

Knox moves to fullback; DuBose goes for Heisman

Analysis by Chuck Green
Sports Editor

Tom Rathman may have started a trend last season.

Rathman, Nebraska's starting fullback last year, ended the regular season with 881 yards rushing on 118 carries. That's an average of 7.5 yards per carry and an average I-back's dream season.

Enter Tyreese Knox.

Knox, a sophomore, was an I-back last season on the Cornhusker freshman team. He finished the five-game season with 483 yards and five touchdowns on 55 carries, almost nine yards every time he touched the ball.

With 4.44 seconds speed in the 40-yard dash, Knox is the third-fastest Husker, behind I-back Keith Jones and wingback Dana Brinson. Knox was converted to fullback last spring after he decided it was a safer bet than trying to beat out Jones and Heisman-candidate Doug DuBose for starting honors at I-back.

Knox, however, will begin fall camp listed behind Ken Kaelin at fullback. Kaelin spent 1985 playing backup to Rathman.

"At times I was in (last season), everything went OK," Kaelin recalled, "but at other times it didn't go as well. I wouldn't mind making a few bigger plays this year."

Kaelin said he wants to become more consistent than he was last season. He said he feels Nebraska's fullbacks will provide solid blocking this year, even though there isn't any clear-cut star like Rathman was last year.

"There's no real standout at fullback like there was last year," Kaelin said. "I think there's at least four guys who can do the job, maybe more. Overall, the fullback situation is looking good right now."

Behind Kaelin and Knox, Micah Heibel, who was hampered last spring by a case of mononucleosis, and Dan

Casterline will battle for positions on the Husker depth chart.

Though there is no single standout in the fullback ranks, the I-back position is a different situation.

Doug DuBose, a two-time all-Big Eight I-back and a preseason All-American this summer, returns for his final season and his last chance to win the Heisman Trophy.

DuBose rushed for 1,161 yards last season, despite being slowed slightly by a knee problem that was corrected by knee surgery last February. He became the first I-back at Nebraska to surpass 1,000 yards rushing as a sophomore and junior and could become the first I-back at Nebraska to rush for more than 1,000 yards for three consecutive seasons. DuBose is currently sixth on the all-time Nebraska rushing chart with 2,205 yards.

"I think Doug DuBose is one of the finer, if not the finest I-backs around," Coach Tom Osborne said. "He has experience, is bigger — about 200 pounds now — has good power, good elusiveness and great quickness."

Perhaps the greatest speed in the history of Nebraska football, however, is possessed by DuBose's backup, Keith Jones. With an electronic timing of 4.33

seconds in the 40-yard dash, Jones is a serious threat when he turns the corner. His size — 5-10, 185 — is a problem at times when he tries to run inside, but he showed signs of improvement during the spring.

Jon Kelley starts the fall as No. 3 I-back on the depth chart. His 4.45 speed is a definite asset, whether he is running to the inside or trying to turn the corner. Redshirt sophomore Jeff Wheeler could be another I-back to watch this fall.

Another name people may be — and have been — hearing about is Terry Rodgers. Rodgers, the son of 1972 Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Rodgers, was the California Prep Player of the Year last season. He already has caught Osborne's eye.

"We will take a look at Rodgers at I-back," Osborne said. "He has impressive quickness and has good running instinct. His size is the only problem (5-8, 157). He practiced three times a day getting ready for the California All-Star game and lost a little weight."

Rodgers has 4.45 speed in the 40-yard dash and also may be given a look as a possible kickoff or punt return man, Osborne said.



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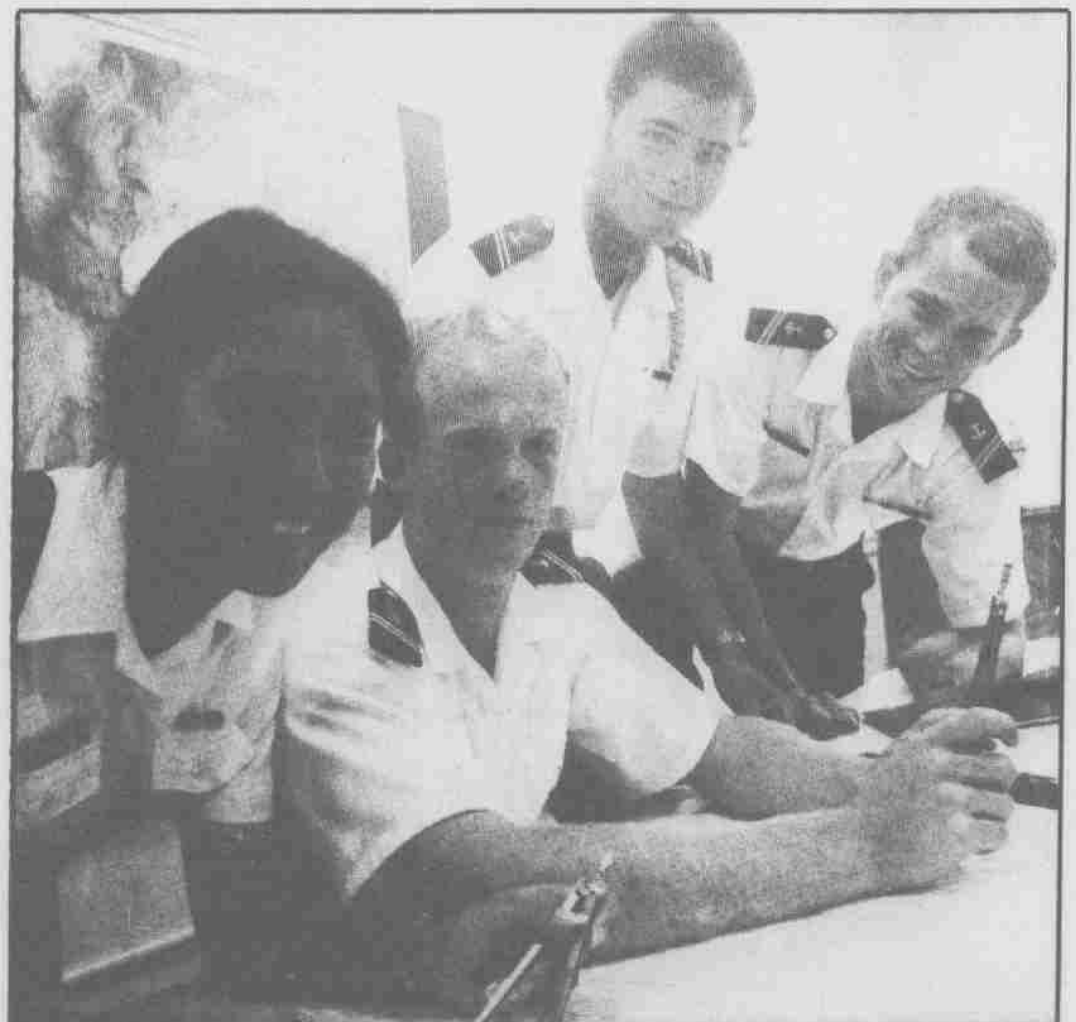
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