

Newcomers movin' on up depth chart

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Reporter

The Nebraska football team was on display Monday afternoon at Memorial Stadium.

The Big Eight Skywriters made their annual swing through Lincoln to listen to coach Tom Osborne talk about the Cornhuskers' chances this season.

The Skywriters also got a closer look at the Huskervision video system and took a peak at Nebraska's first workout with an extended squad.

Under NCAA guidelines, Monday was the first day any player not on the 105-man roster could practice with the team. Fifty-six additional players, mostly walk-ons, joined the Huskers Monday.



Osborne

Osborne also took time out Monday to talk about the improvement some of the younger Huskers have made since the beginning of fall practice.

Among the major shifts on the depth chart was the progress of true freshman Grant Wistrom. The 6-foot-5, 230-pound outside linebacker from Webb City, Mo., has vaulted into the No. 2 spot behind Dwayne Harris at left outside linebacker.

Prior to the start of fall practice Osborne said Nebraska would be looking for a fourth man at the outside linebacker spots. Starters Donta Jones and Harris, along with sophomore Jared Tomich, who will back up Jones, were already in place.

Osborne believes the Huskers have found their fourth man in Wistrom.

"Right now," Osborne said, "Grant would be our number four rush guy. Grant is still learning the situation, but he has done a very good job for a true freshman."

Osborne said Wistrom will also play a large role in the Huskers' kicking game.

SuperPrep rated Wistrom as the high-school defensive-player-of-the-year in the Midlands region last year. He is the only true freshman, Osborne said, who has assured himself of playing this season.

Osborne said sophomore Michael Booker, a Proposition 48 casualty last year, is also likely to see significant playing time this year. Booker, a 6-foot-2, 200-pound left cornerback from Oceanside, Calif., is listed second on the depth chart behind Thorpe Award candidate Barron Miles.

"Those two guys are pretty definite right now," Osborne said.

Walk-on quarterback Monte Christo, a true

See SKYWRITERS on 11



Jeff Haller/DN

Nebraska cornerback Eric Stokes gets his leg stretched after practice last season. Stokes had a tumor removed from his right hip last April and is now back playing.

Comeback

Eric Stokes sacks tumor to win the walking game

By Mitch Sherman
Senior Reporter

Eric Stokes walked off the field dripping with sweat following one of the Nebraska football team's two-a-day workouts earlier this month.

The key word in that sentence is walked.

Only four-and-a-half months ago, the 5-foot-11, 175-pound cornerback didn't know if he would ever walk on to the Memorial Stadium turf in a Nebraska uniform again.

In fact, he didn't know if he would walk at all.

The first sign something was wrong became evident during the second day of spring drills last March.

The sophomore from Lincoln East was running through a noncontact drill when he went down.

"A guy just fell across me," Stokes said, "and I felt a pop."

— 66 —

It could have been that maybe I'm not even walking again. It could have been something a lot worse. It could have been something that could have spread. It could have been cancer.

—Stokes,
NU cornerback

— 99 —

That pop came from Stokes' right hip. Doctors' examinations showed a tumor eating away towards his bone.

It was four weeks before he could have surgery. Stokes spent the time donating necessary blood that the doctors needed, all the while trying to remain positive. In April, doctors successfully removed the tumor, which was benign, and repaired damage done to Stokes' hip.

"I was real confident going all the way

through it," he said. "I never thought it would be anything bad. I was positive, and I set some goals and I knew I would make it back.

"It could have been that maybe I'm not even walking again. It could have been something a lot worse. It could have been something that could have spread. It could have been cancer."

See STOKES on 11

NU must exterminate Mousekateers to gain credibility

School blows.

If it wasn't for the free potato salad at BIG RED WELCOME I wouldn't even be at this mother-lovin' college.

No, no, no. I'm not serious—I just get a little edgy after looking at all those pasty-thighed law dorks on the first day of classes. School is fine, I guess. I just wish they'd serve cocktails or at least those little party weenies.

But I tell you, there's always something sweet about the fall. That's right, baby—Husker football. Granted, it may not stack up to party weenies, but it's pretty damn close.

My best friend and gerbil, Mookie, and I spent most of the summer waiting for this week to come. Actually, we also spent a lot of time loitering outside women's restrooms, but I don't want to get into my social life right now.

It's football time, dammit. Let's talk about the 'skers.

As many of you know, the Cornbumpers will open this season and their pursuit of a national championship in a date with the West Virginia

Mountaineers on Sunday, Aug. 28.

Now, Mookie tells me that this season is exceptionally important. The nation's eye will be on us, especially after almost beating Florescent State for the national championship last season. Mookie's pretty friggin' smart.

Because of the importance of this game and this season, the Cornfluffers need an impressive victory to solidify credibility with the national media, the ultimate deciders of what team will play for the national championship.

A good performance would show the nation that last season wasn't a fluke or a flash in the pan. It would show the people that the 'skers ain't no one-night stand.

And that's what I believe needs to be proved: NU's not EASY. That's right. The Cornbumpers are not some pigskin slut that can be tossed out of the media's bedroom after one year of respect. We want respect now and in the future.

Cornchumpers also want flowers occasionally.

But perhaps more to the point is how good could the Mousekateers, I



Beau Finley

mean, the Mountaineers be?

I mean, I usually gauge a team's ability upon past performance as well as current talent. However, with West Virginia, you need to talk about intangibles like—oh, I don't know—maybe something like how many players are related to each other.

From a fairly reliable source (OK, from Mookie), supposedly 57 Mousekateer players somehow are related to assistant football coach Cooter Jackson. Some may say that this type of inbreeding will unify a squad. I say it will only cause brain damage.

All joking aside, West Virginia is an extremely inexperienced albeit good team. They do have talent, outstanding coaching and a great tradition. However, they also have no quarter-

back, no home crowd to back them, and from what I've heard, a scorching case group of syphilis.

That's tough to overcome. But the Cornchumpers aren't exactly in premier shape either.

First, NU has only three quarterbacks. Actually we have two scholarship QBs and one scholarship wussy. Wait, I'm just kidding, Mr. Turman. Geez, football players are sooooooo sensitive.

Also, Nebraska's pass defense was not particularly stellar last season. However, it improved dramatically after cornerback Barron Miles got knocked out with a water nozzle in the showers just before the Orange Bowl last year.

I figure if someone will just slap him around a bit in the bathtub, no team can pass on the 'skers.

But no matter what problems the Cornbumpers have, I'm proud of them. I'm proud of Tom Osborne for assembling a team that Nebraskans can look to with excitement and honor.

Well, I bet you want a prediction on

this game, don't you? Then you came to the right column, baby. I'm not going to beat around the bush with a wire hanger wearing a tutu in the light of day.

Wait, I think I got that expression wrong. Aw, screw it—I'm rolling.

● Is NU going to score? You bet your sweet butt.

● Is NU going to get passed on? You bet your sweet butt.

● Is NU going to win? You bet your sweet butt.

● Are my editors going to let me write a column next week? I friggin' doubt it.

Here's my parting shot: The Huskies need to win big for the media and for themselves. A close game with the Mousekateers doesn't do Nebraska any good. In fact, it would be similar to kissing your sister.

But I guess in the case of West Virginia, it would also be like kissing your wife.

Finley is a second-year law student and a Daily Nebraskan sports columnist.