

IN BRIEF

Revitalized programs prepare for big games

For decades they dominated college football, one in the Deep South, one in the Northeast and the other in the Heartland.

With iconic coaches and powerful teams, Alabama, Penn State and Nebraska were Saturday afternoon staples. If the Cornhuskers, Crimson Tide or Nittany Lions were on television, Keith Jackson was probably calling the game and something big was on the line.

In recent years, scandals, messy coaching changes and lots of losses have marginalized those three marquee programs.

But on the first day of the second month of the 2005 season, relevance returned to State College, Pa.; Tuscaloosa, Ala.; and Lincoln, Neb.

The Lions, Huskers and Tide all remained unbeaten with big wins against conference rivals in what turned out to be a turn-back-the-clock Saturday in college football.

From 1960-95, Alabama (six), Nebraska (four) and Penn State (two) combined to win 12 national titles.

Under former Nebraska coach Tom Osborne, the Cornhuskers won 84 percent of their games from 1973-97 with a triple-option offense that set the standard for smash-mouth football. When he stepped aside, he handed the program to Frank Solich, his loyal and longtime assistant.

Solich's Cornhuskers went 42-7 before a shocking 62-36 loss to Colorado in their 2001 regular-season finale. It was the beginning of the end.

The Huskers then lost the Rose Bowl 37-14 to Miami, setting the

stage for a 7-7 season in 2002, the school's worst in 40 years. A 10-3 record wasn't good enough for Solich in 2002. He was fired with a 0.753 winning percentage.

In came former Oakland Raiders coach Bill Callahan and out went the option, replaced by the West Coast offense. Huskers fans never realized how good they had it until Callahan's team went 5-6 last year.

Nebraska began this season with three lackluster wins, but Saturday gave reason for hope. Nebraska beat then-No. 23 Iowa State 27-20 in overtime with the flurry of short, high-percentage passes racking up a record-setting day.

The win wasn't enough to get Nebraska back in the rankings, but it certainly makes next week's game against No. 15 Texas Tech in Lincoln, Neb. pretty interesting.

Not quite as interesting as Penn State's game in State College, against No. 6 Ohio State.

Joe Paterno and the Nittany Lions have endured four losing seasons since 2000 — or three more than Paterno had in his first 34 seasons.

With every loss and every outburst at the officials, critics of Paterno mounted. It was reasonable to ask the question: Would Penn State be better off without the second-winningest coach in major college football history?

Paterno has answered that question by guiding the Nittany Lions to their first 5-0 start since 1999, Joe Pa's last national title contender team.

Led by a group of speed-burning freshmen and maturing multidimensional quarterback Michael Robinson, Penn State pasted Minnesota 44-14 on Saturday.

That wasn't the only beating a ranked team took as Mike Shula's Crimson Tide beat Florida 31-3.

The last 23 seasons have seen some tremendous highs for the Tide — a national title under Gene Stallings in 1992, Southeastern Conference championships under Mike DuBose and Bill Curry.

But recently the program has been known more for NCAA violations and embarrassing scandals.

Shula got the job when Mike Price was fired for a drunken night of partying at a strip club. The former Tide quarterback wasn't a popular choice and a 10-15 record over his first two seasons did nothing to help win over finicky fans. After crushing Florida, the Crimson Tide (5-0) moved to No. 7 in the AP poll.

— The Associated Press

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Horoscope by Holiday Mathis

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (October 3). As you assess your life thus far, part of you is surprised you're not where you planned to be — and the other part of you is relieved. You sometimes take the circuitous route and that allows you to live your life more fully! This month features a windfall. Many of you will marry in December. Taurus and Scorpio people are enamored of you. Your lucky numbers are: 10, 4, 33, 28 and 13.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Whether the task was big or small, the important part is that you did it! So you can laugh in the face of all the woulda-coulda-shouldas. Give yourself credit, for goodness' sakes, or it's very difficult to motivate yourself to do more!

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You'll know a worthy endeavor because it seems to have an engine of its own — you're just along for the ride. It's time to question any project that has seemed hard for a long time now.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Where is all of your energy coming from? Note this, because it's about to change. Eventually, you will be completely fueled by new and different resources. Now if only the whole planet would follow your lead.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Talk to your smartest and most creative friends. One good idea leads to another. Things don't have to be difficult or complicated to be brilliant. Keep it simple.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The stars emphasize your relationship with your parents. Of course, everything is their fault, but it's a waste of time to pin the blame on them. Move on by taking it upon yourself to mend the damage.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Usually the humble

and modest type, you have almost arrogant confidence now — so much so that others can't help but defer to your judgment. It feels good to be trusted.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). With one part persistence and two parts information, you could rule your workplace. Ask around to be sure yours is the most effective approach. A Capricorn and an Aries are the most likely to keep you in the know.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Basically, you need more money. If you think too small, you'll have a hard time earning. Broaden your mind to more possibilities by spending time with someone whose expertise is vastly different from your own.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Love is getting to be like a ride on the Ferris wheel — the ups and downs couldn't be more predictable. Get off this ride! Even a roller coaster would be better or at least more thrilling.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Your inner voice is like Jiminy Cricket, a dandy little pest chirping about what's right and wrong. Someone you admire tries to convince you that a certain activity is OK, but you and your bug know it isn't.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Your favorites are the mixed bag, the motley crew and the anything-can-happen kind of day — like today. Keep the schedule light, and make no promises so that you can jump at a moment's notice.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You're in a sensitive mood. You'll have to decide if you want someone to tell you that you're perfect or tell you the truth. You will grow from either type of comment. It just depends on what you feel you can handle now.

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The Other Coast by Adrian Raeside



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