



- Saturday, October 8, 2011

- Memorial Stadium, Lincoln, Nebraska

- 8:00 p.m. (ET)

- TV: ABC -

The program is accustomed to winning....it's traditional....but they're stinging as they come off of a deflating defeat a week ago. They have an athletic young quarterback, but their passing game isn't getting passing grades. And the Big Ten schedule they're up against makes them a longshot to win the conference this year....but enough about the [Nebraska Cornhuskers](#) .

There are lots of other parallels between the Buckeyes and their opponents this Saturday night...from their former-Buckeye head coaches, to the seas of scarlet in their stadiums. But they'll be meeting for the first time in more than half a century in this, the first ever Big Ten home game for the Cornhuskers. And that alone is enough to grab the nation's attention. The national ABC-TV thing helps too.

Bo Pelini's Cornhuskers (4-1, 0-1) come into the game ranked 14th in the media poll, and 15th in the coaches' ranking. Nebraska has lost their only two previous meetings with Ohio State, but that's in the realm of ancient history...in 1955 and 1956. On the other hand, Pelini is 2-0 in his two previous coaching forays against his alma mater...as a graduate assistant with Iowa when they beat OSU in 1991, and as defensive coordinator with LSU in the BCS championship game following the 2007 season. Pelini apologized for his team's performance against Wisconsin last week, calling it "a joke", and he's hoping the 315th consecutive sellout in Lincoln will help get his troops back to playing "Nebraska football".



Besides Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, what will be unfamiliar to Ohio State (3-2, 0-1) this weekend is playing the role of underdog in a Big Ten game, let alone as a double-digit dog. The line reflects the fact that an awful lot of people think Nebraska is going to stomp a mudhole in the Buckeyes' back and walk it dry on Saturday night. And those people are not exactly out on a limb.

The setting will be intimidating, the Cornhuskers players will be amped...did I mention first ever Big Ten home?...yeah. They paid their "Welcome to the Big Ten" dues in a big way last week, getting [drubbed in Madison](#) by the Badgers, so they'll be in the mood to make a statement...to the conference and to the nation. Meanwhile, it's not unfair to say the Ohio State program is reeling.

State of the Buckeyes

As Ohio State stares a possible 0-2 Big Ten record in the face, the Buckeyes' recent track record of not losing more than one conference game for the last six seasons seems ever more remarkable. And it has been seven years since OSU has lost consecutive games, another notable streak that is in serious jeopardy this Saturday.

We heard a lot this offseason about how the Buckeyes were ticked off about the way their coach and their program were portrayed during the scandals, and how they wanted to do their talking on the field this fall. A nationally-televised matchup against one of the teams looking to replace them atop the conference would be a good time and place to start showing it. I imagine the OSU coaches may have used the word "pride" once or twice in practice this week.

After the rock named Bobby DiGeronimo was rolled over a few weeks ago to expose three OSU players taking improper payments for attending a charity event sponsored by the Cleveland-based booster, a few [more problems](#) have crawled out from under it. Two of the players the Buckeyes thought would be returning to action this week from their 5-game suspensions had their furloughs extended when additional violations involving DiGeronimo came to light.

Drip, Drip, Drip

DeVier Posey and Dan Herron were reported to have received overpayment for summer jobs they were supposedly working for DiGeronimo. Those two, along with offensive lineman Marcus Hall have been suspended for the Nebraska game while applying for reinstatement by the NCAA for future games. Some of the offending activity is said to have taken place during 2011...in other words, after the other OSU player scandals were exposed and punished.

It's just one more in a long list of self-inflicted wounds by Ohio State football players, but it is particularly galling that Posey and Herron were involved. These two are among the talents most missed by the struggling OSU offense, but the oft-repeated claim that the two seniors are important team "leaders" is rendered laughable by this latest example of their lack of judgment and concern for their teammates.

And speaking of laughable...OSU President Gordon Gee was in the news again this week for saying publicly that Ohio State is "the poster child for compliance". It is true that when the NCAA examined the Ohio State compliance office as part of their thorough investigation of the program, they determined that the school more than meets NCAA standards in that area. But there's a time for tooting the department's horn...and this week wasn't it. Gee continues to function for OSU's public relations much as Anthony Weiner did for that of Congress.

On the injury front, one wide receiver may be back, and another is lost for the season. Philly Brown may be able to play Saturday after missing time with an ankle injury, but redshirt freshman Verlon Reed has a torn ACL and is out for the season after getting hurt on the last-second onside kick against MSU.

Senior defensive end Nathan Williams end will not play against Nebraska, and I'm hearing talk this week that he too might not return at all this year after undergoing an arthroscopic knee procedure four weeks ago. His backup Solomon Thomas is eligible to return this week from his Tatgate suspension, but it was revealed recently that Thomas suffered a broken bone in his leg this past summer, and might not be completely ready to go yet.

Key Personnel - Nebraska



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