

The rush

I was given a rather sweet opportunity this past weekend. I spent Saturday evening on the sideline of Tom Osborne Field at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb. with cameras in hand and around my neck.

I was lucky enough to score sideline credentials with the help of Russ Pankonin of the Imperial, Neb. Republican. It's safe to say he is my new best friend.

Part of the reason I was there was to photograph a former Chase County High School graduate who now serves as co-defensive coordinator for South Dakota State University (SDSU), the FCS team that Nebraska played Saturday night.

I arrived, well let's say way too early. This is one of those opportunities a kid like me who grew up in western Nebraska won't get too often so I had to make the evening count.

After making my way to what would become the third largest city in Nebraska at kickoff, I signed a piece of paper saying I wouldn't...to be truthful, I didn't read it. All I knew was I wouldn't be able to get my neon green photographers vest had I not signed it. Plus my hands were shaking so badly from excitement it looked as if a chicken went to work on the form with a stick. So I guess it doesn't really matter anyway.

After finding out exactly what to do and where to go, I made my way onto the field. This was an awesome feeling. Now, I have been there before but it was to photograph the Nebraska Class C1 state championship game when Chase County qualified in 2003. There was maybe a grand total of 7,000 people, at the most, in the stands for that game.

This was a wee bit different. I felt like a little person holding my 200mm lens next to probably 50 other photographers who were sporting 300, 400 and even 500m lenses. Nonetheless, I was there and was focused on getting some great photographs.

That leads me to my next issue. Nebraska was playing a SDSU team that no one even gave a chance to come away with a win.

The last time the Jackrabbits visited Lincoln, they went back to Brookings, S.D. with a 7-58 loss. This was back in 1963, just as the Huskers were on the verge of becoming a name to be reckoned with under coach Bob Devaney.

This time the outcome was a little different. Yeah, it looked as if a smaller Division II or even III team had taken the field to play the sixth-ranked Huskers but that didn't matter. They gave the Big Red a game and completely surprised Husker Nation.

Perhaps, the Cornhuskers overlooked this no-name team. I'm hoping and praying that's what happened. Taylor Martinez, the freshman quarterback sensation that has all of Nebraska buzzing was held to just 75 rushing yards. He had racked up 421 in the previous three games.

Luckily Bo (Pelini) and crew came out on top but it looked horrible, which brings me to my point. There weren't very many big plays and opportunities for good photographs.

Not only was I vying for the best sideline space, but I caught myself on many of the plays simply watching and not pushing that little button that actually takes the pictures. Oops.

I learned a lot while photographing this game. Always be ready to capture the image, always be ready to get bumped in the back, head or arm by another photographer and always be prepared if your team plays less than expected.

No matter what happened, I still had a blast and will never forget that night. When 85,000 people stand up around you and yell as the opponent attempts a third or fourth down, it's hard to hear yourself think. It gives me goose bumps just thinking about it.

See it like C Lee

Written by Chris Lee

What a rush.