



***From Staff and Assoc. Press reports
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Lincoln's Memorial Stadium rocked Saturday night as the Nebraska Cornhuskers claimed the Big 12 North title with a 17-3 victory over Kansas State.

The win vaulted the Huskers into the Big 12 championship game against No. 3 Texas Saturday, Dec. 5. in Arlington, Texas.

However, the 8-3 Huskers still have some work to do Friday when they complete the regular season against the 3-8 Colorado Buffaloes in Boulder.

Nebraska's been absent from the Big 12 championship game since 2006. This will mark the Huskers' fifth appearance in the 14-year history of the league.

In only two years, Head Coach Bo Pelini has resurrected a program decimated during the Bill Callahan era.

Now, his Huskers will be playing for the Big 12 title and the BCS bowl game slot that goes to the champion.

Just a month ago, in the wake of back-to-back home losses to Texas Tech and Iowa State, Nebraska's season looked to be going south.

In the Iowa State game, the Huskers finished with more turnovers than points.

Coming into the season, no one would have penciled in a Nebraska win over an Oklahoma team that started the season ranked No. 3.

But with that 10-3 win over then 20th-ranked Oklahoma, followed by a 31-17 win over Kansas, and Saturday's 17-3 victory over Kansas State, the Huskers have turned their season around.

"We've steadily improved and we've hung together," Pelini said after Saturday's win. "We were in a tough spot after the Iowa State game, and everybody wanted to write us off. There's too much character in the locker room."

Winning the Big 12 North title didn't prompt any over-the-top celebrations.

Sure, players poured the Gatorade bucket over coach Bo Pelini Saturday night as the clock ran out.

But in Pelini's world, a division title is only one step in his rebuilding project.

"There's a lot more out there for us," Pelini said. "There's a lot better football out there to be played. That's a good thing. I think that our kids are still hungry. On to the next challenge."

Pelini told his players after Saturday's game that they had not reached their ceiling.

Win the conference, and the back slapping can begin.

"We've grown tremendously, but there is still a lot of work," nose tackle Ndamukong Suh said. "His message when he first got here is embraced by everybody. We're not to what he expects from us, but I think we are on a good path."

Huskers at Colorado Friday

The Huskers head to Boulder, Colo., Friday on a four-game win streak. Their offense isn't great, but it hasn't had to be because the defense ranks among the best in the nation.

Even former Coach Tom Osborne has been offering some offensive advice and Pelini's staff

has been listening.

Offensive coordinator Shawn Watson credits Osborne for helping the Cornhuskers make a late-season shift in philosophy. The Huskers have gone to more two-back, two-tight end formations and reduced the amount of spread offense they run.

For the second year in a row, the Huskers are playing their best late in the season. The Huskers have won a combined seven of eight games after Nov. 1 in 2008 and '09. The defense has allowed opponents 17 or fewer points in each of the last five games.

The last thing the Huskers want is to have their momentum stopped at Colorado.

The Buffaloes had a losing record when they came to Lincoln last year. But they led Nebraska in the final two minutes before Alex Henery kicked a 57-yard field goal and Suh ran back an interception for a touchdown for a 40-31 victory.

Colorado led then-No. 12 Oklahoma State by 11 points last Thursday before losing 31-28.

"You can't overlook Colorado. They are a good team who plays hard," center Jacob Hickman said Saturday.

"We have to go into that next week, and we have the championship the week after. We all have high expectations, and we expect to work hard and go out there to do everything we can to win the game."

Cherry, May greet each other

Saturday's game against Kansas State included a pair of athletes from Southwest Nebraska.

Imperial's Matt May plays special teams for the Huskers and is a back-up linebacker.

Former McCook standout, Josh Cherry, handles the kicking duties for the Wildcats.

The two, who competed against each other in various sports in high school, became good friends over time.

They caught up with each other at mid-field after Saturday night's game for a brief conversation before the teams left the field.

After their senior year, May headed for Nebraska as a walk-on while Cherry accepted a scholarship to Kansas State.

May, who has been hampered by injuries this season, opened the game Saturday with a lead-off tackle on the Husker's opening kickoff.

Cherry kicked a 44-yard field goal on the Wildcats opening drive but missed two other attempts in the game.

Last week, Cherry won the Big 12 special teams award in their 38-12 loss to Missouri.

Cherry scored all of K-State's points with a career-high four field goals, including kicks of 47, 35, 34 and 33 yards.