



# DEFENSIVE DOMINANCE

One of the Huskers' most well-known traditions is the Blackshirts, which has become the common nickname for Nebraska's defensive unit. The term originally dates back to the early 1960s and refers to the black jerseys that Nebraska's first-string defenders wear in practice.

With the return of the two-platoon system in college football in 1964, Head Coach Bob Devaney looked for a way to distinguish the defensive units on the practice fields. Devaney dispatched assistant coach Mike Corgan to a local sporting goods store to find some "contrast jerseys," a sleeveless pullover that went on top of the players' practice jerseys. While the top offensive unit practiced in red jerseys and the second-string offense worked in green pullovers, the first string defense wore black pullovers and the second string wore the contrasting gold jerseys.

The term quickly caught on, and gained momentum during Monte Kiffin's tenure as defensive coordinator in the mid-1970s, before the Blackshirts earned national acclaim under Charlie McBride, who served as the Huskers' defensive coordinator from 1982 to 1999.

## BLACKSHIRT TRADITION

- Nebraska has ranked in the top 10 nationally in total defense 21 times since 1964.
- Nebraska has ranked among the nation's top 10 in all four major defensive categories (rush defense, pass defense, total defense and scoring defense) on four occasions, including helping the Huskers to national titles in 1994, 1995 and 1997.

Grant Wistrom, Mike Rucker, Ndamukong Suh, Barrett Ruud and Larry Asante.



## 2003 BLACKSHIRTS

The Blackshirt defense led by then-defensive coordinator Bo Pelini in 2003 forced a school-record 47 turnovers, including a Big 12-record 32 interceptions. Nebraska ranked second nationally in scoring defense and 16 Blackshirts went on to play in the National Football League.



*The 2003 Blackshirts were one of the nation's most dominant units under coordinator Bo Pelini and featured numerous players who are still starring in the National Football League. Front row, from left...Graduate Assistant Carl Pelini (now defensive coordinator), defensive line coach Jeff Jamrog (Director of Football Operations), safety Philip Bland, nose tackle Ryon Bingham (San Diego Chargers), linebackers coach Jimmy Williams, linebacker Demorrio Williams (Kansas City Chiefs), cornerback Fabian Washington (Baltimore Ravens), cornerback Lornell McPherson, safety Jerrell Pippens, linebacker T.J. Hollowell, secondary coach Marvin Sanders (secondary), defensive coordinator Bo Pelini (head coach). Back row, defensive end Trevor Johnson, cornerback Pat Ricketts, linebacker Barrett Ruud (Tampa Bay Buccaneers), defensive end Benard Thomas, defensive tackle Le Kevin Smith (New England Patriots), safety Josh Bullocks (Chicago Bears) and safety Daniel Bullocks (Detroit Lions).*

## 2008 BLACKSHIRTS

The 2008 Nebraska defense made great strides under Bo Pelini and ranked second in the Big 12 in total defense.



*2008 Blackshirts: Anthony West, Rickey Thenarse, Ndamukong Suh, Ty Steinkuhler, Armando Murillo, Barry Turner, Larry Asante, Phillip Dillard, Pierre Allen, Tyler Wortman, Zach Potter and Shukree Barfield.*

“Guys were ready to run through a wall for (Coach Pelini). He was such a great motivator. He’d print out cards with different quotes and leave them in our locker to fire us up before games, and when it came to X’s and O’s, he definitely had the ‘it’ factor. He was the total package.”

Barrett Ruud, Tampa Bay Buccaneers and former Nebraska linebacker

## PROMINENT PUPILS COACHED BY PELINI

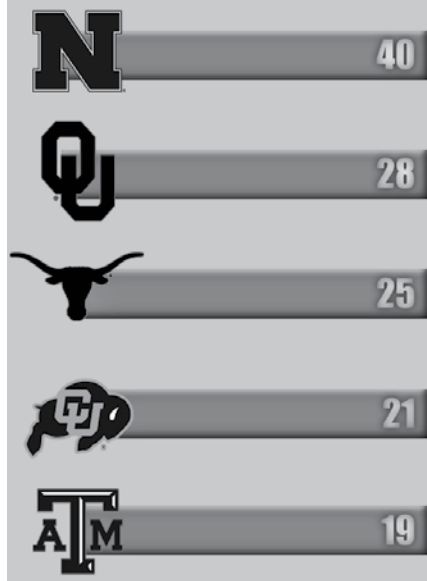
- Deion Sanders, CB, San Francisco 49ers
- Merton Hanks, CB, San Francisco 49ers
- Ted Johnson, LB, New England Patriots
- Tedy Bruschi, LB, New England Patriots
- Nai’l Diggs, LB, Green Bay Packers
- Demorrio Williams, LB, Nebraska
- Josh Bullocks, FS, Nebraska
- Barrett Ruud, LB, Nebraska
- Dan Cody, DE, Oklahoma
- Glenn Dorsey, DT, LSU
- Craig Steltz, S, LSU
- LaRon Landry, S, LSU
- Ndamukong Suh, DT, Nebraska

## PRO BLACKSHIRTS

- Twenty-two former Nebraska Blackshirts were on NFL rosters as of July 1.
- Nebraska has had 13 defensive linemen, nine linebackers and 10 defensive backs drafted since 1998.
- Fifteen Blackshirts have been taken in the first four rounds of the NFL Draft since 2000.



## NFL DEFENSIVE DRAFT PICKS (BIG 12 ONLY) SINCE 1997



## THE PELINI FACTOR

Bo Pelini’s college defenses have been dominant at each of his stops – Nebraska, Oklahoma and LSU. Pelini-coached defenses have established themselves as fixtures in the top 10 of numerous national categories.

In the first year under the direction of Bo Pelini and his defensive staff, the 2008 Nebraska defense was among the nation’s most improved units. The Huskers finished second in the Big 12 in total defense, allowing 126.9 fewer yards per game than in 2007.

## 2008 DEFENSIVE IMPROVEMENTS

- Total Defense...126.9 ypg (4th best improvement in nation)
- Rushing Defense...115.7 ypg (best improvement in nation)
- Sacks...+22 (best improvement in nation)
- Scoring Defense...9.1 ppg
- Opponents 3rd-Down Conversion Percentage...16.6 % improvement



## NATIONAL RANKINGS UNDER PELINI

- |          |   |          |                              |
|----------|---|----------|------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | Pass Efficiency Defense (2003)<br>Turnover Margin (2003)<br>Interceptions (2003)  | <b>4</b> | Scoring Defense (2006)       |
| <b>2</b> | Scoring Defense (2003)<br>Turnovers Gained (2003)<br>Turnover Margin (2007)   | <b>6</b> | Rushing Defense (2004, 2005) |
| <b>3</b> | Total Defense (2005, 2006, 2007)<br>Pass Efficiency Defense (2005, 2006, 2007)<br>Passing Yards (2006)<br>Scoring Defense (2004, 2005)<br>Turnovers Gained (2007) | <b>9</b> | Passing Yards (2007)         |
- 2003, 2008 = Nebraska
- 2004 = Oklahoma
- 2005-2007 = LSU