

Huskers meet Heather Locklear, get booed

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A few days of fun in the sun has done only so much to lighten the mood.

"We got to meet Heather Locklear at a Lakers game, and I had my picture taken with Brad Pitt," Nebraska line-backer Jamie Burrow said Tuesday, brightening at the memory.

"Then just about the time I started feeling good about things, they introduced us at the basketball game and we got booed — and I mean loud. That," he said with a pause, "made me mad all

over again."

That's the way the last six weeks have gone for the Husker Nation. On Nov. 23, in the last game of its regular season, Nebraska got thumped 62-36 by Colorado.

It was as bad a beating as one of the proudest programs in college football ever had to absorb.

Ever since, whether on campus in Lincoln, or here in the streets and malls of LaLa Land, the faithful have been seeing red as often as wearing it.

Things were bad enough when Ne-braskans were resigned to waiting until next season to compete for the national championship they practically consider a birthright.

Then, Oklahoma, Florida, Texas and Tennessee all stumbled in quick succession, and the Bowl Championship Series computers crunched the numbers one final time.

They have been smiling weakly for photo ops ever since. The bookies won't give them a sniff, and trying to

convince the rest of the country they're worthy of playing unbeaten, mighty Miami in the Rose Bowl has proved as frustrating as having an argument with yourself.

"We've heard about it over and over and over again, believe me," safety Dion Booker said. "But you can sit back and listen to talk only so long. That's why, right about now, we're looking for someone to take it out on instead of each other in practice."

Between workouts, coach Frank

Solich sent his players on sightseeing tours and shopping forays. They posed for pictures with Will Smith and dropped in on NBA star Allen Iverson's holiday bash.

They even taped an episode of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" with Regis Philbin.

In the malls, the Cornhuskers' red-sweatered following trails a respectful distance behind, unsure whether to serenade their heroes or pray for them.

When they get back to the team ho-

tel, the players find half the people in the lobby rushing them for autographs; the other half keep their noses buried in the newspapers, stunned to find Nebraska's odds of beating the Hurricanes are only slightly better than George O'Leary's chances of landing another head coaching job.

"There's so much tradition behind us that you can only imagine what they're feeling, especially since the last time our fans saw us, we were getting our tails kicked," Burrow said. "

Chiefs manage to win despite high turnovers

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The Kansas City Chiefs seem bent on disproving a time-honored football belief, that teams with the fewest turnovers usually win.

They were minus-two in turnover margin against both Denver on Dec. 16 and San Diego on Dec. 23. But each time, they found a way to come out ahead.

On Sunday at Jacksonville, while going minus-one in the turnover department, they downed the Jaguars 30-26, making it three wins in a row despite lagging in the supposedly telling turnover category.

"We're living on the edge," said coach Dick Vermeil. "We've defied the odds in every way possible."

The Chiefs' wildest statistical oddity fell on the other side of the turnover theory.

At Oakland just before their current three-game streak, they recovered four fumbles.

They also made one interception while giving up just one interception of their own.

But, making Vermeil want to tear his hair out, they still were beaten 28-26.

"Before that game, teams with a plus-four turnover ratio this year were 23-0," Vermeil said.

He added, "Since 1990, it's a 92 percent chance that you win. You have an 8 percent chance of losing that football game and we did it."

Worried that his team had been losing the turnover battle, Vermeil made sure to raise the subject in team meetings while getting ready for Jacksonville.

He could have saved his breath.

"When (the Jaguars) were even or minus in turnovers, they lost seven and won one going into our game," he told



Colorado Buffs fall short of expectations

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — Bidding to become the first team in history to defeat three Top 3 teams in successive games, Colorado fell short.

Mistakes, missed opportunities, poor tackling and an inability to stop Oregon quarterback Joey Harrington doomed the No. 3 Buffaloes to a 38-16 blowout loss in the Fiesta Bowl.

The Buffs, who entered Tuesday's game on a roll following wins over then-No. 2 Nebraska and then-No. 3 Texas, had no answer for No. 2 Oregon.

"They just stopped the run, stopped our whole offense entirely," Colorado wide receiver and kick returner Roman Hollowell said.

The loss cost Colorado a shot at a national championship.

"They never let us get untracked,"

coach Gary Barnett said.

"I think this one was a bit of a surprise for all of us."

"In a game like this, you want to look at it as a reward for your players. But the magnitude of it and the opportunity that was here for us and to let it slip by — not even slip by, just let it run right by us — that concerns me."

The momentum turned when Colorado twice failed on third-and-1 running plays early in the second quarter, one of them at the Oregon 39.

"I think the critical plays for us were the two third-down conversions that we didn't convert," Barnett said. "An offense that has run the ball as effectively as we have through the course of the year, for us to get to those two situations and not convert probably took a little wind out of our sails."

"The first two scores were into double coverage," Colorado co-defensive coordinator Tom McMahon said, referring to Harrington's 28-yard pass to Keenan Howry and his 79-yarder to Samie Parker. "They stuck the ball in

there and beat our over-the-top guys. That should never happen.

"We knew going into the game that we had to tackle and not give up big plays. We did a poor job of tackling."

Their defense appeared to let up for an instant early in the third quarter, allowing Maurice Morris to score on a 49-yard run.

Morris was spun down at the 20, but sat on linebacker Joey Johnson and never touched the ground. Morris bounced back up to complete the scoring play for a 28-7 Oregon lead.

Moments later, Colorado blew another scoring opportunity. Bobby Pesavento appeared to have thrown a 26-yard scoring pass to Derek McCoy, but a late flag on Pesavento for throwing beyond the line of scrimmage wiped it out. Video replay appeared to show Pesavento releasing the ball at the line of scrimmage.

"I knew it was close when he threw it," Barnett said. "I couldn't tell from the replay. That was obviously a big play."

Basketball tournament set for McCook

The 10th annual "M.A.C. Attack" youth basketball tournament sponsored by the McCook Optimist Club will be held on the weekends of Feb. 2-3 and March 23-24 in McCook, Neb.

The fourth through sixth grade boys and girls will compete Feb. 2-3 with a Jan. 18 cutoff date for enrollment. The seventh and eighth grade boys and girls will compete March 23-24 with a March 8 cutoff for enrollment.

The entry fee is \$80 per team with a three-game guarantee. Once a division is filled, no other entries will be accepted for that division.

Entry forms can be picked up at the Sports Shoppe in downtown McCook. Completed forms with entry fee should be sent to: McCook Optimist Club, 208 Norris Ave., McCook, Neb. 69001.

Any questions should be addressed to Event Chairman Bob Elder at (308) 345-4296, or Optimist Club President Jamey Hansen at (308) 345-4240.

Baseball players sought for games

The National Amateur Baseball Association is looking for baseball players ages 13-20 to compete in their 2002 National Invitational Wooden Bat Tournament.

The tournament will be held June 13-16 and June 20-23 in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome.

For a registration form, call Michael E. Mayden at (773) 264-1040. A limited number of athletes can participate and will be chosen in the order they register.

Ham arrested

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Darvin Ham of the Milwaukee Bucks was arrested Monday for suspected violence against his wife.

He was released on \$500 bail.

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The Goodland Daily News
1205 Main • Goodland, KS