

## Memories of my long-ago trip to Nebraska

Written by Bob Brooks

Wednesday, 23 November 2011 22:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 24 November 2011 21:45

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As you're reading this, you're either following the Iowa-Nebraska football game or you have the score well in hand. I would like to give you a few memories of football at Nebraska.

The first thing I would like to expound on was the game I happened to cover between Oklahoma and Nebraska for the Big 8 championship on a Friday in Lincoln, Neb. How come I was there? Well, the Saturday after this game, Nebraska opened its new basketball facility that was named after one of its famous football coaches, Bob Devaney.

So I figured I'd trundle out to Lincoln and see what a Friday-after-Thanksgiving football game looked like. Oklahoma at that time was coached by Barry Switzer and Tom Osborne was the coach at Nebraska.

I was traveling on my own at that time and it was a day when I had the best airplane ride ever. I went to my friends at United and they put me on an 11:30 a.m. plane from Cedar Rapids to Lincoln.

United called a cab company and reserved a cab for me at the airport, and believe it or not everything worked so well that I was in the press box in Lincoln and looking at the game program in Memorial Stadium at 12:15 p.m., a scant 45 minutes later.

Nebraska was favored and led throughout the game, and with eight minutes left I joined the press corps in heading down for coaches quotes after the game. On my way down there, I caught a glimpse of the television and even though Oklahoma couldn't pass, the Sooners had been able to get one completion that put them in Husker territory.

I turned to one of my colleagues and said, "This game isn't over. I'm going to the playing field."

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So I went out the tunnel and wound up near the Oklahoma bench. And just about that time, on a triple-option pitch, Oklahoma tailback Elvis Peacock got the play from Coach Switzer - who wore white gloves to signal in plays - and Elvis took a pitch and ran into the Huskers end zone. And Oklahoma won.

I wound up walking to the center of the field with Switzer and his white gloves and a microphone as he gave me his thoughts at that moment as he met with Osborne.

Nebraska fans were stunned. And that night, Buck Turnbull of the Des Moines Register and I arranged to have dinner together at a Nebraska steakhouse. They had the restaurant set up for close to 500 people, and when Buck and I arrived after covering the game the attendance was about 50.

You could have fired a cannon down one of those wide Lincoln streets and not hit anybody. The Husker fans had gone to the sandhills. And the next day, Devaney tossed up the first basketball in the new arena, and Iowa went on to beat Nebraska in that inaugural basketball game.

It was a week when the Big Red went 0-for-2.

One other note that I want to mention about the Iowa-Nebraska series: It's not happening this year, but snowstorms and ice storms could become a part of this rivalry. In the early 1940's, Iowa played Nebraska in Lincoln and it was so cold that the two teams had to stay in school buses on their sideline.

There was so much snow around, you couldn't tell where the sidelines were or were the yard lines were. And a young man playing for Iowa by the name of Tom Farmer, from Cedar Rapids, was the Hawks' punter. The wind was so bad that one of his punts at Memorial Stadium that day went backwards.

So as this rivalry develops, don't be surprised if there are some famous games decided by the weather. Thanks goodness this one will not be decided that way.

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*(Bob Brooks is sports director at KMRY and has been one of the leading voices of college and prep sports in Eastern Iowa for more than 65 years. He is a 10-time winner of the Iowa Sportscaster of the Year Award, and was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Indiana in 2004. His sports reports can be heard weekday afternoons at 4:30 and 5:30, and Saturdays at 6:40 for the Hawkeye football wrap-up.)*