Oklahoma, Nebraska, may be NCAA's best

By CHRIS WIGHTMAN
Collegian Sports Writer

I'm sure it was the same everywhere this summer. Penn State students picking up their favorite sports magazine, glimpsing through to see the 1983 college preseason predictions.

And to the devout Penn State fan, who after last season thought that University Park had become the new football mecca, it must have come as quite a surprise when the none of the polls had the Lions ranked No. 1.

At least that's the way it was where I lived this summer. Many a day would be spent on the sun-drenched beaches of Ocean City, N. J., with my six Penn State fanatic roommies, discussing how the Lions got the short end of the stick in the polls.

"I can't believe we weren't ranked No. 1," Shane said.

"I know what you mean," Walter added. "I thought The Sporting News would have a little more sense than to rank us No. 18."

"Hey yeah," Dave said, "I have trouble even counting that high."

"Isn't that the poll that had Notre Dame on top," Brian said in a joking manner. "I thought ND was 6-4-1 last year and we were 11-1. And didn't we beat them too? Maybe I mixed the teams up."

"Listen to this," Greg blurted in, "one poll I saw didn't even rank us in the top 20. That ain't right!"

"What do you think, Wighty?" Mike asked."

And rolling over onto my stomach I looked out into the sea. I saw a few mighty waves that came crashing toward the shore. Why, even a couple of the waves were so powerful, they reminded me of Nebraska's and Oklahoma's 1983 rosters.

Then, from nowhere, came a wave that was sloppy. Half of it was sort of like the mighty waves, but the other half was sought of wobbly. It kind of represented the defense and offense of the Penn State roster.

I rolled back over and said, "Guys, you're going to have to wait until the fall to get any answers from me. I turned my brain off last May, and it doesn't work again until August 26."

Needless to say, my answer was greeted with a lot of grief. But what can you do.?

Well, the fall is finally here and my brain is back in service. And now I can sit down and logically reveal my top 20 for the 1983 collegiate football season.

No. 1 Oklahoma

There's one reason why Oklahoma will be ranked numero uno — Marcus Dupree. This sensational sophomore burst onto the collegiate scene in unbelievable style last year. Dupree ran for 905 yards, scoring 13 touchdowns and averaging a whopping seven yards a carry.

Complementing Dupree in the backfield will be junior Jerome Ledbetter, who started for the team in 1980, but has sat out for the last two seasons. And watch out for Spencer Tillman, an All-American in high school who redshirted last year. With Tillman, the Sooners will now have the capability to mix up their ground game.

And on the defensive side of the coin, Oklahoma is almost as strong. This year's Sooner defensive unit boasts 10 returning starters. Senior tackle Rick Bryan and junior end Kevin Murphy lead this core of experienced Sooners; a unit which could prove to be the best in the nation.

No. 2 Nebraska

The only difference between the Sooners being ranked No. 1 and the Cornhuskers in that spot lies in the team's defenses. It's like night and day. While Oklahoma has its whole defense returning, Nebraska's defense only returns four, none of which are seniors.

But one strong point for the Cornhuskers is the fact that what their team is missing in the defense department, it makes up in the offense department. With quarterback Turner Gill, wingback Irving Fryar and I-back Mike Rozier, Nebraska has the best backfield in the college ranks. Gill, who completed 90 of 166 passes for 1,182 yards, adds a versatile option for the Cornhuskers because of his ability to run with the ball. The superb rusher ran for 497 yards and four touchdowns on only 101 carries last season. Most rushers in the college ranks can't even do that.

No. 3 Texas

The Longhorns are also another team that could very well be near the top. Again, the main reason for the Longhorns' success this year will come from its experience. Texas has seven starters returning on offense and 10 returning on defense. The Longhorns approached the 1982 season minus 16 starters, from its 1981 club, all of which were picked up by the pros, and still managed to score a 9-3 record.

I feel the Longhorns will have enough to get passed Auburn and SMU, but when it faces Oklahoma, I can see that game being for the national championship.

No. 4 Penn State

It's the usual story for me, my heart says the Nittany Lions are the champs, but my wallet says Oklahoma. It's unrealistic for anybody to think that Lion Head Coach Joe Paterno and his boys can pull off another championship this year after losing Todd Blackledge and Curt Warner, along with five others on the offense.

But then again, since when has Penn State become real. It seems like year after year the preseason polls always rank Penn State in some high slot, and at the end of the season Penn State finishes seven below it.

There's three questions that loom large over Beaver Stadium this year. Will junior quarterbacks Dan Longeran and Doug Strang be able to fill in for the departed All-American Blackledge (Even though Kenny Jackson is one of the best receivers in the nation, he can't throw the ball at the same time). Can senior Jon Williams handle being the star of the show now that the other star (Warner) is gone? And even if the answer to the first two questions are yes, can Penn State handle its schedule, which is the toughest in the nation.?

No. 5 Auburn

Look out Southeastern Conference, you've got another big powerhouse to contend with. The War Eagles just seem to get better year after year. Last year, preseason polls didn't even rank Auburn, but they finished in the top 20 anyway.

This season Auburn welcomes back 17 starters from last year. Out of those 17, 10 are on the offensive squad, which works out of the wishbone. Along with the experience, Auburn probably has the best running back tandem in the nation in Bo Jackson and Lionel James. Jackson ran for 829 yards and nine touchdowns while averaging 6.5 yards a carry. James totaled 779 yards in 113 carries for a 6.9 average.

No. 6 Notre Dame

The Fighting Irish have been the center of most of the prescason hoopla for 1983. After all, what kind of writers rank a team that has posted a 5-6 and 6-4-1 record in the last two seasons No. 1? Not this one, that's for sure. I'm as holy as the next guy, but I think God found out that the team has been riding on his name long enough.

Normally, I wouldn't have even put the Irish in my top ten. Reason being, their best rusher Phil Carter graduated along with their leading receiver Tony Hunter and their No. 1 tackler Mark Zavagnin. However, this year the Irish cemented their chances at a good record by eliminating the tough teams on its schedule. The Irish dropped Michigan, Arizona and Oregon and added Army, Colorado and South Carolina. They turned three potential losses into three cakewalks. I think Gerry Faust should get to confession A.S.A.P.!

No. 7 Florida State

The Seminoles just didn't beat teams last year, they crushed them. For instance, Florida State crushed Southern Illinois (59-8), East Carolina (56-17) and South Carolina (56-26). However, the Seminoles turned around themselves and got massacred by a team they should have beat, Louisiana State (55-21).

I think a dark horse candidate for the Heisman might be the Seminoles' quarterback senior Kelly Lowery. Lowery moved from third string to first last year, and still ranked up there with the nation's best quarterbacks, hitting on 113 of 217 passes for 1,671 yards.

No. 8 Michigan

With the graduation of star Anthony Carter, Michigan Head Coach Bo Schembeckler's forces will return to the game plan that has made Schembeckler one of the best coaches — defense.

No. 9 Arizona

Speaking of the nation's top quarterbacks, the Wildcats have the best this year in senior Tom Tuniclife. The strong-armed, smart signal caller led a strong Arizona passing attack last year, completing 176 out of 328 attempts for 2,520 yards.

The Wildcats, after the season comes to an end, might be able to boast the best defensive front line. Junior tackles John Barthalt and David Wood combined to make 139 tackles, last year. Noseguards Ivan Lesnik and Joe Drake will also be alternation in the three man spot.

No. 10 North Carolina

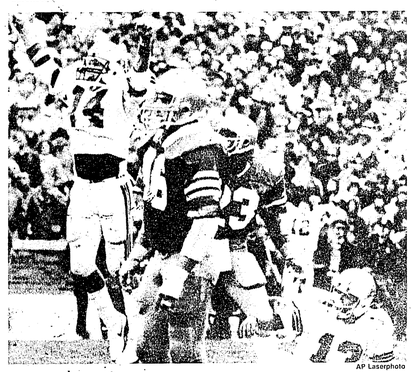
This could be the only unbeaten team in the nation this year. That's right, the Tar Heels are my dark horse favorite to be the national champions this year. With North Carolina's powerful interior on the offense, offset by an excellent passing game led by a core of fine receivers, the team might not lose. But then again, the Tar Heels have one of the more easier schedules in the nation.

Well, that's it for the top ten. And this is how I see the rest of the top twenty.

No. 11 Iowa
No. 12 SMU
No. 13 Ohio State
No. 14 Southern Cal
No. 15 Maryland
No. 16 Miami (Fla.)
No. 17 West Virginia
No. 18 Georgia
No. 19 Texas A&M
No. 20 Illinois

Wighty's Top 20 picks

1. Oklahoma
2. Nebraska
3. Texas
4. Penn State
5. Auburn
6. Notre Dame
7. Florida State
8. Michigan
9. Arizona
10. North Carolina
11. Iowa
12. SMU
13. Ohio State
14. USC
15. Maryland
16. Miami
17. West Virginia
18. Georgia
19. Texas A&M
20. Illinois



AP Laserphoto

Arizona's Kevin Ward (14) jumps for joy as teammate Max Zendejas (13) and two Notre Dame players watch Arizona's winning field goal fly between the posts last season. Both teams have bright futures this year, according to national and local pollsters.

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Bucs hold on to first place, downing Reds 2-1

CINCINNATI (AP) — It was with a twinge of regret that Pittsburgh Pirate starter Rick Rhoden came out of the game last night.

Rhoden was working on a six-hit shutout through seven innings against the Cincinnati Reds when he felt a twinge in his right arm.

Rather than risk a serious injury, Rhoden yielded to Kent Tekulve in the bottom of the eighth. The reliever gave up a run in the ninth, but held on to preserve a 2-1 victory over the Reds that strengthened the Pirates' hold on first place in the National League East.

"I still felt good," Rhoden, 10-11, said of his unplanned premature exit. "When you have a shutout going, you always feel good.

"I hated to leave the game, especially with the shutout. But I've still got six or seven starts to go, and it's better to come out now and hope I can make the rest of them."

Pirate Manager Chuck Tanner said he didn't expect the pitcher to miss a turn in the rotation.

Rhoden scattered six singles and allowed only one runner to reach second base. He also singled home a run in the fifth off loser Mario Soto, 14-11, who gave up just five hits over eight innings and struck out eight.

"We don't really tear the cover off the ball against Mario," Rhoden said. "He pitched a game tonight that he'd usually win."

Soto gave up a run in the third when Marvell Wynne rapped a 1-0 pitch over the right field wall for a solo homer, his sixth of the season.

Rhoden drove in Pittsburgh's other run in the fifth. Dale Berra doubled to right-center field with one out, and Rhoden lined a single to center for a 2-0 advantage.

"I don't care who hit the ball. I was just happy to get the second run," Rhoden said.

That's all Soto would allow. He permitted just one more hit after the fifth, and reached 200 strikeouts for the second consecutive season when he fanned Dave Parker in the eighth. He trails only Philadelphia's Steve Carlton, who leads the major leagues with 219 strikeouts.

"No. 200 doesn't mean anything," Soto said. "I wish I'd won No. 15 and didn't strike out anybody."

The Reds made a last-inning bid against Tekulve, who had to come out of the bullpen after just a few warm-up tosses to relieve Rhoden in the eighth. Tekulve put the Reds out in order in the eighth, then surrendered a leadoff triple to Gary Redus in the ninth.

Dave Concepcion grounded out to bring Redus home, and Johnny Bench kept the Reds alive with a single. But Tekulve retired Ron Oester and Paul Householder on fly balls to record his 16th save.

Cardinals 6 Astros 1

HOUSTON (AP) — Willie McGee knocked in four runs with a double and a single to pace the St. Louis Cardinals to a 6-1 victory over the Houston Astros last night.

McGee gave the Cardinals a 2-0 edge in the first inning with a two-run double off loser Mike Madden, 6-3, and made it 4-0 in the sixth when he drove in two more runs with a single.

Double plays in four of the first five innings kept Madden out of further trouble, but a double play the Astros didn't get in the sixth inning cost them dearly. Madden walked pitcher John Stuper, and Lonnie Smith hit an apparent double-play ball to shortstop Dickie Thon, but second baseman Bill Doran muffed the toss for an error.

Ozzie Smith's sacrifice bunt advanced Stuper and Lonnie Smith, and McGee came through with a two-run single to make it 4-0.

Stuper, 9-8, allowed 10 hits, struck out three and walked one while notching his fourth complete game.

Padres 6 Phillies 5

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Sixto Lezcano tripled home the tie-breaking run and Luis Salazar followed with a two-run homer in the eighth to carry the San Diego Padres to a 6-5 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies last night in the opener of a rain-delayed doubleheader.

The score was tied 3-3 when Alan Wiggins opened the Padres' eighth with a single off Steve Carlton, who failed for the third straight time to gain his 298th career victory. Instead, Carlton suffered his 14th loss in 26 decisions this season.

Cubs 7 Braves 5

ATLANTA (AP) — Mel Hall knocked in five runs with two homers, including a grand slam, and Keith Moreland lashed a tie-breaking, two-run shot in the seventh inning to give the Chicago Cubs a 7-5 victory over the Atlanta Braves last night.

Atlanta was ahead 4-0 when Hall connected against Atlanta starter Phil Niekro in the fifth inning with the bases loaded, sending a drive deep into the right field seats for his 10th home run of the season and the first grand slam of his career. Then, after the Braves had regained the lead in the sixth, Hall opened the seventh with a drive over the fence in left, again tying the score.

Leon Durham followed with a walk and scored when, two outs later, Moreland powered a shot over the fence in left. It was Moreland's 14th homer of the season, but only his first since July 13.

Bill Campbell, 4-7, gained the victory for Chicago but needed help from Lee Smith, who entered the game in the seventh and earned his 21st save.

Gene Garber, 2-4, was tagged with the loss, which dropped the Braves out of the National League West lead for the first time since July 4.

Orioles 9 Royals 2

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Left-hander Scott McGrégor, backed by Cal Ripken's two-run homer in the first inning, won his 16th game of the season last night as the streaking Baltimore Orioles defeated the Kansas City Royals 9-2 for their sixth consecutive victory.

McGregor, 16-5, held the Royals to eight hits, struck out two and walked one in going the distance for the 11th time this season.

The Orioles, winners in 13 of their last 16 games, broke the game open with five runs in the ninth, highlighted by John Shelby's grand slam.

Ripken followed Dan Ford's one-out triple in the first with a home run to center field. It was Ripken's 20th of the season and 22nd in 160 1-3 innings off loser Gaylord Perry, 6-13.

White Sox 2 Rangers 1

CHICAGO (AP) — Richard Dotson tossed a three-hitter and Carlton Fisk and Julio Cruz hit run-scoring singles to lead the Chicago White Sox to a 2-1 victory over the Texas Rangers last night.

Dotson, 15-7, retired the first 12 batters he faced before Larry Parrish singled leading off the fifth.

Dotson struck out four and walked one as the White Sox won their third game in a row and increased their lead in the American League West to 8½ games over Kansas City, which lost to Baltimore 9-2.

Mike Smithson, 7-13, took the loss. The Rangers have lost seven of their last eight and 13 of 17. During that stretch, they have scored just 33 runs.

Chicago took a 1-0 lead in the first when Rudy Law led off with a triple and scored on Fisk's single. Vance Law opened the fifth with a single, stole second and scored on Cruz's single.

Twins 5 Tigers 4

DETROIT (AP) — John Castino's 11th-inning double with two outs drove in the winning run as the Minnesota Twins beat the Detroit Tigers 5-4 last night.

Tom Brunansky opened the inning by drawing a walk from reliever Aurelio Lopez, 8-7, and moved to second on a wild pitch. Brunansky went to third on a fly out by pinch hitter Mickey Hatcher and scored when Castino lined a double into the right-field corner.

Rick Lysander, 4-10, who took over for starter Frank Viola, allowed just one hit over five innings and Ron Davis pitched the 11th inning for his 26th save.

Detroit took a 1-0 lead in the first when Alan Trammell belted his 13th home run. It was the 30th home run Viola has given up this season — the most by any American League pitcher.

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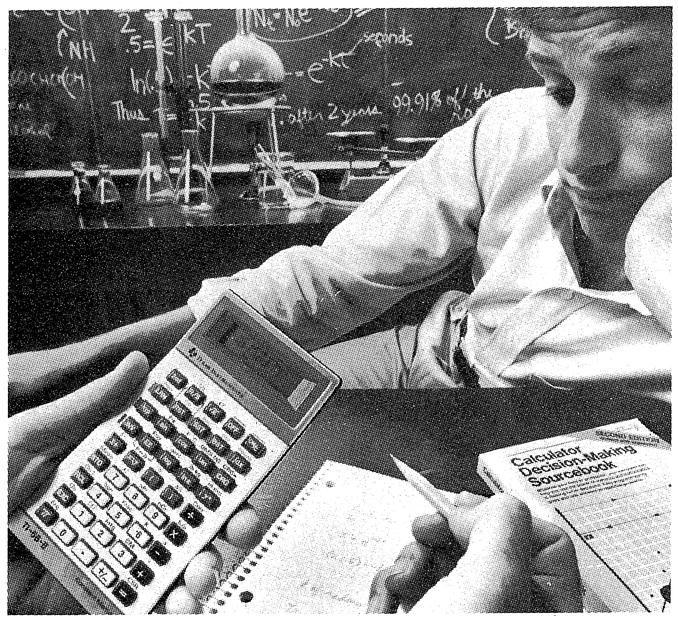

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