6-1, 230, senior
Eteva Mauga-Clements, 6-1, 220, senior
Jake Archer, 6-1, 215, junior
Luke Reimer, 6-1, 225, junior
Nick Henrich, 6-3, 225, sophomore
Garrett Snodgrass, 6-3, 225, sophomore
Grant Tagge, 6-1, 205, sophomore
Grant Buda, 6-0, 205, redshirt freshman
Mikai Gbayer, 6-2, 220, redshirt freshman
Braden Klover, 6-2, 230, redshirt freshman
Randolph Kpai, 6-2, 210, redshirt freshman
Seth Malcom, 6-4, 210, redshirt freshman
Ernest Hausmann, 6-3, 220, freshman

OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS

Caleb Tannor, 6-3, 225, senior
Garrett Nelson, 6-3, 245, junior
Simon Otte, 6-2, 205, junior
Ryan Schommer, 6-5, 260, junior
John Bullock, 6-0, 215, sophomore
Jimari Butler, 6-5, 245, redshirt freshman
Blaise Gunnerson, 6-6, 255, redshirt freshman
Jake Appleget, 6-4, 210, freshman

IMPACT NEWCOMER

He's not really a newcomer, but to many fans Blaise Gunnerson may as well be. He won't be incognito much longer. While the outside linebacker position is thin, it is reasonably strong at the top, and that's where Gunnerson is headed after being hindered by nagging injuries his first two seasons in Lincoln.

If nothing else, Gunnerson passes the eye test. At 6-6 and a tight 255 pounds, his length and stature will get the attention of offensive tackles when he moves down to the end spot in four-man fronts. He's also got good speed. The key is getting healthy and staying that way. Once he does, the sky's the limit for Gunnerson.



JIMMY RASH/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Outside linebacker Garrett Nelson rushes the passer against Purdue. He lead the Huskers with 11.5 tackles for loss in 2021.



Outside linebacker Caleb Tannor celebrates a stop against Michigan in their 2021 game in Lincoln.

REGGIE RYDER/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Cornerbacks

By Scottie Spinazola



REGGIE RYDER/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Quinton Newsome is the front-runner to start at one corner spot. He broke up four passes in 2021.

The Blackshirts were the 37th best team nationally in passing efficiency defense in 2021. Six Big Ten teams ranked ahead of NU. Can Nebraska's pass defense take the next step in 2022?

If the cornerbacks have anything to say about it – and they do – it's possible.

One corner spot seems in good hands with returning starter Quinton Newsome. Long and lean (6-foot-1, 185 pounds), Newsome, now a junior, started all 12 games a year ago and recorded 57 tackles, two for loss, one sack and four pass breakups.

By one account, Newsome continued to progress through spring drills.

"He has had a really good spring and we are going to have to count on him," coach Scott Frost said in April. "He has kind of been the No. 2 guy for us for a couple years here and he needs to step up."

The battle to fill the spot left by last year's top corner, Cam Taylor-Britt, now with the Cincinnati Bengals, could be fierce – just the way defensive backs coach Travis Fisher likes it.

Some of the candidates:

- Braxton Clark, a junior, is even longer and leaner than Newsome at 6-4, 200. Clark played in every game last season collecting five tackles and two pass breakups.

- Tommi Hill, a 6-0, 190-pound portal transfer from Arizona State. The sophomore played in 11 games for the Sun Devils as a freshman recording nine tackles and was a four-star recruit out of high school. In the spring, he apparently enjoyed lining up against some of Nebraska's other newcomers, such as speedster Trey Palmer, who comes from LSU. To hear Hill tell it, it was

a dog fight. “A dog against a dog, always,” Hill said. “Every receiver that I line up against is going to get the best out of me.”

- Omar Brown, a 6-1, 200-pound portal transfer from Northern Iowa. The junior played in 29 games for the Panthers in three years and racked up 140 tackles, 13 pass breakups and eight interceptions. He was named FCS Freshman of the Year his first season out of high school.

“He’s a ball player, he practices hard but he loves to compete,” said Jeremiah Johnson, the former UNI defensive coordinator who currently coordinates the defense at Kent State. “It doesn’t matter who is across from him, Omar thinks he is better than him, and in a lot of cases he is.”

- Tyreke Johnson, a 6-1, 190-pound junior, who arrived at Nebraska in 2021 through the portal after two years at Ohio State. Johnson played in two games his first year as a Husker, but the former five-star has ability.

- Tamon Lynam, a 6-2, 180-pound redshirt freshman, is quietly waiting in the wings after playing every game on special teams as a true freshman and playing in two games last season at corner. He’s another long corner. Notice a trend?

- Jaeden Gould, a 6-2, 190-pound four-star recruit. Gould was named New Jersey High School Player of the Year for 2021 by MaxPreps.

Out of that group, one starter will be named and at least a couple others will see time rotating in. All will be considered for kick and punt teams, which need to make a dramatic upturn in 2022.

CORNERBACKS

Omar Brown, 6-1, 200, junior
Braxton Clark, 6-4, 200, junior
Tyreke Johnson, 6-1, 190, junior
Quinton Newsome, 6-1, 185, junior
Phalen Sanford, 5-11, 200, junior
Tommi Hill, 6-0, 190, sophomore
Tamon Lynam, 6-2, 180, redshirt freshman
Jaeden Gould, 6-2, 190, freshman
Malcolm Hartzog, 5-10, 175, freshman
Cooper Hausmann, 5-11, 185, freshman

IMPACT NEWCOMERS

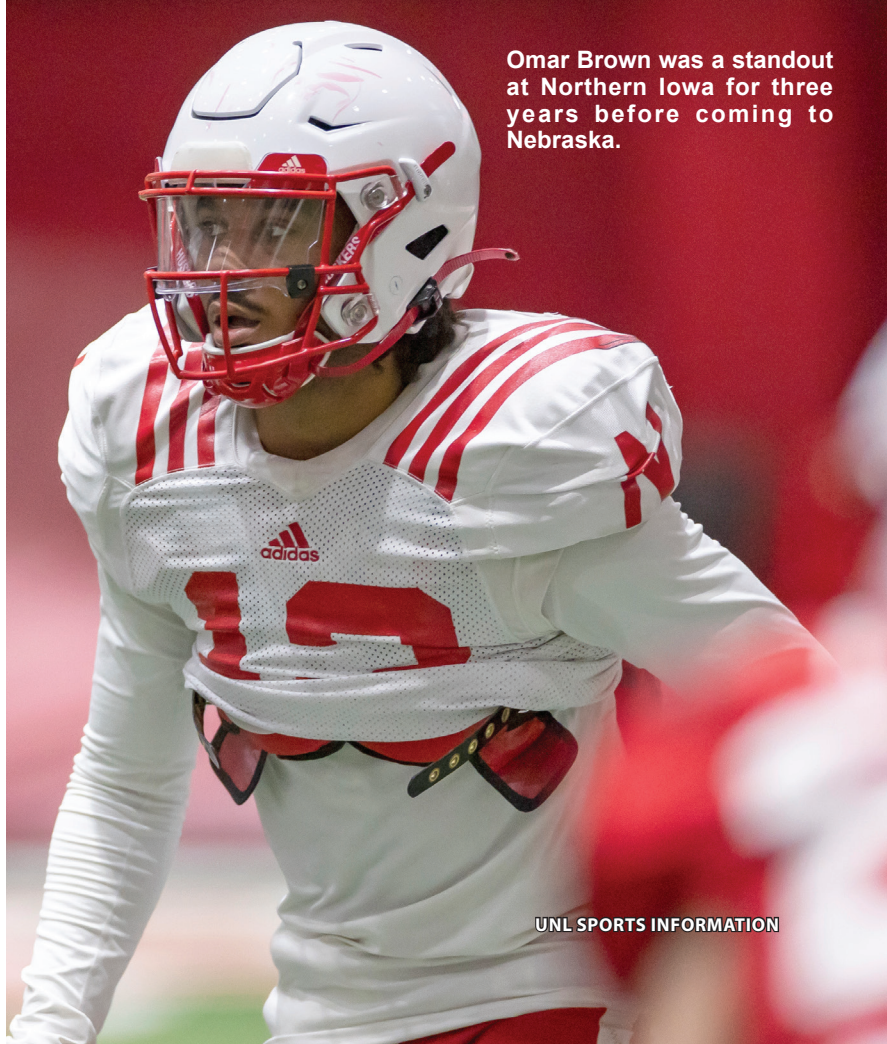
Portal transfers Tommi Hill and Omar Brown likely will have an immediate impact. Both are battle-tested and confident. Hill is used to playing at a high level and he doesn’t lack for talent. Even though Brown’s accolades came at the FCS level, the guy can play and is expected to adjust quickly to the Big Ten. He is used to meeting challenges.

Freshman Jaeden Gould was a nice get for the Huskers out of high school. Big and strong, the youngster could eventually grow into a nickel or safety. It’s possible he’ll play them all by the time he leaves Nebraska, but he needs to stay healthy.



Tyreke Johnson appeared in two games last year after transferring from Ohio State.

JIMMY RASH/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED



Omar Brown was a standout at Northern Iowa for three years before coming to Nebraska.

UNL SPORTS INFORMATION



Marques Buford is expected to compete for a starting spot at safety.

JIMMY RASH/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Safeties

By Clark Grell

Experience was the Blackshirts' greatest asset in 2021, especially in the secondary where Deontai Williams and Marquel Dismuke combined for 49 career starts at safety. As expected, Williams and Dismuke were steady during their super senior seasons. They were coaches on the field, defensive coordinator Erik Chinander said many times.

Now they have moved on, and defensive backs coach Travis Fisher will need to identify new starters at both spots, as well as nickelback, where the Huskers must replace All-Big Ten selection JoJo Domann.

Yes, the Huskers will be leaner on experience, but Fisher has a room full of players with potential, and some of them already have seen meaningful snaps.

Fourth-year sophomore Myles Farmer will likely start at safety after playing in all 12 games last year. The 6-foot-1, 200-pounder started the final four contests of the season after Williams went down with an injury. Farmer made 30 tackles, including a career-high seven against No. 6 Ohio State – his second start of the season.

Coach Scott Frost said Farmer will need to transition from following to leading in 2022, so clearly the Huskers are counting on him to take on a bigger role.

Sophomore Marques Buford Jr. and junior college transfer DeShon Singleton are expected to compete for a starting spot, likely opposite Farmer. Nebraska also bolstered its safety depth in May with the addition of Alabama transfer Kaine Williams.

Buford will look to build off of a big spring. At 5-11, 190, he was one of two true freshmen to see the field last year, primarily on special teams. He saw time in the secondary against Fordham and Buffalo before making his rise in spring ball.

"He's a dog, man," Fisher said in the spring. "He's not scared of anything. He shows up every day."

Fisher referred to Buford, who also saw practice reps at cornerback, as "my hidden gem."

If Buford was to move to corner, that would leave Singleton, Williams, Noa Pola-Gates, Koby Bretz and Jaeden Gould (listed as a corner, but played safety in high school) to battle for the other spot.

Pola-Gates has seen limited playing time, but he's entering his fourth year in the program, and he has a great opportunity to plant himself on the two-deep.

The 6-foot, 180-pounder was a four-star recruit. His first season (2019) was cut short by injury after two games, and he played primarily on special teams in 2020 and 2021.

Williams was a late addition to the team. After playing in one game for Alabama last year, the 6-2, 205-pounder entered the transfer portal in April before picking the Huskers over Kansas and Indiana.

At the very least, Williams will add depth to a position that needs it.

Who replaces Domann, a hybrid linebacker/safety, who posted 72 tackles, two forced fumbles and two interceptions in 10 games?

Sophomore and Lincoln Southeast graduate Isaac Gifford (6-1, 205), recruited as a safety, will have a chance to step in after filling in for an injured Domann in the final two games of last season. If Fisher wanted a bigger body roaming at nickel, he could turn to Chris Kolarevic (6-1, 230), who worked at nickel in the spring after playing in a backup

role at linebacker in 2021. Though he has been slowed by ailments, including missing most of last season because of blood clots, fourth-year sophomore Javin Wright (6-4, 210) is another player Husker coaches are excited about using in a hybrid role.

There is promise and talent. Now it's up to Fisher and Chinander to groom the pieces.

"It's always a challenge when you lose a lot of guys who played a lot of football, and then you get some guys in and the first thing you say is 'inexperienced,'" Fisher said in the spring. "That's been a challenge for me. You get some guys who are inexperienced and get them on the field, and get them experience really fast. You get them as many game-speed reps in practice as possible and let them go out and see what they've got."

SAFETIES/NICKELBACKS

Chris Kolarevic, 6-1, 230, senior
Darius Moore, 6-1, 185, senior
Marques Buford Jr., 5-11, 190, sophomore
Myles Farmer, 6-1, 200, sophomore
Isaac Gifford, 6-1, 205, sophomore
Javier Morton, 6-2, 185, sophomore
Noa Pola-Gates, 6-0, 180, sophomore
DeShon Singleton, 6-3, 205, sophomore
Kaine Williams, 6-2, 205, sophomore
Javin Wright, 6-4, 210, sophomore
Michael Booker III, 6-1, 195, redshirt freshman
Derek Branch, 5-11, 175, redshirt freshman
Koby Bretz, 6-2, 195, redshirt freshman
Blake Closman, 5-10, 190, redshirt freshman
Ashton Hausmann, 5-11, 215, redshirt freshman
Christian Lilienkamp, 6-0, 170, redshirt freshman
Jalil Martin, 6-3, 190, freshman
Blake Miller, 6-1, 195, freshman
Gage Stenger, 6-2, 200, freshman

IMPACT NEWCOMER

Coach Scott Frost and defensive backs coach Travis Fisher have snagged strong junior college safety talent before (see Deontai Williams), and they're hoping they have another in DeShon Singleton.

The Amite, Louisiana, native was one of eight DB transfers to join the Huskers in the offseason, and he clearly benefited from arriving early to take part in winter conditioning and spring ball.

Singleton, who began his collegiate career at Hutchinson (Kansas) Community College, received praise from Fisher ahead of the spring game.

"(He) offers us a lot in the pass game as well as the run game, being a big safety being able to tackle," Fisher said. "He can play a lot of corner, too, so he can cover all across the field."

Singleton has three years of eligibility remaining, plus a redshirt season. In his only season at Hutchinson, he recorded 22 tackles and two interceptions in nine games. At 6-3 and 205 pounds, he gives the Huskers a much-needed big-bodied defender to battle against the physical Big Ten teams.

Husker safety Myles Farmer intercepts a pass against Ohio State. Farmer is a likely starter.



REGGIE RYDER/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

Special Teams

By Clark Grell

Nebraska's special teams in 2021—how do we put this nicely?—struggled. Mightily.

A misplayed punt return began a snowball effect in the season-opener at Illinois. A punt returned for a touchdown gave Michigan State life, and later an overtime win. Wisconsin returned the opening kickoff for a score. Oklahoma had a momentum-changing block and return on a Husker PAT attempt. The woes carried into the season finale against Iowa when NU unraveled after having a punt blocked.

The Huskers didn't have a reliable place-kicker (8-of-16 on field goals), and the punting units left much to be desired.

Nebraska finished ranked 128th out of 130 NCAA Division I teams in ESPN's special teams efficiency index. Only Mississippi and Temple were worse.

It was clear that Nebraska's special teams needed a major overhaul, and coach Scott Frost took the first step by hiring a full-time special teams coordinator for the first time during his tenure in Lincoln.

A year after serving as a defensive analyst for Frost, Bill Busch was tasked to improve the third phase. For Busch, this marks his third coaching stint with the Huskers. The Pender native was a graduate assistant under Tom Osborne from 1990-93, and he later joined Bill Callahan in 2005 as special teams coordinator and safeties coach.

"It's something that I've done in the past and I've been very fortunate to have those opportunities," Busch said on "Sports Nightly" earlier this year. "It's kind of a job that everyone likes to take a giant step back away from, like, 'Ah, I really don't want to do that,' type of thing. There's a lot of things that go with it."

Among Busch's first tasks is shoring up the kicking and punting units. Nebraska dipped into the transfer portal for punter Brian Buschini and kicker Timmy Bleekrode.

Buschini was named the FCS punter of the year after averaging 46 yards per boot last season at Montana.

Bleekrode arrived in Lincoln in May after kicking and punting at FCS Furman. The Atlanta native was 15-of-18 on field-goal attempts last season, including a career-best 51-yarder against Tennessee Tech. He also connected on 30-of-32 PAT attempts, and averaged 42.2 yards on 60 punts.

Bleekrode played three seasons at Furman and will have three years of eligibility at NU.

He'll likely be pushed for playing time by junior Chase Contreras, who took over for Connor Culp toward the end of last season and hit on all 11 of his PAT attempts while making 2-of-4 field goals with a long of 39.

Nebraska found other ways to bolster special teams

through the transfer portal.

Brady Weas, who spent his first three seasons at FCS Georgetown, will compete for the starting nod at long snapper. The 6-foot-2, 260-pound senior played in 31 games with the Hoyas.

Lincoln Southwest graduate Cameron Pieper also figures to be in the mix at long snapper. The 6-3, 260-pound junior handled snapping duties on field goals and PATs in nine games, before taking on all special team snaps over the final two games of last season.

Busch appears to have options in the return game. Transfers Tommi Hill (Arizona State) and Trey Palmer (LSU) could get looks, as well as Oliver Martin and Alante Brown.

Gretna graduate Brendan Franke returns after handling kickoff duties in 2021. Bleekrode also could get a long look for kickoffs.

SPECIALISTS

Brady Weas, 6-2, 260, long snapper, senior
Chase Contreras, 6-1, 180, kicker, junior
Cade Mueller, 6-0, 220, long snapper, junior
Cameron Pieper, 6-3, 260, long snapper, junior
Timmy Bleekrode, 5-8, 190, kicker, sophomore
Brian Buschini, 6-0, 215, punter, sophomore
Grant Detlefsen, 6-3, 210, punter, sophomore
Brendan Franke, 6-3, 215, kicker, sophomore
Gabe Heins, 6-0, 215, kicker, sophomore
Jacob Hohl, 6-2, 220, punter, sophomore
Camden Witucki, 6-2, 225, long snapper, redshirt freshman
Charlie Weinrich, 5-11, 185, kicker, freshman

IMPACT NEWCOMER

Nebraska fans gave Brian Buschini a warm welcome during the spring game. A 63-yard boomer on his first punt may have had something to do with that. Outside a 14-yard shank, Buschini had a strong spring game and offered a glimpse of what he can bring to Saturdays in the fall.

Offered a scholarship by special teams coordinator Bill Busch, Buschini told reporters in the spring that he was looking for a big-time opportunity after spending three seasons at Montana.

He was a key cog for the Grizzlies.

Of his 69 punts in 2021, 30 were pinned inside the 20-yard line, and he flipped the field several times, with 28 punts going 50 yards or more.

The Helena, Montana, native will look to improve a unit that ranked 120th in net punting last year. His net average of 43.0 last season would have ranked 13th at the FBS level.

"He's got a very good, even demeanor, which you have to have," Busch told reporters in the spring. "Not every punt is perfect (and) not every kick is perfect, so you've got to be able to have a short memory, but also a good demeanor with how you handle things. He's done a great job with that so far."

Buschini, who also handled kickoffs at Montana, has three years of eligibility remaining.

Brian Buschini was named the top punter at the FCS level last year at Montana.





NORTHWESTERN



HEAD COACH PAT FITZGERALD

16TH YEAR AS HEAD COACH

RECORD: 106-81

WHEN

AUG. 27

WHERE

DUBLIN, IRELAND

2021 RECORD

3-9, 1-8 BIG TEN

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST

9-6

LAST MEETING

NEBRASKA WON 56-7 (OCT. 2, 2021)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

AUG. 27 NEBRASKA (DUBLIN, IRELAND)
SEPT. 10 DUKE
SEPT. 17 SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
SEPT. 24 MIAMI (OH)
OCT. 1 AT PENN STATE
OCT. 8 WISCONSIN
OCT. 22 AT MARYLAND
OCT. 29 AT IOWA
NOV. 5 OHIO STATE
NOV. 12 AT MINNESOTA
NOV. 19 AT PURDUE
NOV. 26 ILLINOIS



Junior running back Evan Hull will be the Wildcats' main threat on the ground in 2022.

LAST YEAR

Until last season, Pat Fitzgerald was the only Northwestern coach to have a career record above .500 in Big Ten games. That is no longer the case after the Wildcats followed up their 2020 West Division title by finishing 1-8 against conference opponents.

Included in those eight losses was an embarrassing 56-7 drubbing by Nebraska on Oct. 2. That NU victory over the other NU was the Cornhuskers' third and final victory of the season and their only one in conference play.

The victory also gave Nebraska the tiebreaker to finish the season in sixth place in the West Division. Northwestern avoided a winless conference season with a win over Rutgers. Nebraska's lopsided victory over the Wildcats was a rare blowout between the two teams. Eight of the previous 10 games between the NUs had been decided by eight points or less.

The 49-point loss was the second-worst for Fitzgerald in his 16 seasons in Evanston, and that margin of victory is the largest by the Huskers against a conference opponent since joining the Big Ten in 2011.

Nebraska opened the games with a 70-yard touchdown pass from Adrian Martinez to Samori Toure on the first play from scrimmage and eventually built a halftime lead of 35-7. Any hopes Northwestern harbored for a second-half comeback were doused by two big third-quarter plays – an 83-yard TD run by Xavier Betts and another Martinez-to-Toure TD pass, this one for 38 yards.

The Blackshirts also had an impressive day slowing the Wildcats' offense. After a 216-yard performance the week before against Ohio, running back Evan Hull gained just 31 yards on seven carries.

Dublin, Ireland
8,096 Miles

THE LONG
ROAD TO *Indianapolis*



JOHN KONSTANTARAS/NORTHWESTERN ATHLETICS

Offensive lineman Peter Skoronski, at 6-4 and 295 pounds, was a first-team All-Big Ten pick as a sophomore.

WILDCAT STRENGTHS

The offensive line returns four starters led by first-team All-Big Ten left tackle Peter Skoronski. The bad news is that the Wildcats offense averaged just 144 yards per game rushing. Three starters returning in the secondary will be a plus for the defense.

WILDCAT WEAKNESSES

The defense is young, and that could be a problem early in the season. Northwestern gave up 6.15 yards per play, the first time in a decade it had surrendered more than five yards per snap. Little pressure was generated to slow down opposing passing games (see the Nebraska rout), and the Wildcats were last against the run.

By Steve Beideck



NORTHWESTERN

AUG. 27, 2022
(DUBLIN, IRELAND)

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

MICHIGAN STATE	L 21-38
INDIANA STATE	W 24-6
DUKE	L 23-30
OHIO	W 35-6
NEBRASKA	L 7-56
RUTGERS	W 21-7
MICHIGAN	L 7-33
MINNESOTA	L 14-41
IOWA	L 12-17
WISCONSIN	L 7-35
PURDUE	L 14-32
ILLINOIS	L 14-47

Steve BEIDECK's STADIUM REVIEW



CAPACITY: 48,000

DUBLIN, IRELAND

AVIVA STADIUM

Opened in 2010, Aviva is home to both the Irish rugby national team and Republic of Ireland soccer team, as well as big-name concerts. One collegiate football game has been played there in 2016 when Georgia Tech defeated Boston College. Notre Dame and Navy are scheduled to play in the stadium in 2023.

Nebraska has played one international game, defeating Kansas State 38-24 in Tokyo in 1992. Northwestern has never played outside the United States.



JOHN KONSTANTARAS / NORTHWESTERN ATHLETICS

Senior defensive end Adetomiwa Adebawore was in on seven tackles against Nebraska last season.

RETURNING STARTERS

Seven offense – Five defensive

ALL-BIG TEN RETURNEES

Peter Skoronski, 6-4, 295, offensive tackle, junior
(second team coaches, first team media)

Evan Hull, 5-11, 210, running back, junior (honorable mention)

Adetomiwa Adebawore, 6-2, 265, defensive end, senior
(honorable mention)

A.J. Hampton, 5-11, 180, cornerback, senior (honorable mention)

Cameron Mitchell, 6-0, 195, cornerback, junior (honorable mention)

DID YOU KNOW?

Northwestern's defense had gone 21 years without allowing an opponent to rack up 600 or more yards in a game. That last happened to the Wildcats against Arizona State in 2005.

THE LONG ROAD TO

Indianapolis

PORTAL PLAYERS

A pair of defensive tackles in Ryan Johnson (Stanford) and Taisan Holmes (Massachusetts) are going to be asked to shore up the porous defensive line that was the Big Ten's worst against the run a year ago. Henrik Barndt of Indiana State also could provide some help here. Luke Akers arrives from UCLA to take over punting duties.

TOP NEWCOMER

Luke Akers, punter transfer from UCLA.

THEY SAID IT

"There's some times when you're like, all right, once we hit the fall, the road is (going to) start down either that path or this path. Sometimes you try to turn the dial, and it doesn't work. I'm the one responsible for that ... It drives you up the wall, but I think there's been a pretty high level of consistency in my approach." – **Coach Pat Fitzgerald in the April 24 Daily Northwestern**



NORTHWESTERN ATHLETICS

Senior defensive back A.J. Hampton, No. 11, made six tackles against Nebraska in 2021.

BIG FOOD TOUR

Mike'I SEVERE's

BEST PLACE TO EAT

In the Big Ten, the football is good and so is the food.

Those who follow the Huskers on the road know there are good food cities on Nebraska's schedule. After all, depending on the year, the Huskers can be in the Chicago and New York metros. This year is a little different since the Huskers start out across the pond in Ireland – surely a great trip with good food, although it's not a trip I've made as part of the Nebraska football media contingent. So, if you are reading this, you are on your own when it comes to food near Aviva Stadium in Dublin. I'm sure it will be a trip to remember, full of great food – trust me, it won't be green beer and corned beef – and hopefully a Husker win over Northwestern. For eating recommendations for other Husker road trips, I'm your man. Read on to see my recommendations packaged with each road game on the schedule ...

NORTH DAKOTA



HEAD COACH BUBBA SCHWEIGERT
NINTH YEAR AS HEAD COACH
RECORD: 74-40

WHEN
SEPT. 3

WHERE
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

2021 RECORD
5-6, 3-5 MISSOURI VALLEY

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST
1-0

LAST MEETING
NEBRASKA WON 33-0 (SEPT. 23, 1961)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 3 AT NEBRASKA
SEPT. 10 NORTHERN IOWA
SEPT. 17 AT NORTHERN ARIZONA
SEPT. 24 AT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
OCT. 1 MISSOURI STATE
OCT. 8 AT YOUNGSTOWN STATE
OCT. 22 SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
OCT. 29 ABILENE CHRISTIAN
NOV. 5 AT INDIANA STATE
NOV. 12 SOUTH DAKOTA
NOV. 19 AT NORTH DAKOTA STATE



Junior quarterback Tommy Schuster started all 11 games in 2021, completing 65.1% of his passes while throwing for 2,493 yards.

LAST YEAR

Following lopsided scores in three nonconference games, eight of North Dakota's nine Missouri Valley Conference scrums were decided by seven or fewer points. Losses to North Dakota State (16-10), South Dakota (20-13) and Southern Illinois (31-28) were followed by UND's biggest win in conference play, a 34-10 decision over Western Illinois.

Then it was back to nail-biters in the final four games, which the Fighting Hawks split 2-2 to finish the season with a 5-6 overall record. Missouri State edged North Dakota 32-28 before the Fighting Hawks collected back-to-back wins for the only time in 2021 – a 24-21 victory over Youngstown State and a 14-7 win over Illinois State. South Dakota State ended UND's season with a 24-21 loss.

RETURNING STARTERS

Eight offensive – Four defensive – Punter

ALL-MISSOURI VALLEY CONFERENCE RETURNEE

Devon Krzanowski, 6-2, 235, linebacker, senior
(honorable mention)

DID YOU KNOW?

From 1907-1918, and again from 1921-1927, Nebraska was a member of the Missouri Valley Conference. In those 19 seasons, the Huskers won eight conference championships and shared the league title three other times.

THE LONG ROAD TO

Indianapolis

FIGHTING HAWK STRENGTHS

The North Dakota offense is expected to be potent again this season with starting quarterback Tommy Schuster ready for his sophomore campaign. The 6-0, 195-pounder got his collegiate career off

to a quick start in the Fighting Hawks' 35-14 season-opening victory at Idaho State. Schuster completed 14 of his 18 passes for 183 yards and one touchdown. Six days later Schuster completed 29-of-43 throws in a 48-24 loss to Utah State for a career-

high 345 yards. For the season Schuster finished with a 65.1% completion rate to go with 13 touchdowns and seven interceptions. He was only sacked eight times, but five of those came in the final two games.



Isaiah Smith ran for 356 yard on 52 carries as a redshirt freshman.

TOP NEWCOMER

Defensive lineman Luke Schweigert was the 2021 North Dakota Gatorade Player of the Year. The Bismarck Century High School graduate is expected to play nose guard for the Fighting Hawks. At Century, Schweigert was a four-year starter on offense and a three-year defensive starter. In 2021 Schweigert finished with 60 total tackles (30 unassisted) and three sacks while helping lead the Patriots to the Class AAA state championship. Schweigert is not related to Fighting Hawks head coach Bubba Schweigert.

THEY SAID IT

"It remains a humbling experience to be part of a special event with a rich tradition and I am grateful for the opportunity to reprise this role. We all have an obligation to hold each other accountable for representing the flagship university and UND football in a first-class manner at all times." – North Dakota coach Bubba Schweigert after signing a contract extension through the 2025 season

FIGHTING HAWK WEAKNESSES

The defense needs to be rebuilt. Devon Krzanowski, the honorable mention all-conference linebacker, is back after leading the team with 68 tackles. The next seven behind him statistically all have departed, either because of graduation or transfer. With Nebraska playing one game prior to the Fighting Hawks, this game will be UND's season-opener. The inexperienced defense will at least have some film to study before traveling to Lincoln.

PORTAL PLAYER

Aaron Cooper is a linebacker who should have an immediate impact after moving to UND following four seasons at Cal Poly, where he started every game for the past three seasons. In 2021 the Lancaster, California, native had 39 total tackles, including 29 solo stops and 5.5 tackles for loss. Some of his bigger games were against San Diego (10 solo tackles, forced fumble), two sacks and three TFLs against Montana State and six tackles in the season finale against Northern Arizona.

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

Idaho State.....	W 35-14
Utah State	L 24-48
Drake	W 38-0
North Dakota State	L 10-16
South Dakota.....	L 13-20
Southern Illinois.....	L 28-31
Western Illinois	W 34-10
Missouri State	L 28-32
Youngstown State	W 24-21
Illinois State	W 14-7
South Dakota State.....	L 21-24

By Steve Beideck

GEORGIA SOUTHERN



HEAD COACH CLAY HELTON
FIRST YEAR AS HEAD COACH
RECORD: 0-0

WHEN
SEPT. 10

WHERE
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

2021 RECORD
3-9, 2-6 SUN BELT

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 3 MORGAN STATE
SEPT. 10 AT NEBRASKA
SEPT. 17 AT UAB
SEPT. 24 BALL STATE
OCT. 1 AT COASTAL CAROLINA
OCT. 8 AT GEORGIA STATE
OCT. 15 JAMES MADISON
OCT. 22 AT OLD DOMINION
NOV. 5 SOUTH ALABAMA
NOV. 10 AT LOUISIANA
NOV. 19 MARSHALL
NOV. 26 APP STATE



Portal transfer Kyle Vantrease threw for 4,380 yards and completed 60.9% of his passes in three years at Buffalo.

LAST YEAR

After three consecutive seasons that produced 25 victories and ended with bowl-game appearances, Georgia Southern took a step backward in 2021. The Eagles finished 3-9 including a 2-6 mark in Sun Belt Conference games, a far cry from the bowl-game years that produced two wins: a 23-21 win over Eastern Michigan in the Camellia Bowl and a 38-3 romp over Louisiana Tech in the 2020 New Orleans Bowl.

The coach who led the Eagles to those bowl games, Chad Lunsford, was fired on Sept. 26 following a 1-3 start to the 2021 season. Less than a month later, former USC coach Clay Helton was hired to replace Lunsford. USC officials let Helton go after a 1-1 start last season. The Trojans were just 19-14 since 2018 after going a combined 21-6 the previous two seasons.

Before making the move to Division I in 2014, Georgia Southern won six Division I-AA (FCS) national championships, so there is a strong winning tradition in Statesboro that was interrupted. The Eagles' offense was stuck in neutral, and even at times in park, in 2021.

Traditionally a run-first program, the Eagles had limited success moving the ball in any fashion last season. The run game averaged less than 200 yards an outing (194.9) and departed quarterback Justin Tomlin completed just 51.7% of his passes (74-of-143) for 977 yards. Eagles QBs threw just five TD passes while getting picked off 12 times, including nine INTs thrown by Tomlin.

RETURNING STARTERS

Eight offensive – Five defensive – Kicker – Punter

ALL-SUN BELT CONFERENCE RETURNEES

Anthony Beck II, 6-4, 230, punter, senior (second team)
Khalil Crowder, 6-1, 305, offensive line, senior (third team)
Justin Ellis, 6-2, 255, defensive end, senior (honorable mention)
Khaleb Hood, 5-10, 175, wide receiver, senior (honorable mention)
Anthony Wilson, 5-10, 200, defensive back, junior (third team)

DID YOU KNOW?

If Nebraska was meeting the Eagles on the baseball diamond, Georgia Southern would be the favored team. The Eagles were the No. 16 national seed in the 2022 NCAA baseball tournament and hosted a regional in Statesboro. Georgia Southern failed to advance to the Super Regional.

THE LONG ROAD TO

Indianapolis

EAGLE STRENGTHS

As the passing game gets rebuilt by coach Clay Helton and his offensive staff, the Eagles will rely on the ground game early for first downs and admission to the red zone. A pair of junior running backs who combined for more than 800 yards are back in the Eagle backfield. Gerald Green is a 5-foot-9, 195-pound speedster from Columbus, Georgia, who gained 423 yards on 25 carries in 10 games for an average of 5.6 yards per carry. Jalen White played in all 12 games and rushed for 383 yards on 68 carries which, like Green, means he averaged 5.6 yards per carry. White scored four TDs; Green had five.

EAGLE WEAKNESSES

The defensive line lost its best returning player when now-sophomore Eldrick Robinson II transferred to Wake Forest. Robinson started the final nine games for the Eagles and finished the season with 5.5 tackles for loss, two interceptions, four quarterback hurries and two pass breakups. The loss of nose tackle C.J. Wright to graduation (he signed a free agent contract with Jacksonville in the spring) leaves a 285-pound hole in the middle of the Eagle line. More production will be expected out of senior Parker Devine, who is 20 pounds lighter than Wright but has good quickness and a fair amount of experience. Graduate player Justin Ellis also returns but will need to collect more than the five sacks he recorded last year.



AJ HENDERSON / GEORGIA SOUTHERN ATHLETICS (2)

Redshirt junior Gerald Green gained 423 yards on 25 carries in 10 games.

PORTAL PLAYER

Former Buffalo quarterback Kyle Vantrease is a graduate transfer who Helton and his staff hope can give the Eagles an upgrade. Expect an expanded passing game with Vantrease producing a lot more than 977 passing yards, especially with an established No. 1 receiver in Khaleb Hood, who had 35 catches for 442 yards last sea-

son. In Vantrease's last three seasons as a starter for the Bulls, the 6-2, 220-pounder from Stow, Ohio, racked up 4,380 yards by completing 60.9% of his passes (358-of-588) with 23 touchdowns and 11 interceptions. Vantrease also is familiar with Memorial Stadium after piloting the Bulls last season. He was 27-of-50 for 224 yards with one interception in Buffalo's 28-3 loss to Nebraska.

TOP NEWCOMER

While Kyle Vantrease is the experienced instant fix the Eagles need at quarterback, the long-term solution appears to be freshman Zak Rozsman. The 6-3, 200-pound three-star prospect threw for 6,000 yards and 50 touchdowns in 37 career starts for Walton High School in Marietta, Georgia. He comes to Statesboro as the nation's No. 32-ranked pocket passing QB.

THEY SAID IT

"I'm so excited to be a part of the tradition of excellence that is Georgia Southern University. We look forward, as a team, to showing you our grit, toughness, discipline and the GATA (Get After Their Asses) mentality that has produced championships right here in Statesboro." – **New Georgia Southern coach Clay Helton in his introductory video message**

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

Gardner-Webb	W 30-25
Florida Atlantic	L 6-38
Arkansas	L 10-45
Louisiana.....	L 20-28
Arkansas State	W 59-33
Troy.....	L 24-27
South Alabama	L 14-41
Georgia State	L 14-21
Coastal Carolina	L 8-28
Texas State	W 38-30
Brigham Young.....	L 17-34
App State	L 3-27

By Steve Beideck



OKLAHOMA



HEAD COACH BRENT VENABLES
FIRST YEAR AS HEAD COACH
RECORD: 0-0

WHEN
SEPT. 17

WHERE
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

2021 RECORD
10-2, 7-2 BIG 12

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST
38-46-3

LAST MEETING
OKLAHOMA WON 23-16 (SEPT. 18, 2021)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 3 UTEP
SEPT. 10 KENT STATE
SEPT. 17 AT NEBRASKA
SEPT. 24 KANSAS STATE
OCT. 1 AT TCU
OCT. 8 TEXAS (DALLAS)
OCT. 15 KANSAS
OCT. 27 AT IOWA STATE
NOV. 5 BAYLOR
NOV. 12 AT WEST VIRGINIA
NOV. 19 OKLAHOMA STATE
NOV. 26 AT TEXAS TECH



TY RUSSELL/OKLAHOMA ATHLETICS

Theo Wease missed most of 2021 due to an injury. In 2020 he had 530 receiving yards and four touchdown catches.

LAST YEAR

Few expected Nebraska to hang with the No. 3-ranked Sooners in the first meeting between the Big Red Rivals since the 2010 Big 12 championship game in Arlington, Texas. The Huskers were a three-touchdown underdog in Norman, Oklahoma, but a strong first-half performance found NU trailing just 7-3 at halftime. As was the case in other games in recent seasons, special teams gaffes by the Huskers – including a blocked PAT returned for two points and a missed 35-yard field goal – helped OU take a 23-9 lead early in the fourth quarter. Still, a 21-yard TD pass to Omar Manning from Adrian Martinez with 5:38 remaining in regulation got Nebraska within 23-16. The Sooners managed to control the ball and keep NU from a quality shot at a final TD to escape with the seven-point victory.

RETURNING STARTERS

Four offensive – Five defensive – Punter

ALL-BIG 12 RETURNEE

Michael Turk, 6-0, 228, punter, senior
(first team coaches and media)

DID YOU KNOW?

This game will be Oklahoma's first appearance at Memorial Stadium since the Huskers used a strong defensive performance in 2009 to defeat the Sooners 10-3.

THE LONG ROAD TO

Indianapolis

SOONER STRENGTHS

A deep wide receiver corps is ready to make portal quarterback Dillon Gabriel comfortable. Even with the loss of two All-Big 12 linemen to the NFL Draft, Ga-

briel is expected to have plenty of time to find the likes of Theo Wease (who tested the portal path), Drake Stoops and Marvin Mims running free on intermediate and deep routes. Mims could be the best receiver the Huskers face all season; he is

the No. 6-ranked returning wide receiver per 247Sports. Jalil Farooq will be in the mix as well. The sophomore caught three passes for 64 yards in OU's Alamo Bowl win over Oregon after catching just one ball in the regular season.

TOP NEWCOMER

The new Sooners staff wasted no time finding a replacement for departed quarterbacks Spencer Rattler and Caleb Williams. Once Williams announced he was leaving, former Central Florida QB Dillon Gabriel, who had already left UCF for UCLA, quickly relocated to Norman. In three seasons with the Knights, Gabriel threw 70 touchdown passes and had more than 7,000 passing yards his first two seasons in Orlando.

THEY SAID IT

"I felt the state of Oklahoma needed an appropriate goodbye to this former head coach whose sudden departure left many in shock, including a team of young, dedicated college players. I found the tiniest section of our most desolate of highways (3 inches of westbound Highway 325) to pay tribute to coach Riley's exit from Oklahoma football and the state." – **Oklahoma State Sen. Bill Coleman after Lincoln Riley left OU for USC last December**



Portal transfer Dillon Gabriel started 26 of 27 games in three seasons at UCF. The redshirt junior is the projected starter at quarterback for the Sooners.

SOONER WEAKNESSES

While not necessarily a weakness, having a new head coach inevitably brings change. Brent Venables, the long-time defensive coordinator at Clemson, brings a defensive mindset, and that's good because the Sooners lost four second-team All-Big 12 players from OU's defensive front seven. The new-look line and linebacker corps will need to get good, fast. DaShaun White will take on a leadership role as one of the more battle-tested defenders. He was third on the team in total tackles last season.

PORTAL PLAYERS

Coach Brent Venables and his staff had enough success in the portal to keep the Sooners in the conversation of top teams both in the conference and nationally. Offensive linemen McKade Mettauer (Cal-Berkeley) and Tyler Guyton (TCU), cornerbacks Trey Morrison (North Carolina) and C.J. Coldon (Wyoming) and former Missouri tight end Daniel Parker Jr. are among the top players expected to make immediate contributions.

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

Tulane.....	W 40-35
Western Carolina	W 76-0
Nebraska	W 23-16
West Virginia.....	W 16-13
Kansas State	W 37-31
Texas	W 55-48
TCU	W 52-31
Kansas	W 35-23
Texas Tech	W 52-21
Baylor.....	L 14-27
Iowa State	W 28-21
Oklahoma State.....	L 33-37
Oregon	W 47-32

By Steve Beideck



INDIANA



HEAD COACH TOM ALLEN
SEVENTH YEAR AS HEAD COACH
RECORD: 26-32

WHEN
OCT. 1

WHERE
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

2021 RECORD
2-10, 0-9 BIG TEN

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST
8-10-3

LAST MEETING
INDIANA WON 38-31 (OCT. 26, 2019)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 2 ILLINOIS
SEPT. 10 IDAHO
SEPT. 17 WESTERN KENTUCKY
SEPT. 24 AT CINCINNATI
OCT. 1 AT NEBRASKA
OCT. 8 MICHIGAN
OCT. 15 MARYLAND
OCT. 22 AT RUTGERS
NOV. 5 PENN STATE
NOV. 12 AT OHIO STATE
NOV. 19 AT MICHIGAN STATE
NOV. 26 PURDUE



GRACIE FARRALL/INDIANA ATHLETICS

Quarterback Connor Bazalak, a Missouri transfer, started 20 games in the SEC and threw for more than 5,000 yards.

LAST YEAR

After climbing into the Top 10 and playing in a New Year's bowl the previous season, the Hoosiers came crashing back to Earth in 2021. Included in eight straight losses down the stretch were six by 21 points or more.

It was a fall that few saw coming for an Indiana team that began the season ranked and full of optimism around the return of standout quarterback Michael Penix.

Penix played in just five games in 2021, injuring his shoulder and eventually transferring to Washington, and the Hoosiers went winless in the Big Ten for the first time since 2011.

RETURNING STARTERS

Four offensive – Five defensive

ALL-BIG TEN RETURNEE

Matthew Bedford, 6-6, 310, offensive lineman, senior
(honorable mention)

DID YOU KNOW?

Nebraska and Indiana have split a pair of Big Ten meetings, with each winning on the road. Indiana's 38-31 victory in 2019 was its first in Lincoln in 60 years.

THE LONG ROAD TO

Indianapolis

HOOSIER STRENGTHS

Pieces are in place to get the Hoosiers back on track offensively.

Junior quarterback Connor Bazalak, a Missouri transfer, has big-time experience, throwing for more than 5,000 yards in 20 starts in the SEC.

Bazalak also has weapons around him including junior tight end A.J. Barner. The 6-foot-6, 251-pound Barner is hoping to fill big shoes left by three-time All-Big Ten selection Peyton Hendershot, who finished his career with program records for catches (136) and yards (1,479) by a tight end.

Indiana coach Tom Allen thinks Barner could raise the bar even higher.

"A.J. Barner has a chance to be the best tight end we've ever had at Indiana," Allen said at an alumni event in May. "That's my prediction."

The return of explosive wide receiver D.J. Matthews Jr. should provide Bazalak another option in the passing game. Matthews Jr., a Florida State transfer, flashed big-play ability in his brief time a season ago.

Before a season-ending ACL injury in Week 4, he caught 13 passes (good for fourth on the team for the year) and popped an 81-yard punt return for a touchdown.

HOOSIER WEAKNESSES

The side of the ball most near and dear to Allen's heart was perhaps the biggest culprit in last season's dreadful finish.

Indiana's defense gave up 33.3 points per game a year ago, last in the Big Ten. The unit also had the fewest sacks and interceptions of any team in the conference.

The Hoosiers were particularly dreadful in the red zone, where teams scored on almost 91% of their trips (39 touchdowns and 11 field goals in 55 chances).

Coach Tom Allen will return to calling plays on that side of the ball, and should get a lift with cornerback Tiawan Mullen back in the fold.

The 5-10, 180-pound senior was a first-team All-American selection in 2020, but battled through a lower leg injury last season, making only four starts. A healthy Mullen gives IU a different dynamic on the outside. He's the younger brother of former Clemson and current Las Vegas Raiders corner Trayvon Mullen.

Add in safety Devon Matthews – the team's defensive player of the year in 2021 despite missing three games due to injuries – and the Hoosiers should have an improved defensive unit.

"Defensively we have some of our best players back," Allen said. "I'm excited about that."

TOP NEWCOMER

A hometown hitter highlighted the Hoosier recruiting class.

Linebacker Dasan McCullough out of Bloomington was the highest-ranked prospect that Indiana inked in the Class of 2022.

The 6-5, 223-pound McCullough was ranked as the No. 40 prospect overall – and fourth-ranked outside linebacker – nationally by ESPN. He's the younger brother of IU junior defensive back Deland McCullough II.



Receiver D.J. Matthews is a Florida State transfer with big-play ability.

PORTAL PLAYERS

Connor Bazalak came with the biggest bow. Ranked as the No. 10 quarterback nationally out of high school by ESPN, he started eight games as a freshman at Miz-zou.

But his potential backfield mate could give the Hoosier offense a punch from the portal as well.

Senior running back Shaun Shivers comes from Auburn, where he scored touchdowns in all four seasons with the Tigers.

A consensus four-star prospect out of high school, Shivers can scoot. In a season-opening win over Akron a year ago, the 5-7, 190-pounder scored on the ground and through the air. He had a career-high six catches against Texas A&M later in the season.

The pair will be vital for a program hit hard by the portal. The Daily Hoosier reported that 29 players have transferred from IU since the start of 2021 fall camp, tops in the nation.

THEY SAID IT

"We've got more Florida players in the Big Ten than anyone else, and that's going to continue." – Coach Tom Allen on his staff's focus on the Sunshine State. Indiana lists 14 players out of Florida on its roster, twice as many as Nebraska.

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

Iowa	L 6-34
Idaho.....	W 56-14
Cincinnati	L 24-38
Western Kentucky	W 33-31
Penn State.....	L 0-24
Michigan State	L 15-20
Ohio State	L 7-54
Maryland	L 35-38
Michigan	L 7-29
Rutgers.....	L 3-38
Minnesota	L 14-35
Purdue.....	L 7-44

By Nick Rubek

RUTGERS



HEAD COACH GREG SCHIANO
14TH YEAR AS HEAD COACH
RECORD: 76-81

WHEN
OCT. 7

WHERE
PISCATAWAY, NEW JERSEY

2021 RECORD
5-7, 2-7 BIG TEN

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST
5-0

LAST MEETING
NEBRASKA WON 28-21 (DEC. 18, 2020)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 3 AT BOSTON COLLEGE
SEPT. 10 WAGNER
SEPT. 17 AT TEMPLE
SEPT. 24 IOWA
OCT. 1 AT OHIO STATE
OCT. 7 NEBRASKA
OCT. 22 INDIANA
OCT. 29 AT MINNESOTA
NOV. 5 MICHIGAN
NOV. 12 AT MICHIGAN STATE
NOV. 19 PENN STATE
NOV. 26 AT MARYLAND



Touted sophomore quarterback Gavin Wimsatt looks ready to push for the starting job in 2022.

LAST YEAR

A bowl appearance – albeit in a fill-in role – gives Rutgers what it hopes is a springboard into this season.

The Scarlet Knights won their first three of the 2021 campaign and pushed eventual Big Ten champion Michigan into the fourth quarter of a 20-13 loss in Game 4.

From there, things went sideways.

In their other six league losses, Rutgers was outscored a combined 222-39.

Still, the Scarlet Knights played in the postseason for the first time since 2014, losing to Wake Forest 38-10 in the Gator Bowl after replacing Texas A&M in the bowl, which bowed out because of COVID-19 issues.

Despite the loss, coach Greg Schiano said the preparation and game were important steps in his team's development.

"I am encouraged the culture is growing and the foundation's been laid in our program," Schiano said after the bowl game. "We're building something here. I thought this week was a very big, good step in our building process."

Piscataway, New Jersey
2,592 Miles

**THE LONG
ROAD TO**

Indianapolis



BEN SOLOMON/RUTGERS ATHLETICS

Senior quarterback Noah Vedral, who played at Wahoo Neumann while in high school in Nebraska, started all 13 games for Rutgers in 2021.

SCARLET KNIGHT WEAKNESSES

A defense needing improvement is already looking for answers at linebacker.

Junior Mohamed Toure, who led the Scarlet Knights with $4\frac{1}{2}$ sacks in a hybrid defensive end/linebacker role last season, will miss the 2022 campaign after suffer-

ing an injury in the spring.

Toure had 52 tackles – including eight for loss – in 2021. He also led the team in sacks in 2020.

Incoming freshman linebacker Moses Walker, the highest-ranked Rutgers recruit in the 2022 class, will likely also miss the season after tearing his ACL in April.

Both were expected to be in the mix

SCARLET KNIGHT STRENGTHS

There's a quality mix at the quarterback position – with a returning senior familiar to Husker fans and a fresh face ready to start a new era in Piscataway.

Nebraska native Noah Vedral started all 13 games a year ago. The NU transfer – by way of Central Florida – has experience on his side, starting under center each of the last two seasons.

But sophomore Gavin Wimsatt has the hype factor.

Wimsatt reclassified and joined the Rutgers program early last season, making his collegiate debut one day after his 18th birthday and just a few weeks removed from playing in a high school game.

The Owensboro, Kentucky, native was an Elite 11 finalist and perhaps the best quarterback recruit to ever sign with the Scarlet Knights. He played in four games, including the bowl.

Wimsatt has reportedly added 15 pounds (up to 230) to his 6-foot-3 frame in the offseason, looking more physically ready in the Rutgers spring game.

Whose team is it heading into the fall? Don't be surprised if that answer is "both."

Vedral knows the offense and is a team captain. Wimsatt has all the physical tools to live up to the hype. A combination of the two – a la Michigan a year ago – could be the best option for the Scarlet Knights.

to help replace the loss of a core group of veteran linebackers who had nearly 100 career starts among them.

"The room is definitely thin," Coach Greg Schiano said. "But that's part of football. It's a violent game. It's the best game in the world, but it's a violent game and you have to be ready to just move on and sometimes you have to move positions."

By Nick Rubek



RUTGERS

OCT. 7, 2022
(PISCATAWAY, NEW JERSEY)

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

TEMPLE	W 61-14
SYRACUSE	W 17-7
DELAWARE	W 45-13
MICHIGAN	L 20-13
OHIO STATE	L 52-13
MICHIGAN STATE	L 31-13
NORTHWESTERN	L 21-7
ILLINOIS	W 20-14
WISCONSIN	L 52-3
INDIANA	W 38-3
PENN STATE	L 28-0
MARYLAND	L 40-16
WAKE FOREST	L 38-10

Steve BEIDECK's STADIUM REVIEW



SHI STADIUM

Nebraska at SHI Stadium: 2-0

SHI Stadium is pleasant. Some of the lower end zone seats aren't elevated enough for good views of the other end of the field, but the replay board above the south end zone is helpful.

The venue will be loaded with extras when Nebraska comes to play. Rutgers has made the Friday night affair on FS1 its Blackout Game. The team will be in all-black. Fans will be encouraged to wear special black T-shirts. Be ready for the cannons when Rutgers scores.

The venue's biggest drawback is getting there. Parking runs up to \$100 in lots in the vicinity. There is also a steep hill to climb that can be tricky when the weather is cold and icy.



Senior punter Adam Korsak was named first-team All-Big Ten by the coaches in 2021.

THEY SAID IT

"There is such a thing as state pride. Right now, it might not be in vogue to stay home and play for Rutgers. I'm going to make it in vogue. We are going to become the State of Rutgers. I'm sick and tired of seeing these other places where there's just craziness from the littlest kid to the oldest person in the place. It hasn't happened in New Jersey. It's going to happen." – Coach Greg Schiano on the state of New Jersey catching football fever

DID YOU KNOW?

Nebraska is 5-0 all time against Rutgers, including a 28-21 win in 2020 in the last meeting between the two. The teams first played 100 years earlier, a 28-0 Nebraska win at the Polo Grounds in New York.

THE LONG ROAD TO

Indianapolis

PORTAL PLAYERS

How does RU make up for the loss of All-Big Ten receiver Bo Melton, who was drafted by Seattle in the seventh round?

Taj Harris is a good start.

The 6-1, 180-pound Harris appeared in 37 games at Syracuse, finishing his four seasons there with 151 catches and 1,857 yards – good for fifth and eighth, respectively, in program history. He owns the school's freshman records for catches and yards.

Harris entered the portal after three games in 2021, and just days after racking up 122 yards on eight catches against – ironically enough – his new team.

Ranked in the Top 100 transfers

this offseason, he gives the Scarlet Knights an experienced weapon in the passing game.

Rutgers also plucked New Jersey native J.D. DiRenzo out of the portal from Sacred Heart. Like Harris, the 6-6, 315-pound DiRenzo was a four-star transfer according to 247Sports. A four-year starter and an FCS All-American a year ago, he'll be firmly in the mix at one of the two tackle spots.

TOP NEWCOMERS

Moses Walker and fellow freshman Jacob Allen, a 6-6, 295-pound offensive lineman out of Spotswood, New Jersey, are the headliners. Allen was a consensus four-star prospect and the No. 10 offensive lineman recruit in the country by 247Sports.

RETURNING STARTERS

Six offensive – Five defensive – Punter

ALL-BIG TEN RETURNEE

Adam Korsak, 6-2, 185, punter, senior (first team)



Vedral ran for two touchdowns last season while passing for seven.

Mike'l SEVERE's BEST PLACES TO EAT



FRITZ'S AND RU HUNGRY

The one item unique to the area is The Fat Sandwich. As its name points out, the sandwich is heavy on fat content. Food trucks around the stadium and around town sell a version of The Fat Sandwich. It can include different combinations from hamburger or chicken strips to roast beef. It could also have multiple cheeses and of course some french fries or even mozzarella sticks.

For many, the go-to original Fat Sandwich is sold at RU Hungry in New Brunswick. It has a couple different versions including the Fat Cat and the Fat Darrell. Both include french fries. The Darrell comes with pieces of mozzarella sticks.

If you are looking for a sit-down place so you can grab a drink, then Fritz's is your spot. Just a few minutes from the stadium it features a wonderful bakery menu and good traditional gastropub sandwiches and appetizers. Grab a spot on the patio and try the General Tso's sandwich.



PURDUE



HEAD COACH JEFF BROHM
SIXTH YEAR AS HEAD COACH
RECORD: 20-26

WHEN
OCT. 15

WHERE
WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA

2021 RECORD
8-4, 6-3 BIG TEN

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST
5-5

LAST MEETING
PURDUE WON 28-23 (OCT. 30, 2021)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 1 PENN STATE
SEPT. 10 INDIANA STATE
SEPT. 17 AT SYRACUSE
SEPT. 24 FAU
OCT. 1 AT MINNESOTA
OCT. 8 AT MARYLAND
OCT. 15 NEBRASKA
OCT. 22 AT WISCONSIN
NOV. 5 IOWA
NOV. 12 AT ILLINOIS
NOV. 19 NORTHWESTERN
NOV. 26 AT INDIANA



Quarterback Aidan O'Connell is back for a sixth year with the Boilermakers.

LAST YEAR

Nebraska outgained Purdue 399-349, averaging 6.9 yards per play to the Boilermakers' 4.1, but the Huskers lost, 28-23, largely because of four interceptions thrown by then-starting quarterback Adrian Martinez. One was returned for a touchdown and two more stifled comeback drives in the fourth quarter. Purdue did not have a turnover and quarterback Aidan O'Connell threw for 233 yards and a pair of scores. The Boilermakers also held the ball for a staggering 38:38.

"Overall, we had to be a little bit better against the run and the time of possession would have been different. We have a couple drives where it was one play, interception or two plays," coach Scott Frost said after the game. "If the ball flies up in the air and they get it, that's going to change the time of possession."

West Lafayette, Indiana
1,252 Miles

**THE LONG
ROAD TO**

Indianapolis

BOILERMAKER STRENGTHS

Purdue is coming off its best season since 2003 including a 48-45 overtime win in the Music City Bowl against Tennessee. O'Connell threw for 534 yards – a school record in a bowl game – and joined Drew Brees as the only Purdue quarterbacks with multiple 500-yard games.

Aidan O'Connell returns for his sixth season at Purdue after leading it to 355.3 passing yards a game last season – second

in the Big Ten. He threw 23 touchdowns and eight interceptions a year ago and set a school record for completion percentage (71.6). The Boilermakers lost the league's receiver of the year in David Bell, but senior Milton Wright returns after catching 57 passes, seven for touchdowns. Also back in tight end is Payne Durham, who had 40 grabs and four scores, including two in Music City Bowl victory.

O'Connell will have two new targets in freshman Zion Steptoe, a freshman who had 37 catches for 800 yards in seven high

school games last fall, and Iowa transfer Tyrone Tracy.

The Boilermakers were fifth in the Big Ten in passing yards allowed in 2021 and will be buoyed by senior safety Chris Jefferson, who had 32 tackles and five pass deflections last fall, and returning starting cornerback Jamari Brown.

Mitchell Fineran led the Big Ten with 24 made field goals on 29 attempts and in his two seasons in West Lafayette has split the uprights on 39 of 47 tries.



Receiver Milton Wright caught seven touchdown passes in 2021.

BOILERMAKER WEAKNESSES

Purdue was last in the Big Ten in rushing at 84.2 yards a game – 130 yards fewer than conference leader Michigan. Senior King Doerue returns after leading the team with just 473 yards and two touchdowns a season ago.

Purdue must replace first-team All-

American defensive end George Karlaftis, who in April became the first Boilermaker selected in the first round of the NFL draft in 11 years. He led the team in sacks, tackles-for-loss and forced fumbles.

Purdue was middle-of-the-pack defensively last year: seventh in points allowed and eighth in yards allowed. Coach Jeff Brohm said after the team's spring game that he does not have the depth he'd like

on the defensive line, which is particularly ominous for a team that was 12th in the league in rushing yards allowed. The cornerback position also remains unsettled.

Punter Jack Ansell was last in the league in 2021 at 38.3 yards per punt – more than three yards less than the next worst Big Ten punter – and had a conference-low four punts of 50-or-more yards.

By Mike Malloy



PURDUE

OCT. 15, 2022
(WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA)

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

OREGON STATE	W 30-21
UCONN	W 49-0
NOTRE DAME	L 13-27
ILLINOIS	W 13-9
MINNESOTA	L 13-20
IOWA	W 24-7
WISCONSIN	L 13-30
NEBRASKA	W 28-23
MICHIGAN STATE	W 40-29
OHIO STATE	L 31-59
NORTHWESTERN	W 32-14
INDIANA	W 44-7
TENNESSEE	W 48-45

Steve BEIDECK's STADIUM REVIEW



CAPACITY: 57,236 WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA

ROSS-ADE STADIUM

Nebraska at Ross-Ade Stadium: 2-3

There is plenty of space in the concourse areas to move around and get food or drinks, and the bathroom lines aren't long – mostly because there are plenty of empty seats.

If the Boilermakers aren't in the hunt for at least a bowl berth by mid-October when NU comes to play, Purdue fans' thoughts begin drifting toward Mackey Arena and basketball.

Before Nebraska's 25-24 win in 2017, the Purdue men played Indiana State in a charity basketball game. The basketball fans eventually flooded into Ross-Ade after watching the hoopsters roll to a 94-72 win.

It's worth the short stroll from the football stadium to find the John Wooden statue outside Mackey Arena.

PORTAL PLAYERS

Purdue added in-conference transfer cornerback Reese Taylor (Indiana) and Tyrone Tracy (Iowa) who scored a touchdown in Purdue's spring game. Kansas State transfer Tee Denson and Adams State transfer Bryce Hampton will compete for spots at cornerback.

TOP NEWCOMER

Reese Taylor gives coach Jeff Brohm an option at cornerback. He made five starts a year ago at Indi-

ana making 25 tackles. He was also a third-team all-conference punt returner in 2020 and could help out a team that was 11th in the conference in that category a year ago.

THEY SAID IT

"Depth is good to have but at the same time there's only 11 guys on the field and the 11 on the field have to beat the other team's 11. We want playmakers to emerge, along with the depth, so we can improve and win." – **Coach Jeff Brohm after Purdue's spring game**



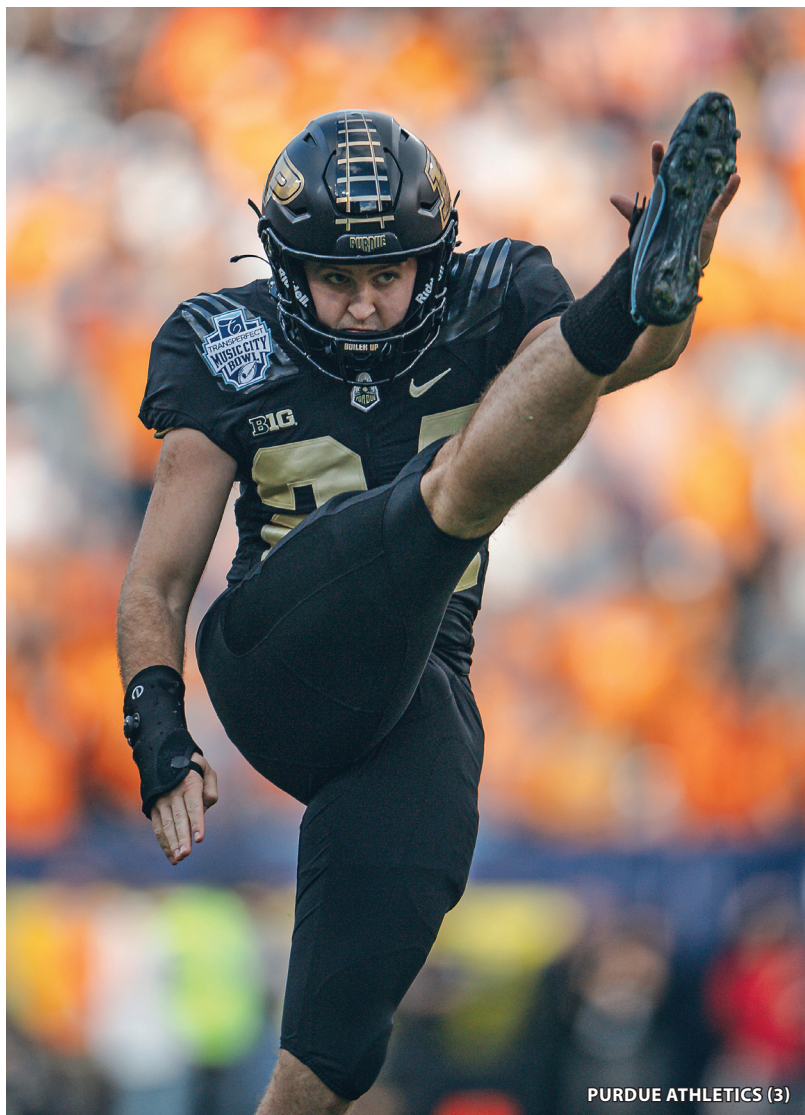
O'Connell passed for 534 yards and five touchdowns against Tennessee in last year's Music City Bowl.

DID YOU KNOW?

Purdue was ranked No. 25 after a 24-7 road win against then-No. 2 Iowa. It was the first time the Boilermakers had reached the top 25 since 2007 when Joe Tiller was head coach.

THE LONG
ROAD TO

Indianapolis



PURDUE ATHLETICS (3)

Jack Ansell, a native of Australia, was “very grateful for the opportunity” to punt for coach Jeff Brohm.

RETURNING STARTERS

Seven offensive – Eight defensive – Kicker – Punter

ALL-BIG TEN RETURNEES

Aidan O’Connell – 6-3, 210, quarterback, senior (second team)

Mitchell Fineran – 5-11, 185, kicker, senior (honorable mention)

Cam Allen – 6-1, 195, safety, senior (honorable mention)

Branson Deen – 6-2, 280, defensive tackle, senior (honorable mention)

Jalen Graham – 6-3, 220, linebacker, senior (honorable mention)

Payne Durham – 6-5, 255, tight end, senior (honorable mention)

Milton Wright – 6-3, 195, wide receiver, senior (honorable mention)

Mike I SEVERE's

BEST PLACES TO EAT



THE BEEF HOUSE AND TRIPLE XXX FAMILY RESTAURANT

The trip to Purdue is one I make whenever the Huskers play there.

One of the big reasons I enjoy going to West Lafayette, Indiana, is stopping at The Beef House. The name says it all. It’s a place to get beef. When you walk in there is a large display case filled with steaks of all different cuts. It also features – oddly, perhaps at first – jars of strawberry jam.

The steaks, fried chicken and gravy for the mashed potatoes are all great, but the topper is the warm rolls they bring to your table with – you guessed it – that fresh strawberry jam. Again it’s absolutely amazing. I’ve been there three times and each time we love it more.

Another must when going to a Boilermakers game is a stop at the Triple XXX Family Restaurant known for its creative sandwiches, soda fountain and all-day breakfast. Several items have been featured on “Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives” including the Drew Brees (yes, he played at Purdue) breakfast special. You will want to try the biscuits and gravy and/or a freshly made breakfast sandwich. The creative lunch and dinner sandwiches are named after former Boilermakers. I went with one of my favorite Purdue players, THE Ryan Kerrigan. No cheese for me, but the hamburger is covered with in-house chili, which I thought was great and very messy.



ILLINOIS



HEAD COACH BRET BIELEMA
SECOND YEAR AS HEAD COACH
RECORD: 5-7

WHEN
OCT. 29

WHERE
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

2021 RECORD
5-7, 4-5 BIG TEN

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST
13-5-1

LAST MEETING
ILLINOIS WON 30-22 (AUG. 28, 2021)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

AUG. 27	..... WYOMING
SEPT. 2	..... AT INDIANA
SEPT. 10	..... VIRGINIA
SEPT. 22	..... CHATTANOOGA
OCT. 1	..... AT WISCONSIN
OCT. 8	..... IOWA
OCT. 15	..... MINNESOTA
OCT. 29	..... AT NEBRASKA
NOV. 5	..... MICHIGAN STATE
NOV. 12	..... PURDUE
NOV. 19	..... AT MICHIGAN
NOV. 26	..... AT NORTHWESTERN



Artur Sitkowski, who missed the spring with an injury, passed for two touchdowns against the Huskers in 2021.

LAST YEAR

There were many disheartening losses for Nebraska in 2021 but this one may have been the most so. In a game originally scheduled for Dublin, Ireland, Nebraska traveled to Champaign and lost the season opener, 30-22. It was a rough day for special teams as a botched punt return gave Illinois a safety and the Huskers missed two of three extra point attempts. Illinois also returned a fumble for a touchdown in the final minute of the first half en route to building a 30-9 lead.

Nebraska, which out-yarded Illinois 392 to 326, rallied behind quarterback Adrian Martinez's 232 passing and 111 rushing yards but it was not enough as Illinois' backup quarterback Artur Sitkowski went 12-for-15 for 124 yards, two touchdowns and zero interceptions.

Worse yet, it was not the springboard to an unexpectedly good season for Illinois. It lost the following week to Texas-San Antonio and finished with a losing record for the 10th straight year.

"It looked like the same movie," coach Scott Frost said after the game. "I don't know what we're doing fielding a punt inside the 1 (yard line) ... missing a couple extra points certainly didn't help."

RETURNING STARTERS

Four offensive – Six defensive

ALL-BIG TEN RETURNEES

Alex Palczewski – 6-6, 315,
offensive tackle, senior
(honorable mention)
Sydney Brown – 6-0, 205,
safety, senior
(honorable mention)



Transfer Tommy DeVito will compete with Sitkowski for the starting QB job.

DID YOU KNOW?

Illinois hasn't had a winning conference record since 2007 and hasn't had a winning overall record in consecutive seasons since 1989 and 1990.

THE LONG ROAD TO *Indianapolis*

ILLINI STRENGTHS

Illinois was improved in Bret Bielema's first season in Champaign, though it will need to fill some key holes to continue the upward trajectory.

The Illini were solid defensively last year ranking sixth in the conference in points (21.9) and yards allowed (365.5) – a staggering improvement over a team that was last in points allowed in 2020. Sydney Brown led the team with 81 tackles. Keith Randolph (42 tackles) and Jer'Zhan Newton (50) anchor a stout defensive line, and linebacker Tarique Barnes, who was second on the team with 80 tackles a season ago, will likely clean up any runner that gets downfield. Barnes will line up beside Calvin Hart Jr. who had the best and worst of games against Nebraska a year ago. He made six tackles, including a sack, and had the critical scoop-and-score fumble return, but blew out a knee in the fourth quarter. He did not play again until this year's spring game.

Illinois could be strong on the ground with Alex Palczewski leading a revamped offensive line with three returning starters. Chase Brown, who put up 223 yards in a win at Penn State – the most ever by a visiting player at Beaver Stadium – averaged 100 yards a game and scored five touchdowns last fall while Josh McCray averaged nearly five yards a carry. Transfer quarterback Tommy DeVito put up big numbers at Syracuse (3,478 yards, 27 touchdowns) in 2021 and threw three touchdowns in Illinois' spring game. He'll compete with Sitkowski, who missed spring ball with an injury, for the starting job in the fall.



Running back Chase Brown ran for 232 yards at Penn State and averaged 100 rushing yards a game in 2021.

ILLINI WEAKNESSES

Illinois was held to 14 or fewer points five times last season and was last in the league and 122nd nationally in passing yards a game. Tommy DeVito could help, but the receiving corps is limited beyond sophomore Isaiah Williams, who had a team-best 47 catches last year.

Illinois graduated four starting offensive linemen and while Alex Palczewski and Julian Pearl return, questions remain. Three freshmen who redshirted last year and two junior college transfers will likely need to step up.

Special teams are an unknown after Illinois' punter, kicker and long snapper graduated. Caleb Griffin, president of the school's Student Athlete Advisory Council, kicked in the spring game while punting duties were handled by former Australian Rules Football player Hugh Robertson. The return game was nearly nonexistent last season as Illinois ran back three kickoffs; the next lowest total was Nebraska's 12.

PORTAL PLAYERS

Illinois focused more on high school and junior college recruiting this offseason. Besides Tommy DeVito, Fabrizio Pinton, a kicker from Air Force, and defensive lineman Tera Edwards, formerly of Northwestern, were the only other players from a Division I university to transfer to Illinois.

TOP NEWCOMERS

It's probably Tommy DeVito, whose development would enable Illinois' running game to shine, but freshman running back Aidan Laughery could step into a prominent role. He turned down offers from Iowa, Michigan State, Rutgers, Minnesota and Washington State to play in his home state.

THEY SAID IT

"I like the way Tommy DeVito handled the huddle and we've always known he has a good live arm, from the first time we saw him on film to where we saw him today, and the first extensive action that the public has seen him, but he definitely is a guy that can throw the ball around. He's athletic, he's dynamic, had a lot of positive things today." – Coach Bret Bielema after Illinois' spring game

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

Nebraska.....	W 30-22
UTSA	L 30-37
Virginia.....	L 14-42
Maryland.....	L 17-20
Purdue.....	L 9-13
Charlotte	W 24-14
Wisconsin.....	L 0-24
Penn State.....	W 20-18
Rutgers.....	L 14-20
Minnesota	W 14-6
Iowa	L 23-33
Northwestern.....	W 47-14

By Mike Malloy



MINNESOTA



HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK
SIXTH YEAR AS HEAD COACH
RECORD: 35-23

WHEN
NOV. 5

WHERE
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

2021 RECORD
8-4, 6-3 BIG TEN

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST
25-35-2

LAST MEETING
MINNESOTA WON 30-23 (OCT. 16, 2021)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 1	NEW MEXICO STATE
SEPT. 10	WESTERN ILLINOIS
SEPT. 17	COLORADO
SEPT. 24	AT MICHIGAN STATE
OCT. 1	PURDUE
OCT. 15	AT ILLINOIS
OCT. 22	AT PENN STATE
OCT. 29	RUTGERS
NOV. 5	AT NEBRASKA
NOV. 12	NORTHWESTERN
NOV. 19	IOWA
NOV. 26	AT WISCONSIN



BRACE HEMMELGARN/UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Mohamed Ibrahim is back after tearing an Achilles tendon in 2021.

LAST YEAR

Nebraska followed up a near-upset of Michigan with a more pedestrian performance in a 30-23 loss at Minnesota. The Golden Gophers scored midway through the first quarter and never trailed, building a 21-9 halftime lead. Nebraska's defense stiffened after halftime, but a safety followed by Bryce Williams' 56-yard touchdown run with 2:12 remaining put the game out of reach. Williams finished with 127 yards to help Minnesota beat Nebraska for the third-straight year.

Quarterback Adrian Martinez finished with 241 passing yards and no interceptions with tight end Austin Allen setting a then-career record 121 receiving yards.

"We needed to show up and start a little faster," coach Scott Frost said after the game. "Little details got us beat. I know the guys are tired of hearing that; I'm tired of saying that."

RETURNING STARTERS

Five offensive – Six defensive – Kicker – Punter

ALL-BIG TEN RETURNEES

John Michael Schmitz, 6-4, 320, center, senior (second team)
Mariano Sori-Marin, 6-3, 245, linebacker, senior (honorable mention)

DID YOU KNOW?

Minnesota's 18-6 win against West Virginia in the Guaranteed Rate Bowl last season was its fifth straight bowl victory, including three under coach P.J. Fleck.

THE LONG ROAD TO

Indianapolis

PORTAL PLAYERS

P.J. Fleck, who delivered the commencement address at the university's Carlson Business College graduation in May, and his staff were active in the transfer portal, grabbing some talent from big-name programs. Chuck Filiaga is a critical addition to a revamped offensive line, but the Gophers also welcome defensive end Lorenza Surgers who played in all 12 of Vanderbilt's games last fall and defensive tackle Darnell Jefferies from Clemson. Minnesota also picked up cornerbacks Shannon Bishop (who prefers the first name Beanie) from Western Kentucky and Ryan Stapp from Abilene Christian and defensive tackle Kyler Baugh from Houston Baptist.

TOP NEWCOMERS

Chuck Filiaga, who played in 39 games at Michigan, will certainly help the offensive line, but the team's best newcomer – to stretch the definition of the term – might be redshirt freshman Austin Booker. The defensive lineman has yet to play for the Gophers, but when he was last on the field he led Center Grove High School to a Class 6A Indiana state championship, recording 67 tackles and eight sacks on the season.

THEY SAID IT

"Roster management, I think for every head coach, is a challenge like we've never seen. How many scholarships are you going to leave open for transfers? Not only that, how eager are you going to be to get high school kids committed early? You're going to be a little more patient with that. You're going to look at more senior film than you've ever looked at. Plus you've got the portal all the way through May 1." – **Coach P.J. Fleck**



Center John Michael Schmitz was second team All-Big Ten in 2021.

GOLDEN GOPHER WEAKNESSES

Having a sixth-year returning starter at quarterback generally tops the list of strengths, but perhaps not in this case. Tanner Morgan returns after leading an unbalanced offense that was 12th in the conference and 118th nationally in the air. Morgan threw 10 touchdowns and nine interceptions for a team that ran the ball 601 times while throwing it 257 times; Purdue led the Big Ten with 575 pass attempts. The receiving corps is an unknown; Chris Autman-Bell returns after leading the team with 36 catches and six touchdowns. Dylan Wright, who had a spring game-best 55 receiving yards, will also be in the mix.

Trill Carter is back at defensive tackle, but is the lone returning starter on the defensive line.

Special teams weren't particularly special last fall as Minnesota ranked in the middle of the Big Ten, or a little worse, in all statistical categories. Kicker Matthew Trickett is back after going 17-for-26 on field goal attempts. He made a pair of 52-yard field goals in a penalty kicks-style tiebreaker in Minnesota's spring game.

GOLDEN GOPHER STRENGTHS

The Gophers won nine games a season ago largely because of their defense. Minnesota was tied for sixth nationally in points allowed (17.3), eighth against the run (97.5 yards), eighth against the pass (181.2) and third in total yards allowed (278.8). Six starters return from that group including linebackers Mariano Sori-Marin, who was second on the team with 85 tackles, and Braelen Oliver. Three starters from the secondary are also back including safety Tyler Nubin, who led Minnesota with three interceptions a year ago.

Minnesota ran for nearly 200 yards a game last year, third in the league. The 2020 conference running back of the year, Mohamed Ibrahim, returns after tearing his Achilles tendon. He ran for 163 yards in his only game a season ago – a 45-31 season-opening loss to Ohio State. John Michael Schmitz, the center, is the only returning offensive lineman, but Minnesota was able to bring in several big dudes, including 330-pound Chuck Filiaga who transferred from Michigan.

Retaining that strong running game will be critical if Minnesota hopes to contend for its first Big Ten championship since 1967.

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

Ohio State	L 31-45
Miami (Ohio)	W 31-26
Colorado	W 30-0
Bowling Green	L 10-14
Purdue	W 20-13
Nebraska	W 30-23
Maryland	W 34-16
Northwestern	W 41-14
Illinois	L 6-14
Iowa	L 22-27
Indiana	W 35-14
Wisconsin	W 23-13
West Virginia	W 18-6

By Mike Malloy

M MICHIGAN



HEAD COACH JIM HARBAUGH
SEVENTH YEAR AS HEAD COACH
RECORD: 61-26

WHEN
NOV. 12

WHERE
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

2021 RECORD
11-1, 8-1 BIG TEN

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST
4-6-1

LAST MEETING
MICHIGAN WON 32-29 (OCT. 9, 2021)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 3 COLORADO STATE
SEPT. 10 HAWAII
SEPT. 17 CONNECTICUT
SEPT. 24 MARYLAND
OCT. 1 IOWA
OCT. 8 AT INDIANA
OCT. 15 PENN STATE
OCT. 29 MICHIGAN STATE
NOV. 5 AT RUTGERS
NOV. 12 NEBRASKA
NOV. 19 ILLINOIS
NOV. 26 AT OHIO STATE



Running back Blake Corum ran for 953 yards and 11 touchdowns as a sophomore.

LAST YEAR

A late Nebraska mistake cost the Huskers a chance to score one of the biggest upsets of the college football season. As he was pushing forward for a first down late in the fourth quarter against a tiring Michigan defense, NU quarterback Adrian Martinez fumbled.

The Wolverines pounced on the ball, milked 63 seconds off the game clock and called on All-Big Ten kicker Jake Moody to make his fifth field goal of the game with 21 seconds remaining. Moody split the uprights and Michigan escaped Memorial Stadium with a 32-29 victory.

Not only did Michigan become bowl-eligible with its sixth win of the season, but the victory fueled the Wolverines' drive to the school's first Big Ten championship in 16 years and a berth in the College Football Playoff. It was a game that had to make Nebraska fans wonder how things might have turned out differently if not for the myriad mistakes that marred the season.

Hassan Haskins added 123 yards on 21 carries and two touchdowns to his season resume that eventually made him a unanimous first team All-Big Ten selection. Haskins is one of 10 Wolverines who earned Big Ten postseason recognition who won't be back in 2022 because of graduation or entry into the NFL Draft.

Haskins went in the fourth round to the Tennessee Titans after three seasons in Ann Arbor where he finished with 2,324 rushing yards and 30 career TDs, including 20 trips to the end zone in 2021.

After bouncing back from a 37-33 loss to Michigan State, the Wolverines rolled through their final four regular season games including a 42-27 thumping of Ohio State to earn the title game berth where they defeated Iowa 42-3.

Michigan then got outclassed 34-11 by Georgia in the CFP semifinals at the Orange Bowl before finishing No. 3 in the final AP rankings.

Ann Arbor, Michigan
1,498 Miles

**THE LONG
ROAD TO** *Indianapolis*



Senior quarterback Cade McNamara started all 14 games in 2021. He will be challenged for the starting spot by redshirt freshman J.J. McCarthy.

WOLVERINE STRENGTHS

If the co-coordinator combination of Sherrone Moore and Matt Weiss is going to make Michigan's offense hum like it did in 2021, a decision will have to be made soon on a starting quarterback. Will Cade McNamara have done enough during the off-season to remain as Michigan's main man or will redshirt freshman J.J. McCarthy be given a chance to show his skills early in the season? The Wolverines have plenty of players back at the other skill positions, and the offensive line looks like it could be the Big Ten's best.

WOLVERINE WEAKNESSES

With only four starters returning from a defense that kept opponents from averaging five yards per play (4.93), Michigan coaches have a lot of work to do in preseason practices to get the new-look defense ready for the heart of conference play. The pass rush needs a complete retooling after Aidan Hutchinson and David Ojabo moved onto the NFL, and the defensive backfield will have at least three new starters learning new defensive coordinator Jesse Minter's system.

By Steve Beideck

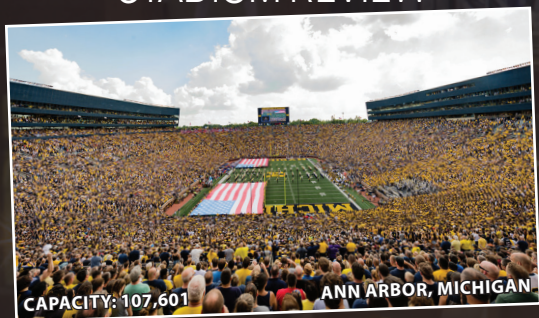
M MICHIGAN

NOV. 12, 2022
(ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN)

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

WESTERN MICHIGAN	W 47-14
WASHINGTON	W 31-10
NORTHERN ILLINOIS	W 63-10
RUTGERS	W 20-13
WISCONSIN	W 38-17
NEBRASKA	W 32-29
NORTHWESTERN	W 33-7
MICHIGAN STATE	L 33-37
INDIANA	W 29-7
PENN STATE	W 21-17
MARYLAND	W 59-18
OHIO STATE	W 42-27
IOWA	W 42-3
GEORGIA	L 11-34

Steve BEIDECK's STADIUM REVIEW



MICHIGAN STADIUM

Nebraska at Michigan Stadium: 2-2
(2-4 all-time in Ann Arbor)

"The Big House," a classic bowl stadium, holds more than 107,000 people. All those people, and not a bad seat in what is often referred to as college football's largest stadium.

Stroll through the concourse to see banners and various historical markers. Combine those with modern amenities like food trucks and spacious merchandise tents in the outer concourse areas, and Michigan provides a wonderful fan experience.

Confident but mostly polite fans are happy to help point visitors in the right direction. Even the police dogs who sniff writers' backpacks before heading to the press box are sweet. Just don't pet them or offer a treat.

PORTAL PLAYER

Olu Oluwatimi is a transfer from Virginia who was getting the most reps at center during the spring. The 6-foot-3, 310-pound graduate transfer was one of three finalists for the Rimington Trophy, which is awarded annually to the nation's top center. This was Michigan's position of greatest need and he should blend nicely with an otherwise veteran group, including a pair of second team All-Big Ten honorees in Zak Zinter and Ryan Hayes.

TOP NEWCOMER

Jim Harbaugh and his staff made sure the No. 1-ranked prospect in the state of Michigan stayed home. Cornerback Will Johnson of Detroit (Grosse Pointe South High School) comes to Ann Arbor as the No. 20

overall prospect and No. 4 cornerback nationally with his 247Sports composite ranking of five stars. Williams enrolled early at Michigan to get a head start on playing time in 2022. He's not one to spend much time on the sideline; Williams was the first four-year varsity starter in school history at Grosse Pointe South.

THEY SAID IT

"We've got to be better. When you're a champion, all the other teams are scouting you. There's a target on the back there in everything you do. Every run-blocking scheme, every pass-protecting scheme ... they're already studying, but it amplifies that much more. You become the red-letter game." – **Jim Harbaugh on the challenge Michigan will face in 2022, TheSpun.com**



Jake Moody kicked four field goals against Nebraska a year ago, including a 39-yarder with 21 seconds remaining for the win. Moody won the Lou Groza Award as the nation's top kicker in 2021.

DID YOU KNOW?

This year's game in Ann Arbor will mark the 60th anniversary of the first signature victory of Bob Devaney at Nebraska. It was a crowd of 70,287 at Michigan Stadium – the largest crowd ever gathered to watch an NU football game at that time.



ROGER HART/MICHIGAN PHOTOGRAPHY

In 2021 McNamara completed 210 passes for 2,576 yards and led Michigan to the College Football Playoff where they lost to Georgia.

RETURNING STARTERS

Eight offensive – Four defensive – Kicker – Punter

ALL-BIG TEN RETURNEES

- Erick All, 6-4, 245, tight end, senior
(honorable mention coaches and media)
- Ryan Hayes, 6-7, 307, offensive line, senior
(second team coaches, honorable mention media)
- Trevor Keegan, 6-6, 324, offensive line, senior
(honorable mention coaches and media)
- Cade McNamara, 6-1, 212, quarterback, senior
(third team coaches and media)
- Jake Moody, 6-1, 211, kicker, senior
(first team coaches, third team media)
- Brad Robbins, 6-1, 203, punter, senior
(honorable mention coaches and media)
- Luke Schoonmaker, 6-5, 250, tight end, senior
(honorable mention coaches and media)
- Mazi Smith, 6-3, 326, defensive line, senior
(honorable mention coaches and media)
- D.J. Turner, 6-0, 181, defensive back, senior
(honorable mention coaches and media)
- Blake Corum, 5-8, 200, running back, junior
(third team coaches, honorable mention media)
- A.J. Henning, 5-10, 185, wide receiver, junior
(third team coaches and media)
- Zak Zinter, 6-6, 320, offensive line, junior
(second team media, honorable mention coaches)

THE LONG ROAD TO

Indianapolis

Mike I SEVERE's

BEST PLACES TO EAT



THE BROWN JUG AND ZINGERMAN'S DELI

I have only been to one Michigan game in Ann Arbor. It was not a great trip, and I really didn't eat any amazing food. Still, I can recommend a couple places popular among the media contingent.

If you're into the restaurants filled with memorabilia, the Brown Jug on the southern part of campus is a good bet. They serve decent Greek food and have a good atmosphere leading up to or after a game. And watch for former Michigan players in town for the game.

If you're looking for a simple sandwich the one place I ate was Zingerman's Delicatessen. From what I am told, it is an Ann Arbor institution.

It's a deli so I had it to go, but I really enjoyed the corned beef, Swiss and Russian dressing. I'm not really into sauerkraut.

W WISCONSIN



HEAD COACH PAUL CHRYST
SEVENTH YEAR AS HEAD COACH
RECORD: 56-19

WHEN
NOV. 19

WHERE
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

2021 RECORD
8-4, 6-3 BIG TEN

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST
4-11

LAST MEETING
WISCONSIN WON 35-28 (NOV. 20, 2021)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 3 ILLINOIS STATE
SEPT. 10 WASHINGTON STATE
SEPT. 17 NEW MEXICO STATE
SEPT. 24 AT OHIO STATE
OCT. 1 ILLINOIS
OCT. 8 AT NORTHWESTERN
OCT. 15 AT MICHIGAN STATE
OCT. 22 PURDUE
NOV. 5 MARYLAND
NOV. 12 AT IOWA
NOV. 19 AT NEBRASKA
NOV. 26 MINNESOTA



The Badger defense gave up 452 yards to the Huskers in 2021.

LAST YEAR

It was another near miss for the Huskers against the Badgers in 2021. This one stung a little more than most of the single-digit setbacks because, well, allow the official Huskers.com game summary to explain the final plays:

"Adrian Martinez completed four straight passes before a pass interference call put the ball at the Wisconsin 11-yard line. After a holding penalty pushed the ball back to the 21, three straight incomplete passes set up a controversial fourth-down play. Martinez threw toward Xavier Betts, who looked to be interfered with but no call was made."

Wisconsin escaped with a 35-28 victory before losing the chance to claim another Big Ten West Division title with a 23-13 loss the next week to Minnesota. Two of the Big Ten's best defenses were expected to share the spotlight, but instead the two offenses combined for nearly 850 yards.

Martinez completed 23-of-35 passes for a season-high 351 yards, the most he'd racked up in one game since his career high of 384 against Wisconsin in 2018. It turned out to be the final game of Martinez's NU career. After the game it was revealed that he suffered a shoulder injury in the first quarter, but he continued to direct the NU offense the remainder of the game. Martinez also was playing with a broken jaw suffered in a September game.

The Badgers vaunted defense gave up 452 yards to the hard-luck Huskers, a total that was more than double Wisconsin's then-season average of 216.3 yards per game.

Running back Braelon Allen became the latest Badgers back to gouge Nebraska's defense for a big game. The freshman from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, rushed for 228 yards and three touchdowns against the Black-shirts. Two of those TD runs were for 71 and 53 yards. Allen's total accounted for all but 24 yards of Wisconsin's rushing total of 252 yards.

Not only did the big-play TDs hurt the Huskers' chances, another special teams gaffe put the Huskers behind just 13 seconds into the game. Stephan Bracey took a short NU kickoff at the 9-yard line, broke two tackles and raced 91 yards for the first six points of the game.

DID YOU KNOW?

Both Wisconsin coordinators – Jim Leonhard on defense and Bobby Engram on offense – had successful NFL careers. Though he was not drafted, Leonhard played 10 seasons for six different teams. Engram had a 14-year NFL career as a second-round pick.

THE LONG ROAD TO

Indianapolis

BADGER STRENGTHS

Depth at the skill positions and the return of three offensive linemen should give the Badgers plenty of pop while a new-look defense, which returns only three starters, looks to find its footing. Braelon Allen is ready for his second season after earning Walter Camp Freshman All-American honors after rushing for 1,109 yards on 157 carries (7.1 yards per carry) and scoring 12 touchdowns, including those three against the Huskers. Seniors Chez Mellusi and Isaac Guerendo provide quality and experienced depth behind Allen. Tyler Beach was a third-team All-Big Ten selection by conference coaches, and he joined Jack Nelson and Joe Tippmann as honorable mention picks by the media panel. Nelson is expected to move from right guard to left tackle.

BADGER WEAKNESSES

As the Wisconsin defense gets set for a reload, it's a stretch to label the defense a weakness. After all, the Badgers had the No. 1-ranked FBS defense in 2021 despite its performance against Nebraska. Still, the onus is on the defense to maintain its standard. Quarterback Graham Mertz is primed for his third season as a starter. That sentence makes a lot of Wisconsin fans queasy after the Overland Park, Kansas, native threw 11 interceptions and lost four fumbles last season. He started all 13 games last season and completed 59.5% of his passes (169-of-284) for 1,958 yards and 10 TDs, a total one fewer than his interception number. The lipstick on the pigskin is that he threw nine TDs and five interceptions in the final 10 games of the season.

THEY SAID IT

"Then special teams, we're kind of dividing that up amongst the staff. And so we'll have a number of coaches kind of be the lead coach on each individual unit. We're not going to have just a specific special teams coordinator." – Paul Chryst on how the Badgers will approach special teams in 2022

RETURNING STARTERS

Five offensive – Three defensive – Punter

ALL-BIG TEN RETURNEES ALL-BIG TEN RETURNEES

Tyler Beach, 6-6, 316, offensive line, senior (third team coaches, honorable mention media)
Keanu Benton, 6-4, 316, nose tackle, senior (second team coaches, honorable mention media)
Chez Mellusi, 5-11, 210, running back, senior (honorable mention media)
Nick Herbig, 6-2, 227, linebacker, junior (honorable mention coaches)
Joe Tippmann, 6-6, 317, offensive line, junior (honorable mention coaches and media)
Braelon Allen, 6-2, 240, running back, sophomore (second team coaches and media)
Jack Nelson, 6-7, 303, offensive line, sophomore (honorable mention coaches and media)



MATT LUDKE/HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED (2)

Graham Mertz went 12-for-18 for 145 yards against Nebraska in 2021.

TOP NEWCOMER

Surprise, it's another guy who left Los Angeles and Chip Kelly to come play in a colder climate. Wide receiver Keontez Lewis at least is more used to cold weather than Jay Shaw, who hails from Corona, California. Lewis is from East St. Louis, Illinois, and is hoping for more chances than he got in one season in Westwood. He saw action in 11 games and had one start against Utah, but the 6-3, 197-pound speedster didn't have a catch in 2021.

PORTAL PLAYERS

Jay Shaw comes to Madison via Westwood as a graduate transfer from UCLA. The 5-foot-11, 188-pound cornerback is expected to be an immediate starter in the Badgers secondary. Wisconsin lost a pair of seasoned starters in Faion Hicks and Caesar Williams to graduation. Cedrick Dort (Kentucky) and Justin Clark (Toledo) also came in via the portal and have high expectations for big minutes in the secondary.

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

Penn State.....	L 10-16
Eastern Michigan.....	W 34-7
Notre Dame	L 13-41
Michigan	L 17-38
Illinois	W 24-0
Army	W 20-14
Purdue.....	W 30-13
Iowa	W 27-7
Rutgers.....	W 52-3
Northwestern	W 35-7
Nebraska	W 35-28
Minnesota	L 13-23
Arizona State	W 20-13

By Steve Beideck



IOWA



HEAD COACH KIRK FERENTZ
 24TH YEAR AS HEAD COACH
 RECORD: 178-110

WHEN
 NOV. 25

WHERE
 IOWA CITY, IOWA

2021 RECORD
 10-2, 7-2 BIG TEN

NEBRASKA'S RECORD AGAINST
 29-20-3

LAST MEETING
 IOWA WON 28-21 (NOV. 26, 2021)

2022 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

SEPT. 3	S. DAKOTA ST.
SEPT. 10	IOWA ST.
SEPT. 17	NEVADA
SEPT. 24	AT RUTGERS
OCT. 1	MICHIGAN
OCT. 8	AT ILLINOIS
OCT. 22	AT OHIO ST.
OCT. 29	NORTHWESTERN
NOV. 5	AT PURDUE
NOV. 12	WISCONSIN
NOV. 19	AT MINNESOTA
NOV. 25	NEBRASKA



Iowa's defense returns Riley Moss, the Big Ten Defensive Back of the Year in 2021.

LAST YEAR

A sign that things might not go well for Iowa in its two postseason games came from the way the Hawkeye offense performed in its narrow escape against Nebraska in the regular season finale.

Eight days before Iowa took the field in the Big Ten championship game, the Hawkeyes trailed the Huskers 21-6 in the third quarter. But thanks in large part to another fourth-quarter collapse by the 3-9 Huskers, the Hawkeyes scored 19 points in the final 14:16 to earn a 28-21 victory.

Iowa's offense scored just one touchdown against the NU defense: a 2-yard run by quarterback Spencer Petras with 2:58 remaining in the game. The other 22 Hawkeye points came on a blocked punt and a safety, along with two PATs and four field goals by All-Big Ten kicker Caleb Shudak.

That win gave Iowa the Big Ten's West Division title. Eight days later the Hawkeyes were throttled 42-3 by Michigan in the Big Ten title game. Iowa's offense also was anemic in its 20-17 Citrus Bowl loss to Kentucky. Petras threw three interceptions, and the Hawkeyes totaled just 20 more yards (384) than they did against the Huskers.

Nebraska was playing without four-year starting quarterback Adrian Martinez, who was sidelined with a shoulder injury suffered in NU's 35-28 loss to Wisconsin. Logan Smothers performed well in his first career start, completing 16-of-22 passes for 198 yards. Smothers also led all Nebraska rushers with 64 yards and two touchdowns on 24 carries.

Iowa players celebrated on the Memorial Stadium field after the game, knowing they had a chance to represent the West Division in the Big Ten championship game if Minnesota beat Wisconsin the next day. The Gophers beat the Badgers 23-13 to keep Paul Bunyan's ax in Minneapolis and sent the Hawkeyes to Indianapolis.

Iowa City, Iowa
606 Miles

**THE LONG
ROAD TO**

Indianapolis

HAWKEYE STRENGTHS

The defense. The Hawkeyes return three defensive line starters, their top three linebackers and Big Ten Defensive Back of the Year Riley Moss from one of 2021's

most effective defenses. Iowa finished the season ranked No. 13 nationally in rushing defense, allowing just 114.4 yards per game. Opponents didn't have much luck either against the Iowa secondary, averaging 214.4 passing yards per game (No. 42

nationally). Middle linebacker Jack Campbell led the nation with 143 total tackles. Moss earned the conference award despite missing three games with a knee injury. Iowa's defense had more interceptions (25) than any other team in the country.



STEPHEN MALLY/HAWKEYESPORTS.COM

Middle linebacker Jack Campbell was a tackling machine for the Hawkeyes in 2021 when he made 143 total stops.

HAWKEYE WEAKNESSES

The offense. There isn't much faith in Iowa City, or any other city in Iowa, for that matter, that these 2021 numbers will get better in 2022:

Rushing offense: No. 102 nationally,
123.6 yards per game.

Passing offense: No. 109 nationally,
180.1 yards per game.

Total offense: No. 121 nationally,

303.7 yards per game.

Third-down conversion percentage:
No. 110 nationally, .340

Red zone offense conversion percentage:
No. 122 nationally, .723

Spencer Petras is expected to hold on to the starting quarterback job at least to start the season. Many fans don't consider that to be good news. His touchdown-to-interception line was 10/9. Alex Padilla, a junior, started Iowa's final three regular

season games against Minnesota, Illinois and Nebraska. He was replaced by Petras in the second half against the Huskers, then played the second half of the Big Ten title game against Michigan because of another injury to Petras. Padilla took over for an injured Petras in the second quarter of Iowa's win over Northwestern, one week before his first career start against the Gophers. In those four games, Padilla completed 49.4% of his passes (41-of-83).

By Steve Beideck



IOWA

NOV. 25, 2022
(IOWA CITY, IOWA)

2021 FOOTBALL RESULTS

INDIANA	W 34-6
IOWA STATE	W 27-17
KENT STATE.....	W 30-7
COLORADO STATE	W 24-14
MARYLAND	W 51-14
PENN STATE.....	W 23-20
PURDUE	L 24-7
WISCONSIN	L 27-7
NORTHWESTERN.....	W 17-12
MINNESOTA.....	W 27-22
ILLINOIS	W 33-23
NEBRASKA	W 28-21
MICHIGAN	L 42-3
KENTUCKY	L 20-17

Steve BEIDECK's STADIUM REVIEW



KINNICK STADIUM

Nebraska at Kinnick Stadium: 10-9

Wear fireproof shorts if wearing red. The tenor toward Nebraska fans resembles Big Eight/Big 12 trips to Colorado and Missouri. The good news is that the stadium security team is nearly peerless, and Husker fans can always comfort themselves knowing the stadium is named after an Omaha Benson graduate.

While Kinnick Stadium itself has been upgraded over time, the lack of modern amenities is still noticeable. Instead of stopping at a concession stand, visit the gentleman who sells “big-ass turkey legs” outside the stadium.

The wave to the children’s hospital patients is a classy touch. Well done, Iowa.

PORTAL PLAYER

Steven Stilianos joins the Hawkeyes after four seasons as the top tight end at FCS Lafayette. He is the only player Iowa added from the portal. Stilianos had 21 receptions in both 2019 and 2021 for the Leopards.

TOP NEWCOMERS

Five-star safety Xavier Nwankpa, the highest-rated prospect in Iowa high school history, headlines a class chock-full of defensive talent. Defensive back Koen Entringer, in-state

linebacker Landyn Van Kekerix and defensive lineman Brian Allen all committed to Iowa during the December early signing period.

THEY SAID IT

“I don’t think there are any magic answers right now. Just a couple conversions here and there, that type of thing, and it’s a really fine line. We have got to keep pushing.” – **Kirk Ferentz after the Citrus Bowl loss to Kentucky on changes needed for Iowa’s offense**



Noah Shannon, at 6 feet and 289 pounds, is one of three returning starters on the Hawkeye defensive line.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fans were calling for Brian Ferentz to be fired after the offense's uninspired performance against Kentucky in the Citrus Bowl. Instead, dad doubled down on his support for his son in the offseason by switching his position responsibility from tight ends to QB. The younger Ferentz has never been quarterbacks coach.

RETURNING STARTERS

Nine offensive – Seven defensive – Two special teams

ALL-BIG TEN RETURNEES

Seth Benson, 6-0, 229, linebacker, senior (honorable mention media)

Jack Campbell, 6-5, 243, linebacker, senior
(third team coaches, first team media)

Sam LaPorta, 6-4, 249, tight end, senior
(third team coaches, honorable mention media)

Riley Moss, 6-1, 194, defensive back, senior (first team coaches and media)

Noah Shannon, 6-0, 289, defensive line, senior
(honorable mention coaches and media)

Mason Richman, 6-6, 296, offensive line, sophomore
(honorable mention coaches and media)



STEPHEN MALLY/HAWKEYESPORTS.COM

THE LONG ROAD TO *Indianapolis*

Mike I SEVERE's

BEST PLACES TO EAT



WIG & PEN PIZZA PUB AND THE BLUEBIRD DINER

The trip to Iowa City is filled with fun places to eat.

I'm usually picky when it comes to pizza, so I was surprised how much I enjoyed Wig and Pen Pizza Pub. It is a London club/journalist themed restaurant. We had a great pie – the Union Jack topped with sausage, pepperoni and fresh red peppers – the last time we were in Iowa City for the Nebraska game. We went to the location in North Liberty the first time. The next time we drove through, heading to Ohio, we stopped at the east-side Iowa City location and had the crab rangoon pizza and some baked pasta.

If you want to grab breakfast before the normal 1 p.m. or noon game you can try The Bluebird Diner in Iowa City. We swung through there a few years ago, and I had the eggs benedict and my wife had the biscuits and gravy. It's not only a solid breakfast place. It also serves some lunch and brunch items as well.

On the way home in Des Moines you can stop at either of two locations of Zombie Burger and Drink Lab – downtown or Jordan Creek – for gourmet burgers. There are some good toppings like fresh green chile, which I enjoy. I liked the guacamole as well and the Nashville hot sauce. They also have an "unburger" if you're looking for something vegetarian.

THE ORIGINAL MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO NEBRASKA ATHLETICS

HUSKERS

ILLUSTRATED

VOLUME 42 | SUMMER 2022 | \$12.99

DISPLAY THRU SEPTEMBER 2022



CHI Health Center

2022

VOLLEYBALL PREVIEW

THE ROAD TO *Omaha* 2022 D1 Championship

By Lincoln Arneal

Moments after the spring season ended, John Cook wasn't ready to go on summer break.

The Nebraska coach wanted to get back to work, and who could blame him?

The Huskers return almost all their key players from their national runner-up team from 2021. Cook talked about how much fun the team is to coach. Plus they added multiple top recruits and one of the most sought-after transfers.

Oh, and the final four will be in Nebraska's backyard at the CHI Health Center Arena in Omaha.

"They're an awesome group. I am very excited," Cook said. "We got a great schedule. The final four is in Omaha, so we gotta go for it."

For the fifth time, the college volleyball season will end in Omaha. Usually, whenever the River City hosts the final four, something magical happens for the Huskers.

NU won national championships in its home state in 2006 and 2015, setting an NCAA single-match attendance record each time. In 2008, NU lost to Penn State in five sets but was the only team all season to take any sets off the undefeated Nittany Lions.

Omaha also hosted the 2020 championship in unusual circumstances due to COVID-19. The tournament was postponed to April 2021, with a limited field of 48 playing all matches in the convention center and arena. NU advanced to the regional final, which it's done for the past 10 seasons and played one of the first matches in front of a crowd that season.

For the 2022 season, the road to Omaha will feature a familiar path. The Huskers will face several nonconference teams that should provide a good test but allow them to settle into new roles and develop chemistry. NU will close with a tough two weeks, including Creighton, Long Beach State, Stanford and Kentucky.

Then the Huskers will enter the Big Ten gantlet. When the coaches release their preseason picks, Nebraska will likely be the early favorite to win the league crown, and Ohio State will also be among the Big Ten's best teams. Reigning national champion Wisconsin will be talented but have lots of new faces, Minnesota and Purdue each lost top players, and Penn State has to replace longtime coach Russ Rose.

Over the following 14 pages, we will break down the Huskers' roster and each opponent. Much like its 2021 national championship runner-up finish, Nebraska must capture something special to make the trip up I-80. Last season the Huskers used an elite defense to knock off higher-seeded teams. They'll need to find that recipe again and improve offensive efficiency to play the season's last match.

Nebraska isn't the only team with designs to make a trip to Omaha in 2022.

The teams fighting to make a trip to the CHI Health Center might be familiar, but this season will feature a lot of new faces. Of the 14 first-team All-Americans, only three are back – NU libero Lexi Rodriguez, Texas outside hitter Logan Eggleston and Georgia Tech outside hitter Julia Bergmann.

After falling on its home court in the

regional finals to the Huskers, Texas lost six of its nine regulars from last season but rebuilt behind transfers: outside hitter Madisen Skinner (Kentucky), libero Zoe Fleck (UCLA) and Keonilei Akana (Nebraska). UT also added Jordan Larson and her husband, David Hunt, as a volunteer assistant and associate head coach, respectively.

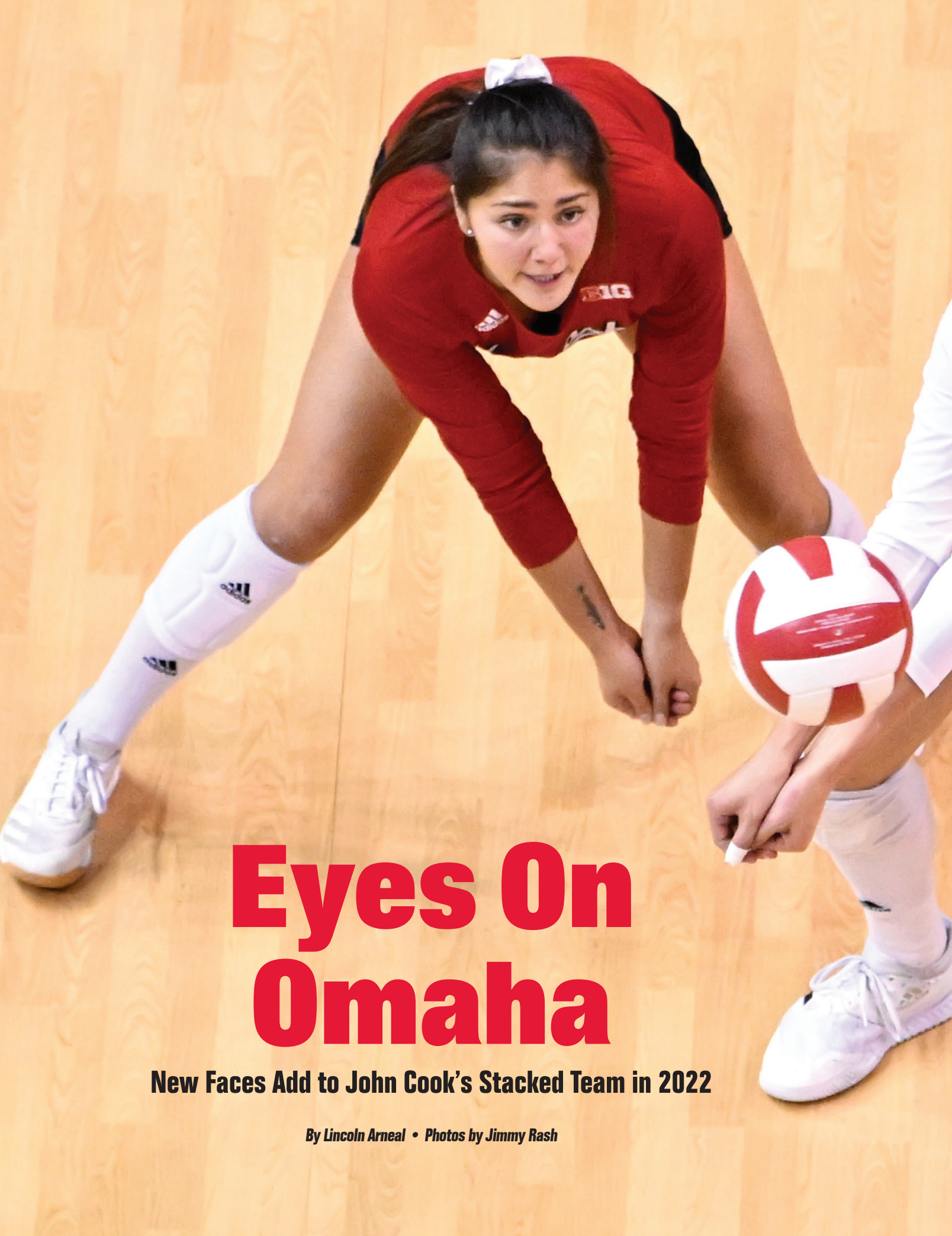
Washington lost outside hitter Samantha Drechsel, but it returns three other All-Americans in middle blocker Marin Grote, outside hitter Claire Hoffman and setter Ella May Powell. Ohio State and Stanford each return a pair of All-Americans, the only other teams that return more than one All-American from last year.

After a disappointing 15-15 season in 2021, USC added the No. 1 recruiting class with six freshmen plus transfer All-American Skylar Fields from Texas. In addition, Minnesota (22-9), Baylor (22-6) and Florida (22-9) each added top-five classes, according to PrepVolleyball.com. (Nebraska was No. 2).

Pitt and Louisville each made their first final four appearance in 2021. While they will need to replace departed seniors, they should still be among the top teams in the ACC. Meanwhile, Florida will try to regain control of the SEC from Kentucky.

Lots of other teams will be aiming to break through the regional round and advance to Omaha, including Western Kentucky, BYU and Creighton.

The road to Omaha begins in August, but for the Huskers and Cook, they can't wait to get to work and start the journey.



Eyes On Omaha

New Faces Add to John Cook's Stacked Team in 2022

By Lincoln Arneal • Photos by Jimmy Rash



Even with five All-Americans on its roster and coming off a national championship match appearance, the Nebraska volleyball team enters the 2022 season with a bit of uncertainty.

While all the pieces have elite skill sets, it's a matter of them coming together to form a team that's better than the sum of its parts. The formula served NU well as it knocked off No. 2 Texas on its home court in the regional final last year, dispatched No. 3 Pitt in the national semi-final and took Wisconsin to a fifth set in the title match.

This season, the Huskers will try to

mimic that success with a few new faces and by answering several questions and settling position battles that will shape what the team looks like on the court as they try to extend the season to the final four in Omaha in December.

Setter

When Nicklin Hames announced she was returning for her fifth and final year in January, it came with the caveat that she would be handing over the keys to the offense to sophomore Kennedy Orr, who was the No. 1-rated prospect coming out of high school.

Orr only played in three matches during her freshman campaign – all during the opening weekend when Hames was out with an ankle injury. NU coach John Cook hyped up her performances in the practice gym and said she made plays that no other setter was making.

Everything was going to plan to have Orr step into the spotlight. However, Orr injured her knee during beach season, the same knee that cut short her senior year of high school. She didn't travel with the Huskers to Hawaii or California and had a minor procedure done. Orr returned to training and Cook said she was practicing fully. However, during the spring exhibition against Kansas, Hames handled nearly all the setting duties save for a few points in the third and fourth sets.

Whether Orr is the starting setter in August largely depends on her health. If her knee cooperates, she could return to the form that earned her top setter honors at the 2019 FIVB U18 World Championships and guide the Husker offense.

But the backup option of Hames, who was a second-team All-American in 2021, is not too shabby of a Plan B. The Huskers have been a winner with Hames and can return to the top of the Big Ten with her running the show, but Cook hopes Orr can elevate NU's attack to another level.

Lexi Rodriguez, left, was the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year as a freshman in 2021.

Madi Kubik, right, was a force at the left pin as a junior and is one of the team's best passers.



Freshman Bekka Allick showed promise as a middle blocker in the spring.

The Huskers also have the services of junior Anni Evans. Last season, the Waverly graduate was used primarily as a serving specialist and ran a two-setter offense in the season opener.

Outside Hitter

Pencil in Madi Kubik at the left pin as one of the starters. After that, the position is up in the air. Kubik has been a steady performer during her first three seasons at NU. She's one of the Huskers' best passers and can take over matches on the attack.

Ally Batenhorst took over for Lexi Sun late last year and had her best match of the season against the Longhorns in her home state of Texas. However, she also suffered from bouts of inconsistency and struggled to terminate out of system. At 6-foot-4, Batenhorst can hit different angles than other NU attackers and provides a big block at the net.

She will likely battle with classmate Lindsay Krause for the second starting position. Krause played at opposite last season and was named to the Big Ten all-freshman team. She started the season hot and held her own early against conference opponents but was benched a few times. Krause is fearless on the attack but could also get



Sophomore Ally Batenhorst can hit at different angles than other NU attackers and provides a big block at the net.

in an error rut relying on her power shots. However, if she can mix up her repertoire, she could grab the starting spot over Batenhorst.

Freshman Hayden Kubik, the younger sister of Madi, should also provide depth but is not expected to challenge for a starting role.

Opposite

While Krause started the most matches here last season, Whitney Lauenstein appears to have the inside track at the position. The Waverly graduate is an athletic freak who can jump out of the gym and has a live arm. However, she can also be a bit error-prone. She finished the spring match with 12 kills and seven errors. If she can harness her athletic ability and learn the nuances of elite-level volleyball, she can serve as a weapon for the Husker attack.

Krause was impressive as a freshman at opposite and could figure into this position again, but she seems a better fit at the left pin.

Middle Blocker

Even after losing four middle blockers from last year's team – Lauren Stivrins (exhausted eligibility), Callie Schwarzenbach (transfer), Kalynn Meyer (switched to track



With a live arm and excellent athleticism, sophomore Whitney Lauenstein is squarely in the mix at opposite.

and field) and Rylee Gray (retired) – the Huskers still have loads of talent in the middle. But that comes with a big caveat.

The looming question hanging over the position is whether All-American Kayla Caffey will return for her seventh year of volleyball. She didn't play for two of her years at Missouri and has the option of a third year at NU thanks to the COVID-19 season. She applied for a waiver from the NCAA and was granted it, but Cook said they are still sorting out her eligibility on Nebraska's end. He hasn't explained what that entails but said it was "a really complicated issue."

NU picked up a big transfer portal win this offseason as former Penn State All-American Kaitlyn Hord elected to spend her bonus season with the Huskers. She was one of the best middles in the Big Ten last season as she was third in hitting percentage and blocks per set and brings loads of experience to the position. If Caffey is cleared, she and Hord will serve as one of NU's most dynamic middle blocking tandems in program history.

After those two, the Huskers have touted but unproven depth. Freshman Bekka Allick flashed moments of talent in the spring season and looked ready to handle Division

I competition but also had several rookie moments against Kansas. She will be joined by Maggie Mendelson, who reclassified up a year and was the No. 3 overall prospect in the class. Mendelson, who will also play basketball for the Huskers, was teammates with Allick at the U18 World Championships last fall and helped the U.S team finish third.

Libero/Defensive Specialist

The most straightforward position for the entire team to project might be libero. Lexi Rodriguez was a sensation in her first year, winning Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year and AVCA National Freshman of the Year. She was a steadying force on de-

fense and made a handful of jaw-dropping digs every match. Senior Kenzie Knuckles also returns for her senior year after moving to the middle back position and serving as a change-of-pace attacker.

Gone, however, is the third member of the Legion of Boom as junior Keonilei Akana transferred to Texas after the spring season. The Huskers have several options. They could move Knuckles to right back and have both outside hitters play all six rotations. Or, if Orr takes over setting duties, Hames could play defensive specialist. Cook has called her one of the best defensive setters he's seen and right back is her natural defensive position. The Huskers also can use freshman Maisie Boesiger at

defensive specialist.

Coaching

Cook might be the most known commodity for NU. He's proved his mettle and will now take over the dean of the Big Ten conference after Russ Rose and Cathy George retired this offseason.

Jaylen Reyes was promoted to lead assistant and will coordinate the defense. Kelly Hunter was promoted from volunteer assistant to a full-time role and will work with the setters and offense. Hunter and Reyes have great rapport with the roster. NU could add a volunteer assistant but already has a solid base of knowledge, energy and harmony on its staff.



Nicklin Hames, a second-team All-American in 2021, will be the Huskers "backup" option at setter.



Lindsay Krause played at opposite last season and was named to the Big Ten all-freshman team.



**HEAD COACH
KELLY SHEFFIELD**



WISCONSIN

2021 RECORD: 31-3

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 17-3, THIRD STRAIGHT TITLE

POSTSEASON: NCAA CHAMPIONS

SERIES RECORD: 19-11, NEBRASKA

OCT. 26 AWAY

NOV. 25 HOME

A TOP CONTENDER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

Nebraska won't be sad to see the Badgers seniors go. They own an eight-match winning streak over NU dating back to 2017, including last season's national championship match. Dana Rettke was a five-time first-team All-American and setter Sydney Hilley and libero Lauren Barnes were among the best players at their position.

In their place, Wisconsin hit the transfer portal adding Sarah Franklin and

Caroline Crawford, who both made the all-league team at their previous stops, and Gabby McCaa, who led the Eagles in blocking.

The Badgers also return final four MVP Anna Smrek, a 6-foot-9 sophomore middle blocker. They also return junior middle blocker Devyn Robinson and back-row attacker Jade Demps. Danielle Hart is back for her sixth year after injuring her knee early last season.

The main question is who takes over

at setter. Junior MJ Hammill and senior Izzy Ashburn split duties this spring with the Badgers running a one-setter system. Wisconsin has also not determined who will start at libero with three players taking turns, led by senior Joslyn Boyer. Incoming freshman Gulce Guctekin should also figure into the position.

The Badgers' nonconference schedule includes a few tests against Baylor and Kentucky, plus a match at the 17,230-seat Kohl Center versus Florida.



The Badgers hold up their national championship trophy after defeating Nebraska in 2021.

KEY DEPARTURES

Graduate middle blocker Dana Rettke, exhausted eligibility; graduate setter Sydney Hilley, exhausted eligibility; graduate libero Lauren Barnes, exhausted eligibility; graduate defensive specialist Giorgia Civita, exhausted eligibility; senior outside hitter Grace Loberg, exhausted eligibility.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Junior outside hitter Sarah Franklin, transfer from Michigan State; sophomore middle blocker Caroline Crawford, transfer from Kansas; senior opposite Gabby McCaa, transfer from Boston College; freshman Gulce Guctekin, top libero at 2020 U19 European Championships; freshman outside hitter Ella Wrobel, No. 9-rated prospect.



HEAD COACH
JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG



OHIO STATE

2021 RECORD: 27-6

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 15-5, TIED FOR THIRD

POSTSEASON: NCAA TOURNAMENT REGIONAL SEMIFINALS

SERIES RECORD: 17-9, NEBRASKA

SEPT. 24 HOME
NOV. 13 AWAY

A TOP CONTENDER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

After three straight losing seasons from 2017-19, Ohio State is ready to compete on the national stage. Jen Flynn Oldenburg lost just 10 matches in her first two seasons at OSU and will put her team through the gauntlet this year.

The Buckeyes will have one of the most demanding nonconference schedules with matches against Texas, at Louisville, BYU, at Georgia Tech and at Pitt. Including the Big Ten schedule, OSU will play all eight regional finalists from last season.

Ohio State will have plenty of talent

to handle the challenge with two All-Americans returning in second-team selection Rylee Rader and third-team honoree setter Mac Podraza. In addition, junior opposite Emily Londot had a solid second campaign after earning national freshman recognition in 2020-21. Attackers Mia Grunze and Gabby Gonzales are also back, while libero Kylie Murr, high school teammates with Nebraska's Kenzie Knuckles, returns to anchor the defense.

The one loss OSU suffered was at middle blocker, where Arica Davis, who earned three Big Ten freshman weekly awards, transferred out. Senior Reilly

MacNeill has only played a handful of sets in her career because of injuries and is the only other middle blocker listed on OSU's roster. Also, associate head coach Jill Wilson left to take over the LSU program and volunteer coach Nicole Fawcett, a national player of the year at Penn State, was promoted.

The key for the Buckeyes will be navigating the nonconference schedule. Most of their core has been together for several years and has the potential to reach the final four. Like Nebraska, they host Minnesota and Wisconsin during the season's final weekend.

KEY DEPARTURES

Sophomore middle blocker Arica Davis, transferred to Minnesota; setter Josie Vondran, transferred to LSU.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Freshman outside hitter Chelsea Thorpe, No. 134-rated prospect.



OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

Junior Mac Podraza was first-team All-Big Ten a year ago and returns as the Buckeye setter in 2022.



HEAD COACH
HUGH MCCUTCHEON



MINNESOTA

2021 RECORD: 22-9

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 15-5, TIED FOR THIRD

POSTSEASON: NCAA TOURNAMENT REGIONAL FINALS

SERIES RECORD: 36-11, NEBRASKA

NOV. 26 HOME

A TOP CONTENDER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

The Gophers lose superstar Stephanie Samedy but add to the team's firepower with the top recruit in the nation in outside hitter McKenna Wucherer. Junior Jenna Wenaas will lead the attack but needs to improve her .208 hitting percentage. After a solid freshman season, outside hitter Taylor Landfair played in just nine matches before missing the rest of last year with an injury.

In addition to replacing Samedy, the

Gophers must find help in the middle. Ellie Husemann started 20 matches but was more of a blocker (1.27 per set) than an offensive weapon as she averaged 0.73 kills per set. Transfers Arica Davis (1.53 kills and 1.28 blocks per set) and Naya Gros (1.71/1.31) should provide competition and depth at the position.

While junior setter Melani Shaffmaster returns, the Gophers added depth from the portal in Elise McGhie from Kansas and Northern Kentucky's Miranda Wucherer – McKenna's sister. In

addition, all-Big Ten libero CC McGraw is back for her fifth year, while senior defensive specialist Rachel Kilkelly will also help stabilize the back row.

The Gophers will have a challenging nonconference slate with matches against Baylor, Texas, Florida and Stanford in the first month. If Minnesota can find a third attacker and figure out a rotation at middle blockers, they should remain in the league's top tier and could return to the regional final again.



Junior outside hitter Jenna Wenaas had 22 kills and 19 digs in a five-set win over Nebraska last season.

KEY DEPARTURES

Senior outside hitter Airi Miyabe, exhausted eligibility; senior middle blocker Katie Myers, exhausted eligibility; senior middle blocker Shea Rubright, transfer to Washington State; graduate setter Bayley McMenimen, transfer to Loyola Chicago.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Sophomore middle blocker Arica Davis, transfer from Ohio State; graduate middle blocker Naya Gros, transfer from Michigan State; junior setter Elise McGhie, transfer from Kansas; graduate setter Miranda Wucherer, transfer from Northern Kentucky; freshman outside hitter McKenna Wucherer, No. 1-rated prospect; freshman middle blocker Carter Booth, No. 14-rated prospect; freshman outside hitter Julia Hanson, No. 49-rated prospect.



**HEAD COACH
DAVE SHONDELL**



PURDUE

2021 RECORD: 26-7

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 15-5, TIED FOR THIRD

POSTSEASON: NCAA TOURNAMENT REGIONAL FINALS

SERIES RECORD: 21-8, NEBRASKA

**OCT. 19 AWAY
NOV. 20 HOME**

A TOP CONTENDER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

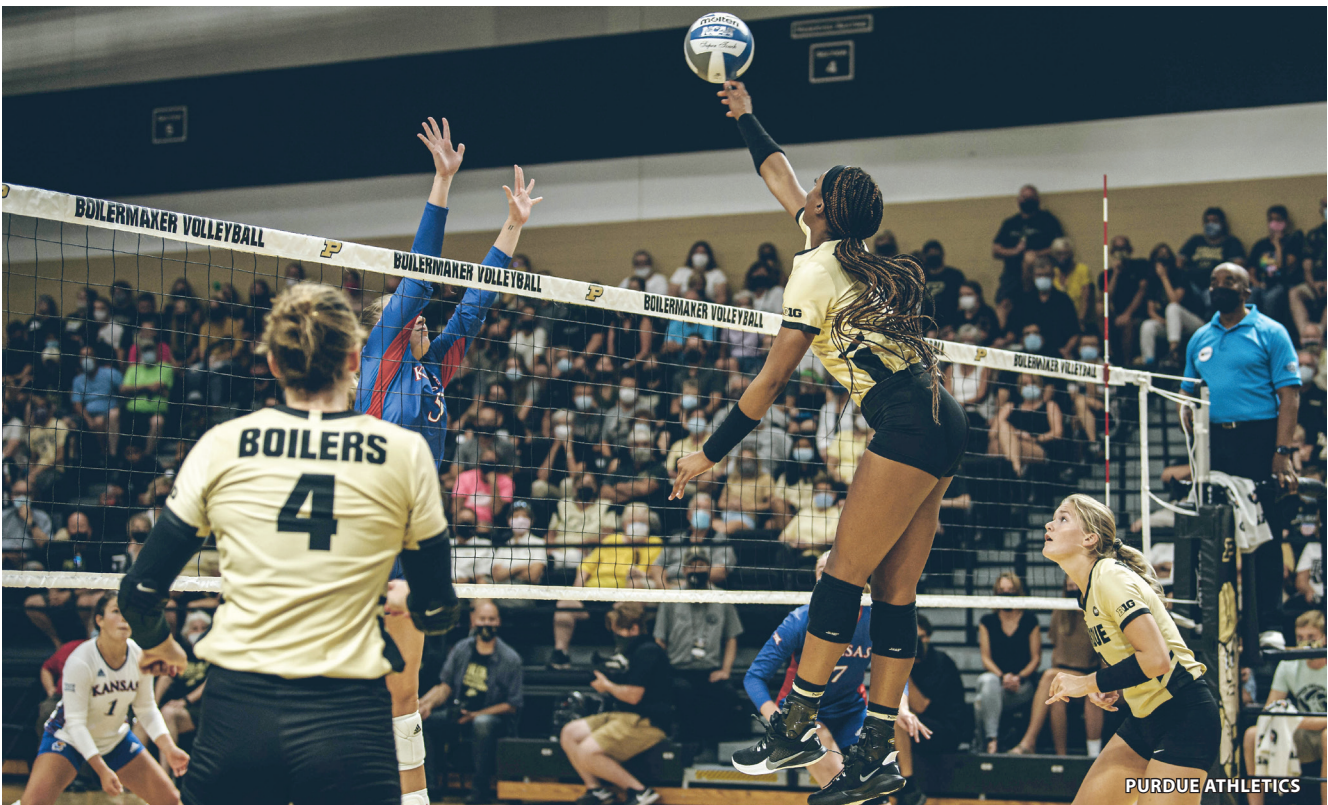
The Boilermakers reached the regional final for the second straight year and fifth time in program history. They fell short of qualifying for their first final four but recorded victories against Wisconsin (twice), Minnesota and Ohio State. Despite those big wins, Nebraska had their number and won twice.

Now Purdue must reload after los-

ing their top two outside hitters (Caitlyn Newton and Grace Cleveland), middle (Jael Johnson), setter (Hayley Bush) and libero (Jena Otec). They've dipped into the transfer portal for three additions to help out at middle blocker, libero and setter, but they'll have to have players step up at the pins to challenge for the Big Ten title.

Sophomore middle blocker Raven

Colvin is the lone player who started more than two matches returning. She played with the U21 junior national team this summer and is poised to build upon that experience. Senior outside hitter Emma Ellis provided a spark off the bench and appeared in 67 sets across 25 matches, but she struggled with consistency, which prevented her from more playing time.



Sophomore middle blocker Raven Colvin is the only returning Boilermaker who started more than two matches in 2021.

KEY DEPARTURES

Junior middle blocker Taylor Trammell, transfer to Penn State; senior setter Hayley Bush, exhausted eligibility; graduate outside hitter Caitlyn Newton, exhausted eligibility; senior defensive specialist Marissa Hornung, exhausted eligibility; senior middle blocker Jael Johnson, exhausted eligibility; graduate libero Jena Otec, exhausted eligibility; senior outside hitter Grace Cleveland, exhausted eligibility.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Graduate setter Grace Balensiefer, transfer from Northern Illinois; junior libero Emily Brown, transfer from Missouri; graduate middle blocker Hannah Clayton, transfer from Iowa; freshman outside hitter Eva Hudson, No. 25-rated prospect; freshman outside hitter Brielle Warren, No. 40-rated prospect; freshman middle blocker Lizzy Carr, No. 133 prospect.

ILLINOIS

2021 RECORD: 22-12

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 12-8, SEVENTH

POSTSEASON: NCAA TOURNAMENT REGIONAL SEMIFINALS

SERIES RECORD: 32-8-1, NEBRASKA

OCT. 22 AWAY

MID-TIER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

The Illini peaked late in the season as coach Chris Tamas, who received a five-year extension in March, earned his 100th career victory by knocking off No. 7 Kentucky in the second round of the NCAA tournament.

Illinois had one of the calmest off-seasons of any Big Ten team, at least from the personnel side. The Illini lost

just three players from last year's squad, two of which were playing in their fifth season.

Illinois had to cancel three of its four spring matches on the court for health and safety reasons. After playing against Danish team Brøndby Volleyball Klub, its two scrimmages against Purdue and an appearance at the Circle City Showcase in Indianapolis were called off.

Despite the lack of on-court opportunities, Illinois has enough chemistry with nearly all their key players returning. They lose just one starter (outside hitter Megan Cooney) but return leading attacker Raina Terry and setter Diana Brown. They'll need to find some back-row replacements, but the Illini should make a push to join the league's top group.

KEY DEPARTURES

Senior outside hitter Megan Cooney, exhausted eligibility; senior libero Taylor Kuper, exhausted eligibility; graduate setter Kylie Bruder, exhausted eligibility.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Sophomore opposite/outside hitter Kayla Burbage, transfer from Missouri; freshman middle blocker Cari Bohm, No. 96-rated prospect.

MARYLAND

2021 RECORD: 19-13

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 7-13, TIED FOR 10TH

POSTSEASON: NONE

SERIES RECORD: 16-0, NEBRASKA

OCT. 1 AWAY
OCT. 29 HOME

MID-TIER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

The Terrapins started last season strong, winning its first 13 matches of the year, including an upset of eventual national champion Wisconsin. However, they struggled to maintain that success during the grind of Big Ten play and finished in the bottom half of the league.

Despite that, Maryland still finished with its most wins since 2010.

Graduate middle blocker Rainelle Jones returns after leading the nation in blocking. She'll have a new partner in the middle after Cara Lewis transferred out, and Anastasia Russ enters from Pitt.

The Terrapins lost four players total:

Lewis and three players in their fifth year. For Maryland to take the next step in program development and not celebrate the accomplishments of a 7-13 league record, it will have to play more consistently and win against Michigan (0-2 in 2021) and avoid losses against Iowa and Northwestern.

KEY DEPARTURES

Senior middle blocker Cara Lewis, transfer to Virginia Tech; graduate outside hitter Paula Neciporuka, exhausted eligibility; graduate middle blocker Hannah Thompson, exhausted eligibility; graduate defensive specialist Kaylee Thomas, exhausted eligibility.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Middle blocker Anastasia Russ, transfer from Pitt; graduate opposite Gem Grimshaw.



MICHIGAN

2021 RECORD: 18-12

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 11-9, EIGHTH

POSTSEASON: NCAA TOURNAMENT FIRST ROUND

SERIES RECORD: 20-3, NEBRASKA

OCT. 8 AWAY

MID-TIER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

Michigan was firmly in the league's middle tier last year. It won every match against teams lower in the standings and split with Illinois and Minnesota. It has to find something special to make its first appearance in the second weekend since 2018.

The Wolverines' lineup was the model of consistency as five players started all 30 matches. In the final spot, May Pertofsky started 26 matches, while Kendall Murray, the older sister of 2023 Nebraska commit Harper Murray, started the other four.

Outside hitter Paige Jones, their

second-best attacker, is gone from that lineup. Instead, UCLA transfer Allison Jacobs should receive first crack at the job. Last year, she averaged 1.88 kills and 1.6 digs per set for the Bruins. Junior outside hitter Jess Mruzik will star in the offense, especially until they get more out of the middle blockers.

KEY DEPARTURES

Senior outside hitter Paige Jones, exhausted eligibility; senior middle blocker Kayla Bair, retired from the sport.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Sophomore outside hitter Allison Jacobs, transfer from UCLA; freshman middle blocker Serena Nyambio, No. 34-rated prospect.



PENN STATE

2021 RECORD: 21-11

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 13-7, SIXTH

POSTSEASON: NCAA TOURNAMENT SECOND ROUND

SERIES RECORD: 25-11, NEBRASKA

OCT. 14 HOME

MID-TIER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

The biggest change for Penn State is the retirement of Russ Rose, Penn State's coach since 1979. Katie Schumacher-Cawley, a 1999 Nittany Lion national championship team member, takes over after serving as an assistant for the past four years. There is a big roster turnover as only 10 players from the

21 listed on last year's roster are back. All three setters on the roster left the program, including four-year starter Gabby Blossom.

PSU added several skilled attackers in Kashuana Williams, who led the Big West in kills per set for Long Beach State; Utah's Zoe Weatherington; and Taylor Trammel from Purdue. In addition,

Seleisa Elisaia, who also earned all-Big West honors at Cal State Bakersfield, and incoming freshman Katie Hurta will likely compete for setting duties. Schumacher-Cawley will have her work cut out, putting the pieces back together after the Nittany Lions failed to make the tournament's second week for the first time since 2003.

KEY DEPARTURES

Head coach Russ Rose, retirement; outside hitter Annie Cate Fitzpatrick, transfer to Florida; graduate middle blocker Kaitlyn Hord, transfer to Nebraska; setter Gabby Blossom, transfer to San Diego; libero Jenna Hampton, transfer to South Carolina; senior outside hitter Adanna Rollins, transfer to Kentucky; sophomore setter Rachel Muisenga, transfer to Michigan State; senior Erika Pritchard, exhausted eligibility; senior outside hitter Jonni Parker, exhausted eligibility.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Senior outside hitter Kashuana Williams, transfer from Long Beach State; middle blocker Taylor Trammel, transfer from Purdue; outside hitter Zoe Weatherington, transfer from Utah; freshman setter/outside hitter Katie Hurta, No. 20-rated prospect; freshman opposite Alexa Markley, No. 32-rated prospect; freshman libero Gillian Grimes, No. 36-rated prospect; senior setter Seleisa Elisaia, transfer from Cal State Bakersfield.



NORTHWESTERN

2021 RECORD: 12-19

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 7-13, TIED FOR 10TH

POSTSEASON: NONE

SERIES RECORD: 16-1, NEBRASKA

OCT. 16 HOME
NOV. 6 AWAY

BOTTOM TIER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

Temi Thomas-Ailara was one of the most reliable attackers in the Big Ten last year. The two-time first-team league selection recorded double-digit kills in every match. The senior outside hitter was second in the conference with 4.59 points per set, trailing only Minnesota's

Stephanie Samedy.

The Wildcats welcome the No. 7-ranked recruiting class, according to PrepVolleyball.com, which is the best in program history. The group is headlined by Ohio's 2020 Gatorade Player of the Year, Kathryn Randorf. The four-member class features three of the top 75 recruits.

Northwestern administration must believe in coach Shane Davis, who is entering his seventh season, as the school signed him to a multi-year contract extension this offseason. The 7-13 record was his best during his tenure. Previously, Davis led the Loyola Chicago men's team to back-to-back NCAA titles in 2014 and 2015.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Freshman middle blocker/outside hitter Kathryn Randorf, No. 60-rated prospect; freshman outside hitter Averie Hernandez, No. 64-rated prospect; freshman setter Sienna Noordermeer, No. 71-rated prospect.

KEY DEPARTURES

None.



MICHIGAN STATE

2021 RECORD: 11-18

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 4-16, TIED FOR 11TH

POSTSEASON: NONE

SERIES RECORD: 23-2-2, NEBRASKA

SEPT. 23 HOME
OCT. 7 AWAY

BOTTOM TIER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

Coach Cathy George retired in January after 17 years at Michigan State. The Spartans brought in Illinois State coach Leah Johnson to take over the program.

The new regime flipped the roster quickly after a disappointing 2021 sea-

son. Five starters left, including the top outside hitter, middle blocker, libero and setter. None hurts more than All-Big Ten outside hitter Sarah Franklin. On top of that, outside hitter Cecilee Max-Brown stepped away from the sport after dealing with injuries.

In their place are a flock of incom-

ing transfers headlined by former Texas libero Nalani Iosia and All-ACC setter Zoe Nunez from Notre Dame. Johnson also brings with her outside hitter Aliyah Moore. If Nunez can connect with her hitters, the Spartans could creep up to the middle of the conference standings.

KEY DEPARTURES

Junior outside hitter Sarah Franklin, transfer to Wisconsin; senior outside hitter Cecilee Max-Brown, medically retired; senior outside hitter Biamba Kabengele, transfer to Pacific; middle blocker Naya Gros, transfer to Minnesota; junior setter Celia Cullen, transfer to SMU; Senior libero Talia Edmonds, transfer to Hawaii.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Graduate setter Zoe Nunez, transfer from Notre Dame; sophomore outside hitter Aliyah Moore, transfer from Illinois State; junior libero Nalani Iosia, transfer from Texas; sophomore setter Rachel Muisenga, transfer from Penn State; sophomore outside hitter Grace Kelly, transfer from Virginia Tech; freshman outside hitter Evie Doezeema, No. 73-rated prospect; freshman opposite Maradith O'Gorman, No. 74-rated prospect.



INDIANA

2021 RECORD: 10-22

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 4-16, TIED FOR 11TH

POSTSEASON: NONE

SERIES RECORD: 21-1, NEBRASKA

NOV. 2 HOME

BOTTOM TIER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

The Hoosiers limped to the finish last year, winning just one of its last 10 matches. After going 16-15 (7-13) in his first Big Ten season, Steve Aird hasn't taken a step forward as Indiana has three, five and four wins in the league and failed to break .500 overall.

The Indiana student newspaper published an article detailing claims of improper behavior by Aird and a toxic culture around the program. However, an internal IU investigation did not result in any sanctions. Aird also replaced both assistants, who took jobs elsewhere. They were replaced by UCLA men's

assistant Spencer McLachlin and high school and club coach Rachel Morris.

Senior Breanna Edwards opted to use her bonus year elsewhere and transferred to San Diego. After running a 6-2 last season, the Hoosiers lost one of the two setters, but Camryn Haworth should take over the reins.

KEY DEPARTURES

Graduate opposite Kari Zumach, transferred to UCF; outside hitter Breana Edwards, transferred to San Diego; graduate setter Brooke Westbeld, exhausted eligibility.

KEY NEWCOMER

Outside hitter Candela Alonso, from OSACC Haro Rioja Vóley in Spain.



IOWA

2021 RECORD: 6-24

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 4-16, TIED FOR 11TH

POSTSEASON: NONE

SERIES RECORD: 35-0, NEBRASKA

NOV. 11 HOME

NOV. 18 AWAY

BOTTOM TIER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

New Iowa coach Jim Barnes arrives after a seven-year stop at Tulane. He was previously the head coach at Baylor, where he led the Bears to a regional semifinal appearance in 2009.

The Hawkeyes lost their two top scorers as opposite/setter Courtney Buzzario (Pitt) and middle blocker Hannah Clayton (Purdue) elected to play their last year elsewhere. To infuse talent, Iowa added seven transfers and two incoming freshmen to bolster their talent.

Senior setter Lily Tessier (Florida State) should lead the offense, while the Hawkeyes added two outside hitters, three middle blockers and a libero to the roster. Senior middle blocker Jacquelyn Caspers, a 6-5 Iowa native, should add a spark on defense.

KEY DEPARTURES

Graduate opposite Courtney Buzzario, transfer to Pitt; middle blocker Hannah Clayton, transfer to Purdue; sophomore setter Jenna Splitt, transfer to Butler.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Middle blocker Delaney McSweeney, transfer from Wake Forest; setter Lily Tessier, transfer from Florida State; middle blocker Anna Davis, transfer from Tulane.



RUTGERS

2021 RECORD: 8-21

2021 BIG TEN FINISH: 0-19, 14TH

POSTSEASON: NONE

SERIES RECORD: 11-1, NEBRASKA

SEPT. 30 AWAY

BOTTOM TIER

By Lincoln Arneal

OVERVIEW

It looks like another rebuilding year for third-year coach Caitlin Schwehofer. After winning six Big Ten matches in the 2020 season, the Scarlet Knights took a step back and failed to record a conference victory last year.

It's nearly a clean slate for Rutgers, which might not be a bad thing, as they won just nine sets all season. RU returns just four players who combined for 26 starts. Libero Madyson Chitty

is also back, but Rutgers had six players exhaust their eligibility. Help might be hard to find as the Scarlet Knights list just three newcomers on their roster ahead of the 2022 season, including just one freshman.

KEY DEPARTURES

Graduate opposite Beka Kojadinovic, exhausted eligibility; senior middle blocker Shealyn McNamara, exhausted eligibility; senior opposite Kamila Cieslik, exhausted eligibility; senior outside hitter Anastasiia Maksimova, exhausted eligibility; senior setter Inna Balyko, exhausted eligibility.

KEY NEWCOMERS

Senior setter Alyssa Nayar, transfer from Arkansas-Little Rock; sophomore libero Lucy Malone, transfer from Coastal Carolina.

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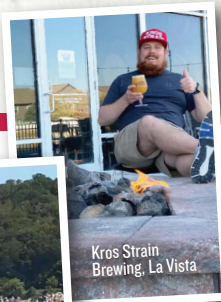
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JULY 4

Omaha Storm Chasers
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Werner Park, Papillion

JULY 28-31

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AUGUST 3-7

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Nonconference

By Lincoln Arneal

Aug. 26

Texas A&M-Corpus Christi

2021 record: 19-10, 13-1 Southland.

Postseason: NCAA tournament first round.

Series record: First meeting.

Key Departures

Outside hitter Julia Carter, transfer to Middle Tennessee; middle blocker Montez Uigaese, exhausted eligibility; middle blocker Rachel Young, exhausted eligibility.

Key Newcomers

McKenna Reising, transfer from Hartford; six incoming freshmen.

Connection to Nebraska

None.

Overview

After a tough nonconference start to the 2021 season, the Islanders righted the ship to dominate the Southland Conference, dropping just two regular-season matches during the final two months. Most of the key pieces return including senior setter Faith Panhans, who was the Southland Player and Setter of the Year, and senior Carissa Barnes, the league's libero of the year.

Aug. 26

Tulsa

2021 record: 14-16, 9-11 American.

Postseason: National Invitational Volleyball Championship First Round

Series record: 1-0, Nebraska, last played in 2015.

Key Departures

Middle blocker Maggie Hembree, exhausted eligibility; middle blocker Callie Cook; setter Roosa Rautio, exhausted eligibility.

Key Newcomers

Four freshmen signed, none rated in top 150.

Connection to Nebraska

Tulsa was supposed to open its 2021

season at Nebraska, but a COVID-19 outbreak forced them to cancel the trip. They will try again this year.

Overview

Senior outside hitter Kayley Cassaday returns after earning all-league honors a season ago averaging 3.99 kills per set. The Golden Hurricanes will enjoy the Devaney Center after missing out last year. The largest crowd they played in front of in 2021 was 1,160 at Wichita State, while not playing a rated opponent all season.

Aug. 27

Pepperdine

2021 record: 22-6, 14-4 West Coast.

Postseason: NCAA first round.

Series record: 5-3 Nebraska, last played in 2005.

Key Departures

Graduating seniors libero Madison Shields; middle blocker Rosie Ballo.

Key Newcomers

Senior outside hitter Riley Patterson, transfer from Pacific; freshman setter Rosemary Archer, No. 15-rated prospect; freshman middle blocker Vanessa Polk.

Connection to Nebraska

Senior outside hitter Kayleigh Hames is the younger sister of Nicklin Hames.

Overview

Rachel Ahrens isn't listed as a newcomer, but she will be a key part of the Waves' success as she returns for a fifth season after leading the team with 4.98 kills per set and 51 aces. Pepperdine returns four other starters, including setter Isabel Zelaya, which should keep it at the top of the West Coast Conference after finishing second last year.

Sept. 1

Loyola Marymount

2021 record: 17-11, 8-10 West Coast.

Postseason: None.

Series record: 4-0, Nebraska, last played 2019.

Key Departures

Outside hitter Megan Rice.

Key Newcomers

Middle blocker Phoebe Awolaye, transfer from Georgia; opposite Michelle Shaffer, transfer from Santa Clara.

Connection to Nebraska

None.

Overview

Of the seven players who started at least 17 matches a year ago, six return for LMU. The Lions' top attacker, setter, passer, blocker and server were all freshmen last year. The two transfers bring tough serving and added depth. LMU was frisky at times taking a set against Purdue and BYU a year ago but also dropped home matches down the stretch. If their young core can take a step forward, they could challenge for an NCAA tourney bid.

Sept. 3

Ole Miss

2021 record: 21-9, 10-8 Southeastern.

Postseason: NCAA first round.

Series record: First meeting.

Key Departures

Setter Kylee McLaughlin, eligibility exhausted; middle blocker GG Carvacho, transfer to Virginia; graduate senior Gabby Easton, transfer to Virginia.

Key Newcomers

Setter/defensive specialist Sommer Daniel, Utah transfer; middle blocker Meauna Booth, transfer from Long Beach State; setter Aly Borellis, No. 29-rated prospect.

Connection to Nebraska

Head coach Kayla Banwarth was a Nebraska assistant coach from 2017-19 and former player from 2007-10. Freshman outside hitter Shayla Meyer is the sister of former Husker Kalyann Meyer.

Overview

In her second year at the helm, Banwarth helped the Rebels improve from 1-19 in the 2020-21 season against an all-SEC sched-



Kayla Banwarth

able to make the postseason last year. Ole Miss won its first 12 matches of the season and made its first NCAA appearance in 11 years. The Rebels return their top three scorers, led by senior outside hitter Anna Bair. Ole Miss will need some time to get acquainted this fall as they added two transfers and six freshmen.

Sept. 7

Creighton

2021 record: 31-4, 16-2 Big East.

Postseason: NCAA tournament second round.

Series record: 20-0, Nebraska; last played in 2021.

Key Departures

Junior setter Ally Van Eekeren, transfer to High Point; senior defensive specialist Abby Bottomley, exhausted eligibility; freshman outside hitter Eve Magill, retired

Key Newcomers

Senior opposite/setter Jazz Schmidt, transfer from Palm Beach Atlantic; freshman outside hitter Ava Martin, No. 41-rated prospect.

Connection to Nebraska

The match will be played at CHI Health Center Arena, the site of the 2022 final four. Creighton also features six Nebraskans on its roster.

Overview

Creighton looked poised to make the second week of the tournament last year, but Kansas knocked off the Bluejays on their homecourt. Creighton suffered a big

setback in the first round as outside hitter Jaela Zimmerman suffered a knee injury against Ole Miss. She is back this year, but it is unknown when she'll be back at full strength. The Bluejays have a pair of outstanding sophomores – setter Kendra Wait and outside hitter Norah Sis, who was VolleyballMag.com's freshman of the year. Creighton should dominate the Big East again this year and will have tough nonconference tests during the first week of September against Kentucky, USC and Nebraska.

Sept. 10

Long Beach State

2021 record: 16-15, 10-10 Big West.

Postseason: None.

Series Record: 4-4, last played in 2006.

Key Departures

Outside hitter Erykah Lovett, transfer to Tennessee; outside hitter Kashauna Williams, transfer to Penn State; setter Kasia Partyka, transfer to Wyoming; senior middle blocker Miranda Canez, exhausted eligibility; senior outside hitter Avery Nelson, exhausted eligibility.

Key Newcomers

Outside hitter Jayden Nembhard, transfer from Kansas State; outside hitter Victoria O'Sullivan, transfer from San Diego State; graduate middle blocker Callie Schwarzenbach, transfer from Nebraska;



Callie Schwarzenbach

setter Zayna Meyer, transfer from BYU.

Connection to Nebraska

Callie Schwarzenbach and Tyler Hildebrand (below).

Overview

Nebraska had a hole late in the scheduling process and was looking for a home match. NU coach John Cook reached out to his associate head coach from last year, Tyler Hildebrand, who had returned to his alma mater for his first head coaching job. The 49ers barely finished above .500 last year, but Hildebrand will field a team that looks quite different. He quickly overhauled the roster by bringing in four transfers, and the 49ers return All-Big West outside hitter Katie Kennedy. The biggest departure was Kashauna Williams, who led the Big West in kills per set. O'Sullivan might be the best option to replace her as she recorded double-digit kills in 20 of her 25 matches for the Aztecs last year.



Tyler Hildebrand

Sept. 13

Stanford

2021 record: 19-11, 13-7 Pac-12.

Postseason: NCAA tournament second round.

Series record: 6-11, Stanford, last played in 2021.

Key Departures

Senior middle blocker Holly Campbell, exhausted eligibility; graduate opposite Mackenzie Fidelak, transfer to Denver.

Key Newcomers

Freshman outside hitter Elia Rubin, No. 6 prospect; freshman setter Kelly Belardi, No. 22 prospect.

Connection to Nebraska

Played five times at final fours, including for 2006 and 2018 titles, splitting those matches.

Overview

The Cardinal struggled during the delayed 2020 season while going 2-8 and missing the NCAA tournament for the first time in program history. However, Stanford took a step toward normalcy last year and made the postseason, where it fell to Minnesota in the second round. Outside hitter Caitie Baird and opposite Kendall Kipp led the attack and were both second-team All-Americans. The Cardinal only lost one starter from last year's team and will add two top-flight recruits to the mix. Stanford always plays NU tough and knocked off a more-talented Husker squad, a win that served as a launching point for star player Sami Francis' freshman season. The Huskers should not plan any black alternatives after wearing black jerseys in 2021 and 2018 and unveiling their black court in 2019, which were all losses.

Sept. 18

Kentucky

2021 record: 25-5, 17-1 Southeastern.

Postseason: NCAA tournament second round.

Series record: 9-2, Nebraska, last played in 2018.

Key Departures

Junior outside hitter Madi Skinner, transfer to Texas; junior middle blocker Sophie Fischer, transfer to Georgia.

Key Newcomers

Graduate outside hitter Adanna Rollins, transfer from Penn State; sophomore setter Lane Jenkins, transfer from Loyola-Chicago; senior outside hitter Kelly Franxman, transfer from Xavier.

Connection to Nebraska

Head coach Craig Skinner was an assistant coach at Nebraska from 2000-04.

Overview

The Wildcats won the national title 15 months ago, but they look quite different now. Only three players remain from the championship match – middle blockers Azhani Tealer and Elise Goetzinger and defensive specialist Riah Walker. The Hus-

ers and UK were on a collision course a year ago in the regional semifinals, but the seventh-seeded Wildcats were upset by Illinois in the second round. As a freshman, setter Emma Grome guided UK to an SEC title, but she'll have to find new attackers as the top two outside hitters are gone. Like her older sister a year before, Madi Skinner transferred to a school in Texas. The Wildcats added Adanna Rollins, who will face off against Nebraska on a third team after spending a year at Penn State following three at Minnesota.



Craig Skinner

2022 HUSKER VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 26, 2022	9:00 a.m.	Tulsa vs. Pepperdine <i>Husker Invitational</i>
Aug. 26, 2022	11:00 a.m.	Texas A&M-Corpus Christi <i>Husker Invitational</i>
Aug. 26, 2022	4:00 p.m.	Texas A&M-Corpus Christi vs. Pepperdine <i>Husker Invitational</i>
Aug. 26, 2022	6:30 p.m.	Tulsa <i>Husker Invitational</i>
Aug. 27, 2022	2:00 p.m.	Texas A&M-Corpus Christi vs. Tulsa <i>Husker Invitational</i>
Aug. 27, 2022	7:00 p.m.	Pepperdine <i>Husker Invitational</i>
Sept. 1, 2022	7:00 p.m.	Loyola Marymount <i>Ameritas Players Challenge</i>
Sept. 2, 2022	6:00 p.m.	Mississippi vs. Loyola Marymount <i>Ameritas Players Challenge</i>
Sept. 3, 2022	7:30 p.m.	Mississippi <i>Ameritas Players Challenge</i>
Sept. 7, 2022	5:00 p.m.	at Creighton
Sept. 10, 2022	3:00 p.m.	Long Beach State
Sept. 13, 2022	TBA	Stanford
Sept. 18, 2022	2:00 p.m.	at Kentucky
Sept. 23, 2022	TBA	Michigan State
Sept. 24, 2022	TBA	Ohio State
Sept. 30, 2022	TBA	at Rutgers
Oct. 1, 2022	TBA	at Maryland
Oct. 7, 2022	TBA	at Michigan State
Oct. 8, 2022	TBA	at Michigan
Oct. 14, 2022	TBA	Penn State
Oct. 16, 2022	TBA	Northwestern
Oct. 19, 2022	TBA	at Purdue
Oct. 22, 2022	TBA	at Illinois
Oct. 26, 2022	TBA	at Wisconsin
Oct. 29, 2022	TBA	Maryland
Nov. 2, 2022	TBA	Indiana
Nov. 6, 2022	TBA	at Northwestern
Nov. 11, 2022	TBA	Iowa
Nov. 13, 2022	TBA	at Ohio State
Nov. 18, 2022	TBA	at Iowa
Nov. 20, 2022	TBA	Purdue
Nov. 25, 2022	TBA	Wisconsin
Nov. 26, 2022	TBA	Minnesota



Once a Husker, Always a Husker

Tony Samuel Played and Coached at a High Level

By Shane G. Gilster

Tony Samuel coached outside linebackers/rush ends at Nebraska from 1986 to 1996. In that time he coached six first-team All-Americans and 12 future NFL players, including first-round draft picks Broderick Thomas (1989), Mike Croel (1991), Trev Alberts (1994) and Grant Wistrom (1998).

“When I became a coach at Nebraska in 1986, Broderick Thomas was a sophomore. I inherited a great talent; he had a great instinct of human nature, could identify the fear in people, had the speed of a running back and size of a defensive lineman. Broderick was a true outside linebacker where you rushed the passer and covered receivers ... a little bit of everything,” Samuel said.

One might think Thomas would be at the top in program history in sacks, but a quick look at the NU record book shows Alberts and Wistrom at Nos. 1 and 2 on the career sacks chart. That could be because Nebraska’s defensive scheme changed after Thomas left for the pros.

“It was similar to the one we ran when I played,” Samuel said of the defense on which Thomas played. “We didn’t change our defense until after the 1991 season. We went more to a four-man front with a defensive end. So Broderick didn’t get to play that position like Trev or Grant did.”

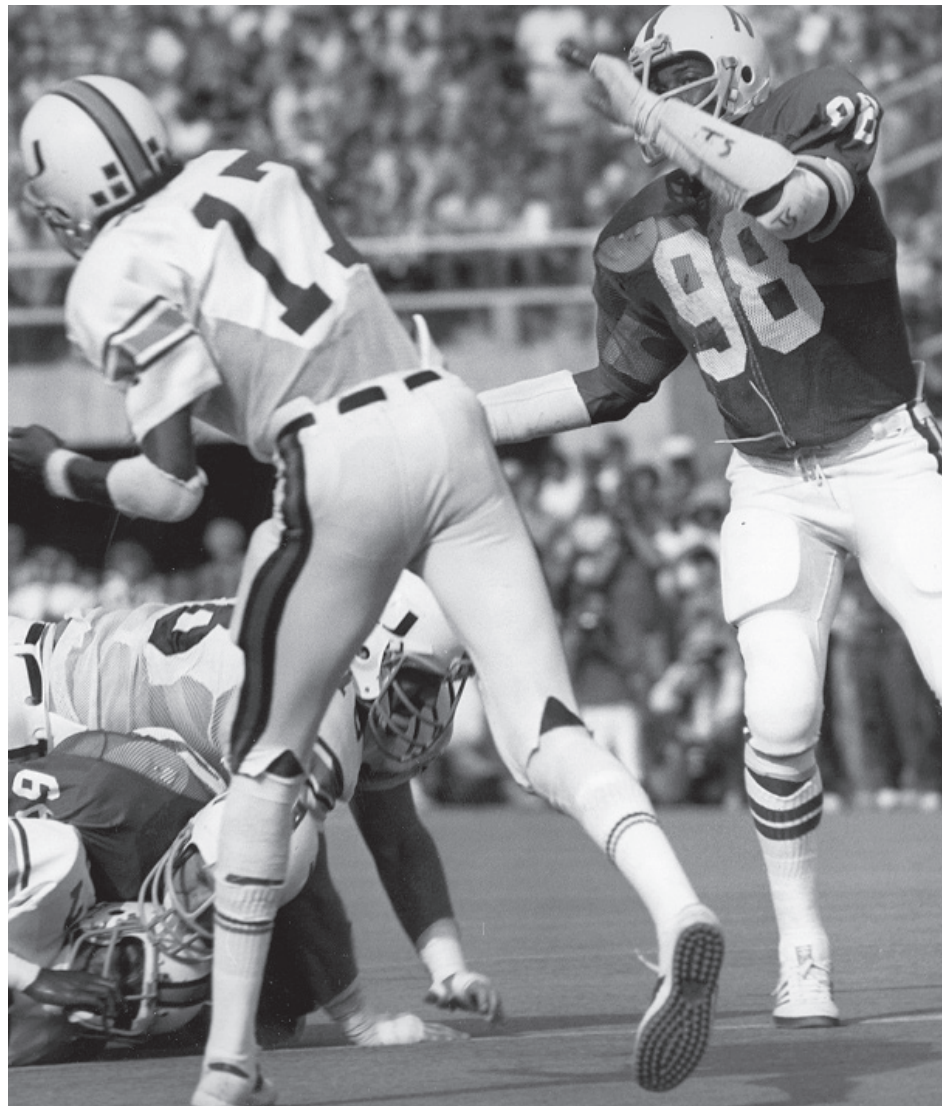
Even though Samuel didn’t recruit Thomas, he developed him and would continue mentoring great players at that position. His recruiting philosophy was to look for big, fast runners who had a knack for play-making.

“Mike Croel was probably the fastest player I ever coached,” Samuel said. “He played receiver in high school, and people recruited him to play that in college. He could cover and rush at the same time. We used him a lot in coverage.”

Samuel may have coached players similar in terms of body type and talent, but each player had his own unique characteristics, and Samuel tried to approach coaching each of them with that in mind. “I didn’t want a cookie-cutter player rather

than someone to be themselves,” he said.

Samuel was a perfect fit to coach defensive ends, having played it for the Huskers from 1973 to 1977. He was a member of Tom Osborne’s first recruiting class and a two-year starter.



Tony Samuel came to Nebraska as a defensive end from New Jersey in 1973 and later coached the position for the Huskers.



In 1990, Samuel (front row, middle) coached the likes of David White (No. 96, front row, far left), Trev Alberts (No. 34, over Samuel's left shoulder), Travis Hill (No. 93, front row at Samuel's left) and Mike Croel, No. 88.

Monte Kiffin was the Husker defensive coordinator in 1973 and his recruiting area included New Jersey. He recruited Samuel from the state, along with Stan Walde-more, Arty Semler, John Minetti and Larry Young, who was Samuel's teammate at Lincoln High School in Jersey City.

"I remember watching the Game of the Century between Nebraska and Oklahoma," Samuel said. "Rich Glover was a senior at Nebraska when we all were seniors in high school. He was from the same hometown as I was. Watching a hometown hero play in a game like that, having 22 tackles from his nose guard position would pique your interest."

Samuel's teams didn't have quite the success that Glover's teams had at Nebraska, but the Huskers never won less than nine games and were one win away in 1975 – a loss to Oklahoma – from playing for the national title in the Orange Bowl.

At the end of his college playing days, Samuel thought he might like to get into coaching. So when NU assistant coach George Darlington asked him to become a graduate assistant coach, he accepted. From 1978 to 1982 he watched and learned from the Husker coaching staff. He also earned his undergraduate degree in education from UNL in 1981.

Samuel was ready to become a full-time coach but there wasn't an opening at NU, so he went to Western Michigan from 1982 to 1983 to coach the defensive line and then did a two-year stint at Stanford before Osborne brought him back to coach at his alma mater.

"If you would look at those years when I was a coach at Nebraska before we won it all, there was always one of those games that got us. We were awfully close to playing for it all," Samuel said. "The scariest game that I had to prepare for was against

Oklahoma State when they had Barry Sanders in 1988. It was also hard to prepare for the wishbone offense of Oklahoma because you only had a week to prepare. Most teams didn't run that style of offense. You had to be disciplined and adjust to the speed of it. It usually took about a quarter for your defense to get used to it."

In Samuel's 11 seasons with the Cornhuskers, they won two national championships (1994 and 1995) and seven conference championships; averaged 10 wins per year; and went to a bowl game every year.

"The last game I coached at Nebraska was against Virginia Tech in the Orange Bowl. That season was a rebuild in 1996 and (Scott) Frost was in his first year at quarterback but we were still really good," Samuel said. "We recovered from that Arizona State loss and had a great year even though we lost to Texas in the Big 12 Championship game when most of the

team was sick.”

Samuel felt he was ready for the next step in his coaching career and decided to seek a job as a head coach.

“So, I went to interview at New Mexico State just to get the experience of the interview,” he said. “I really liked the place, but they never had a history of winning.”

Samuel got the job and put together a coaching staff with a heavy Husker flavor. Barney Cotton was the offensive coordinator and Jeff Jamrog coached the defense. Gerry Gdowski became the quarterbacks coach and recruiting coordinator.

Under Samuel, the Aggies went 34-57 from 1997 to 2004. Their 6-5 record in 1999 was their first winning season since 1992, and a 7-5 record in 2002 was the most wins in a season since 1967.

“The biggest challenge was the schedule because we had to play teams like Georgia and Texas to help get income for our athletic department,” Samuel said. “Also, we couldn’t keep all of our coaching staff together because if another team wanted them, we couldn’t match what the other school was offering in order to keep them.”

The Aggies were 5-6 in Samuel’s last season before he was let go. He got another chance at Southeast Missouri State, going 31-60 from 2006 to 2013. His best season was 9-3 in 2010. The Redhawks finished 7-1 in the Ohio Valley Conference to capture the first conference title and NCAA playoff appearance in the 107-year history of the football program.

Samuel was named OVC Coach of the Year and won the Eddie Robinson Award, given annually to the top head coach in the FCS.

“I wanted to go to a place like Southeast Missouri State that didn’t have a history of success and put a coaching staff together to give it one more try,” Samuel said. “I wasn’t into the money but helping kids. We got to where we needed to get but it was tough to sustain it.”

Samuel’s head coaching career came to an end, but he stayed in the profession as an assistant at Georgia State in Atlanta for two years and then finished up at UNLV from 2016 to 2019.

“Tony Sanchez was hired as the head coach for UNLV,” Samuel said. “He played at New Mexico State and was a student assistant. I coached defensive line and Barney Cotton was the offensive coordinator.”

His stay in Las Vegas was brief. Sanchez and the Rebels never had a winning season,



After Nebraska, Samuel went on to become the head coach at New Mexico State and Southeast Missouri State.

and the school let the coaching staff go after a 4-8 season in 2019.

Now retired at the age of 66, Samuel and his wife, Diane, a native of Crofton, Nebraska, reside in Anderson, Nevada, right outside of Las Vegas. They have four children: Travis, Serena, Phillip and Teryn, and six grandchildren. Travis was a tight end at New Mexico State, and Phillip played basketball at Academy of Art University in San Francisco.

Samuel has no intention of coming out of retirement to coach again, especially with the way college football has been transformed by NIL and the transfer portal.

“The NIL and transfer portal take away from coaching and building relationships with kids. It is hard now to see them through the process in this game of life,” he said. “They can leave whenever they want to in the transfer portal. It is a free-for-all right now and we need some sort of order to it.”

At a high-profile football program like Nebraska, he said, a good leader is important to help navigate the new age of college athletics. Samuel sees Alberts as a perfect fit as NU’s athletic director.

Samuel coached Alberts at Nebraska,

molding him into the best linebacker in the country in 1993 as the Butkus Award winner. Samuel sees Alberts as having similar success as AD.

“I watched Trev grow up and he is very even-minded,” he said. “He understands people from a lot of walks of life, being a farm kid from Iowa and then on from there. I actually think this is a perfect time for Trev to be the athletic director at Nebraska because of his life experiences and being a great leader and player on the team.”

Samuel, who calls himself a Husker, still comes back to Lincoln occasionally to visit old friends and acquaintances.

“There are quite a few familiar faces in the athletic department like Kenny Wilhite, who played for us at Nebraska and was on my coaching staff at New Mexico State and Southeast Missouri State,” Samuel said. “I went to a home game last season when Ray Phillips got inducted into the hall of fame. He was a teammate of mine at Nebraska. And this past January, I stopped by Lincoln to say hello to Trev.”

What’s that they say about Nebraska football players?

“Once a Husker, always a Husker.”

Samuel is the epitome of the phrase.

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2022

HUSKER

FOOTBALL

SCHEDULE



Date	Opponent	Location	Results
Sat, Aug 27	Northwestern *	Dublin, Ireland (Aviva Stadium)	-
Sat, Sep 3	North Dakota	Memorial Stadium	-
Sat, Sep 10	Georgia Southern	Memorial Stadium	-
Sat, Sep 17	Oklahoma	Memorial Stadium	-
Sat, Oct 1	Indiana *	Memorial Stadium	-
Fri, Oct 7	Rutgers *	at Piscataway, N.J.	-
Sat, Oct 15	Purdue *	at West Lafayette, Ind.	-
Sat, Oct 29	Illinois *	Memorial Stadium	-
Sat, Nov 5	Minnesota *	Memorial Stadium	-
Sat, Nov 12	Michigan *	at Ann Arbor, Mich.	-
Sat, Nov 19	Wisconsin *	Memorial Stadium	-
Fri, Nov 25	Iowa *	at Iowa City, Iowa	-

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NU Won On and Off the Field in Tokyo



Story by Shane G. Gilster

The Nebraska football team's 1992 trip to Tokyo to play Kansas State was the first time in program history the Huskers played a game internationally.

The game was originally scheduled to be played in Manhattan, Kansas, in October but both teams agreed during the spring to move the game to Japan to play in the Coca-Cola Bowl. Each team was guaranteed a payout of \$200,000, minus the \$9,000 spent on passports.

"We talked to the players about it. They are always enthusiastic to try something new, so they said they'd like to do it," NU coach Tom Osborne said at the time. "Now, there's a few of them probably wondering whether they did the right thing or not."

Some players were wondering exactly that during the 13-hour flight to Japan. Both teams were on the same flight out of Kansas City, and they shared the same return flight. The planes' seating arrangement consisted of two seats on each side of the aisle and four in the middle. Nebraska got two on the outside and two in the middle, and Kansas State had the same arrangement on the opposite side.

The Huskers entered the contest with an 8-2 record and ranked No. 11 in the



A well-known professional tag-team wrestling duo may have gotten more than they bargained for in an overseas dust-up with some Huskers.

country, while the Wildcats were 5-5. Both teams were playing for bowl game spots. If Nebraska won, it would be Big Eight champions and go to the Orange Bowl. If Kansas State pulled off the upset, it would become bowl-eligible, and Colorado would win the Big Eight.

"There was some pressure and (we) wished we were playing at Kansas State just because of what was on the line," said NU center Jim Scott. "We had to worry about playing in a different environment and having jet lag. It played in our minds early but once we got there, established with the climate and got over our jet lag with some practices underneath us, we acclimated pretty well."

Before a sellout crowd of 50,000, with the best seat costing \$230 in the Tokyo Dome, the game kicked off at 10 p.m. Lincoln time but wasn't televised, so Husker fans had to listen to radios and stay up late to hear the conclusion.

Fortunately for Husker Nation, they didn't have to worry as Nebraska was in control from start to finish. NU built a 21-0 lead midway through the second quarter on their way to a 38-24 victory. Nebraska was led by freshman quarterback Tommie Frazier, named the Coca-Cola Bowl MVP, who

ran for three touchdowns and passed for another. I-back Calvin Jones was the game's leading rusher with 186 yards on 30 carries.

"I thought we played well in the game and were in control from the first snap until the end," said Scott, who spent the game blocking a tough defender named Brent Venables, who is now the head coach at Oklahoma.

The Blackshirts, led by Travis Hill, who was named the game's outstanding defensive player, limited KSU to 62 yards rushing. But the Wildcats put up 10 points toward the end of the first half and added two fourth-quarter touchdowns to make the game seem closer than it was.

"Overall, when you win the Big Eight, you've got to be happy," said Charlie McBride, the Husker defensive coordinator. "You sure would like to win it in style, which I'm not sure we did."

"We've got to play a heck of a lot better than that mentally. We were ahead 21-0 and thought the game was over. We played better in the second half defensively, but you just can't do that."

To be fair to the Husker players, the game atmosphere wasn't exactly what they were used to playing in. They had issues hearing signals and breathing inside the To-

kyo Dome.

Texas Southern University's Ocean of Soul Marching Band was invited to perform at the game and repeatedly played NU and KSU fight songs. There was also constant music blaring through the loudspeakers, which Osborne didn't appreciate.

"It was a very bizarre setting," he said. "The noise was almost as bad as the Washington game when we were on the sidelines trying to talk."

There was little ventilation in the dome with humidity hovering over 50%. "It was taxing to the players," Osborne said. "We were a little concerned how they would hold up."

Said NU linebacker Trev Alberts: "We had been conditioned to play with the temperature in the 40s and in some wind. Then we go into a domed stadium like that and it hit everyone pretty hard."

The Huskers' head trainer George Sullivan asked game officials to place fans on the sidelines to help cool the players, but the fans never arrived.

"Whenever we play in a domed stadium, we order fans," Sullivan said. "The people here said for us not to worry about it, that it would be taken care of. But then you never see them again."



Tommie Frazier, Tom Osborne and Travis Hill accepted the hardware for the Huskers after beating Kansas State in Tokyo.



UNL SPORTS INFORMATION

The Tokyo Dome presented an odd atmosphere for a football game as music, either piped in or performed by a band, played throughout the game, and fans cheered most wildly whenever the ball was kicked.

Jones, who was the workhorse for NU at I-back because his “We-back” partner Derek Brown didn’t make the trip because of an injury, had a hard time breathing.

“To get some air, you have to breathe deeply,” said Jones who has asthma. “When you run, you breathe fast. So, I wasn’t getting any.”

At halftime, Jones filled up with liquids and took a bronchial medication to open his air passages. NU then built its lead to 31-10 in the third quarter, highlighted by Jones’ 38-yard touchdown run. He was subbed out in the fourth quarter as fullback Lance Lewis was moved to I-back with Cory Schlesinger at fullback.

With the game in hand, NU subbed in backups and walked out with a 14-point win, but the score could easily have been more lopsided. But a win is a win. The Husker players and coaches were just relieved to get the game over with.

“I almost starved to death because the food was terrible,” said William Washington, who started at tight end for NU. “The beds were too short; everything was so com-

pact. At the game the Japanese fans would cheer at the wrong times. If we scored, they didn’t say anything, but if we punted, they would cheer; weird stuff like that.”

Then there was the language barrier, which made it difficult on the fans. Only one consonant, “n,” can end a word in Japanese. All other words end in vowel sounds. So, Cornhuskers is Cone-hasukazu and Wildcats is Wairudo-kyatsu.

But the trip had its positives. The Huskers were impressed with how everything was regimented in Tokyo and how far the city was ahead of the United States in terms of technological advancements.

“It gave us an opportunity to see a different culture and to understand that the world is bigger than the United States,” said Will Shields, NU’s All-American offensive lineman. “Tokyo had vending machines that had everything, and the parking meters didn’t accept cash only credit cards, so their technology was impressive. Our team got to hang out together more than what we normally did and do different things.”

One of those nights out together almost

resulted in a public relations mess. Washington, who was also a team captain, explained it this way:

Some Husker players were in a bar/night club after the game on the fourth floor. A Husker and a Kansas State player were on the elevator with two well-known tag-team professional wrestlers who accused the Husker of saying something to one of the female wrestlers who was part of the wrestling group.

The tag-team duo charged the two football players, but the Kansas State player ran out, leaving the Husker alone to fight the professional wrestlers. The doors closed and the elevator went down to the first floor and then came back up. The doors finally opened, and NU defensive lineman John Parrella, who was 6-foot-5 and 290 pounds, stepped in and pulled his teammate out, while punching one of the wrestlers.

“He hit him so hard that his nose went one way and face went the other; blood was everywhere,” Washington said. “(The wrestler) was shouting, ‘Who hit me?’ And I pointed to Parrella, but (the wrestler) didn’t

want any part of him. I had to get the guys out of there before the police showed up, so we left."

The next day on the way to the airport, police surrounded the team buses, Washington said. "I'm on the bus with coach Osborne and was sweating bullets because I didn't tell him what happened the night before. I was afraid that this was going to become an international incident involving our team."

Washington said police boarded the buses but determined it wasn't the Nebraska bunch that

they were looking for, and the Huskers were able to proceed to the airport.

Scott remembered what happened when the team got home: "We had a day or two off and when we had our team meeting, coach Osborne said he heard the team had an All-Star wrestler in its midst. We all started laughing because we didn't know he knew what happened."

In a Japan, where warriors are part of its culture, the Huskers left having displayed a road warrior mentality on and off the field.

Husker Travelogue

(courtesy of 1993 Husker Media Guide)

Tuesday, Dec. 1 – The team left Lincoln in the morning, met up with the Kansas State at the Kansas City airport and departed at 3 p.m. Central via Japan Air for Tokyo with a layover in Vancouver. After a 13-hour trip, the teams arrived in Tokyo at 4 a.m. Nebraska time, but it was 7 p.m. on Wednesday in Tokyo.

Thursday, Dec. 3 – The team practiced at Jingu Baseball Stadium. Coach Osborne and selected players attended a press conference, then in the evening, the team attended a welcome party at Senshu University, a sister school of UNL. There the players met Senshu's football team, known as the "The Green Machine."

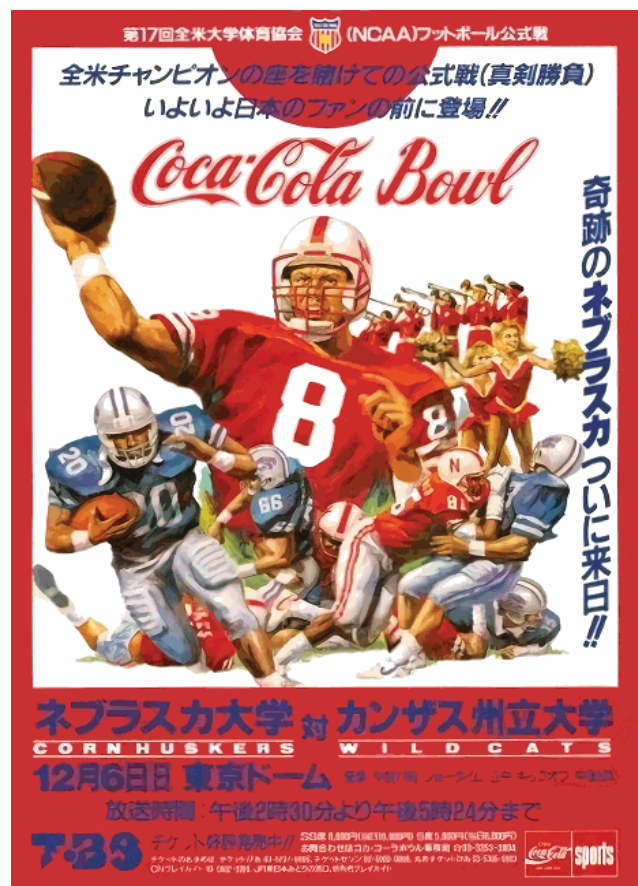
Friday, Dec. 4 – After a second day of practice, both K-State and Nebraska attended a welcome party at Kansas State's hotel. The guests enjoyed dance routines, visiting yell squads and music of the Texas Southern band. Then, the players relaxed as a local rock band performed.

Saturday Dec. 5 – Nebraska went through its usual walk-through practice and took pictures in the "Big Egg," the Tokyo Dome. After lunch, members of the team enjoyed a short bus tour to the Imperial Palace where the emperor lives and to the Tokyo Tower, a lookout tower patterned after the Eiffel Tower. The team turned in early after watching its usual pre-game movie this time on TV via VCR machines.

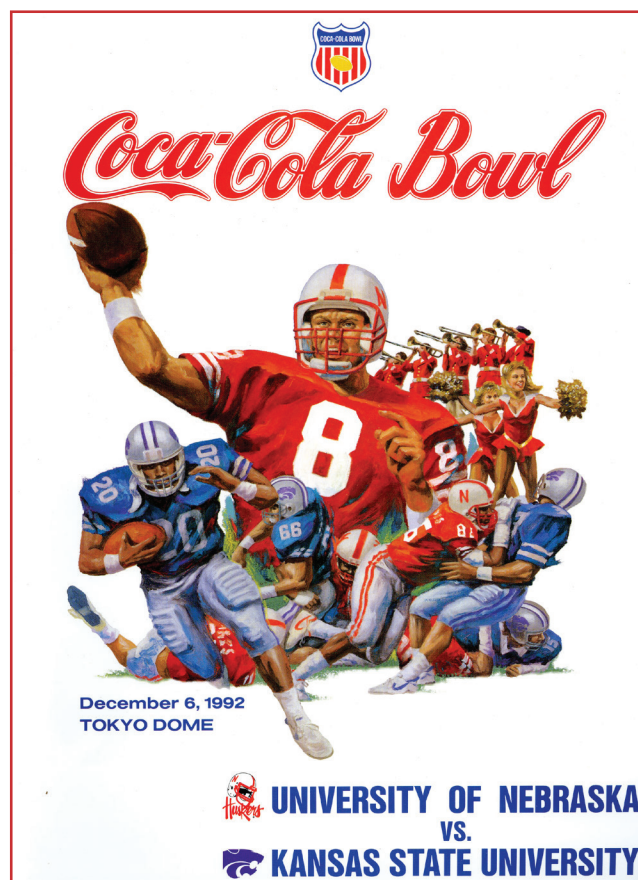
Sunday, Dec. 6 – Game Day. Nebraska defeated Kansas State 38-24 in front of a crowd of approximately 50,000. Kickoff was 1 p.m. in Japan but 10 p.m. back in Nebraska. Approximately 250 Nebraska fans attended. The crowd picked a team, then cheered for good plays, good yell squad routines and great songs of the band, which played throughout the game. After the game, many members of the staff and players visited local restaurants.

Monday, Dec. 7 – The team had bags packed the night before and on Monday morning set out to see the sights. The Huskers visited a temple, several shrines in the Ginza area, then shopped at the local outdoor stores. Both teams arrived at the airport at 2 p.m. in order to get the group of 300 through customs before the 4 p.m. flight. Again, after a short layover in Vancouver and three in-flight movies and meals, Kansas State and Nebraska personnel arrived in Kansas City at 2 p.m. Central on Monday, two hours earlier than their watches read if still set on Tokyo time. Nebraska bused back to Lincoln, arriving at approximately 6 p.m.

Husker outside linebacker Alberts said, "It was an extremely long flight and certainly was different preparing for a game in a foreign country than in Lincoln, but it was an enjoyable experience. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity."



Things can get confusing for Americans in Japan, as the game posters in Japanese, above, and in English, below, attest. For instance, in Japanese, Cornhuskers is pronounced Cone-hasukazu.

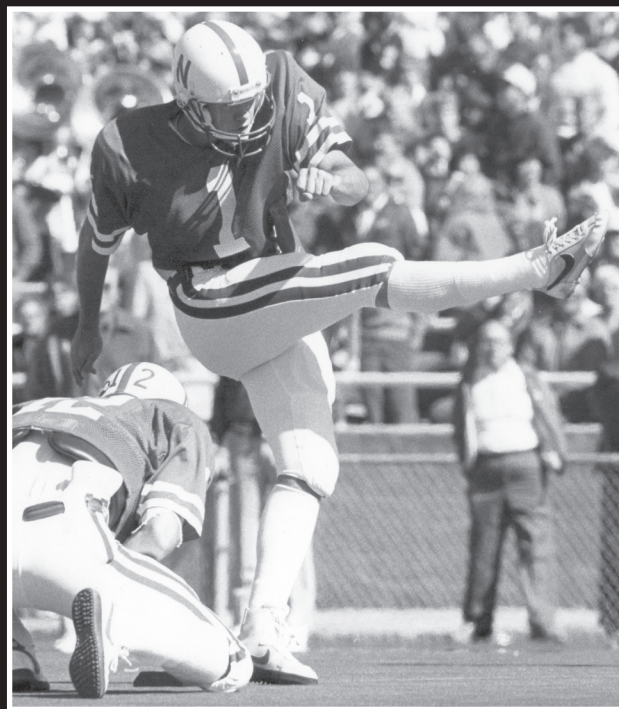


HUSKER TRIVIA

Presented by



1. Who was the last head coach before Bob Devaney to have a winning record at NU?
2. Which of these Husker quarterbacks won the most games in his career? A. Tommie Frazier B. Eric Crouch C. Steve Taylor D. Turner Gill
3. What two years did Tom Osborne win Big Eight Titles in the 1970s?
4. Who were the three first-team All-Americans Nebraska had on its 1995 national championship team?
5. Who holds the Husker career record in yards per kick return?
6. Can you name the only two-time first-team All-American under Tom Osborne in the 1970s?
7. Which two seasons did NU have the most rushing touchdowns?
8. All three of NU's first-team All-Americans in 1984 were from the state of Nebraska. Can you name them?
9. What year did Nebraska have three players picked in the top 10 of the first round of the NFL Draft?
10. Which two players under Tom Osborne played quarterback as a true freshman on the varsity?



Who am I?

I tied the NCAA record with seven made field goals in a game and broke the record with five in the first half.

WHO AM I?
Dale Klein (1985)

ANSWERS
1) Lawrence McCeney "Biff" Jones, 1937-1941 (28-14-4)
2) B. Eric Crouch (35 wins) 3) 1975 & 1978 (Co-Titles
with Oklahoma) 4) Tommie Frazier QB, Aaron Graham
C, Jared Tomich DE 5) Tyrone Hughes, 28.29 (1989-92)
6) Rik Bonness C (1974-75) 7) 1983 & 1997(66)
8) Bret Clark S (Nebraska City), Harry Grimminger OG
(Grand Island), Mark Traylor C (Bellevue)
9) 1937 (Sam Francis 1st, Lloyd Cardwell 7th,
Les McDonald 8th) 10) Steve Taylor (1985) &
Tommie Frazier (1992)



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