

# Offensive lineman--unsung hero

by Dave McBride

Each year, among the glittering and flashy array of running backs and quarterbacks and ends, the offensive lineman in college football is relegated to the role of unsung hero.

But each year, these stalwarts, many of whom have never crossed a goal line with the football, play a vital part in the success of every team, and through their efforts, each year some gain the same recognition among the experts as the backs and ends that every fan looks at.

Nebraska left guard Dick Rupert is one such person. Tabbed during pre-season as an All-American candidate Rupert is the backbone of the 1971 Cornhusker offensive line.

"AS YOU PLAY line, your thrills aren't things like making touchdowns," the 6-2, 221 pound senior said. "That's not where your sense of accomplishment is. Your glory, so to speak, is when a back compliments you on your block, or when he comes back and says 'nice block' or 'thanks for the block.'"

"You don't look at your job as being making touchdowns," he said. "It's just something you kind of dream about. I've never scored a point, and I

must have played in around 50 games now."

Rupert has played offensive line for his entire football career, starting with the junior varsity squad in high school when he played center.

The physical education major hails from Los Angeles, and enjoyed an outstanding high school career at Westchester High, where he won All-Los Angeles, most valuable player, and All-Western League honors.

HE STARTED college at Harbor Junior College in Los Angeles before transferring to Nebraska.

"I kind of wanted to get away from Los Angeles," he said, explaining his choice of Nebraska. "I liked the coaches and I wanted to play big-time football, and this is about as big-time as you can get."

Rupert was quoted after the Oregon game last Saturday as saying, "Our line just likes to block for our backs," and feels that there is a great deal of pride among the offensive linemen in a job well done.

"The offensive line is basically a unit—it has to work that way," he said. "There are four other guys on the offensive line and no play will work well unless all five block well."

"EVERYONE TRIES to help each other," he explained. "When someone misses a block, you try to help him not get down on himself. The offensive line is probably one of the closest knit units on the team."

Rupert pointed to the importance of teamwork among the members of the offensive line as being a key to their success.

"You find out who's going to be playing next to you in spring ball," he said. "then you start to work with them and get to know their moves."

He described the unit's interaction as a process of mentally competing with

each other," and trying to figure out what each member will be thinking at any given moment in order to know how to react.

"OVERALL, we're probably a better offensive line than last year, but not bigger," Rupert said, noting the losses of All-American Bob Newton, Donnie McGhee, and Wally Winter.

"We had Bob Newton last year, which is quite an asset to an offensive line," Rupert said. "Generally I think we're maybe a little stronger and quicker than last year, though."

Does the pressure of being watched as an All-American possibility bother him?

"It doesn't really affect me," Rupert said. "I like the game for what the game is. I don't play it to be an All-American, I play it because I like football."

"As far as pressure, there's always been a lot of pressure, because at any time, if you miss your block, it can ruin the play," he continued.

"Everytime I get on the field, I like to play as hard as I can. I play the game because I like it, and for me, that means playing as hard as I can all the time."



Rupert...heads Husker offensive line

## Full Big Eight schedule slated

Oklahoma and Iowa State, the only Big Eight football teams without a 1971 game under their belts, join their brethren this weekend in a full eight-game conference program.

The speedy Sooners hope to steal back some of the attention focused on Nebraska and Colorado last week with an impressive home debut against Southern Methodist. The invading Mustangs will throw something called a Flying Wishbone offense at the suspect OU defenders, but Oklahoma's plain old Overland

Wishbone attack should be more than enough to compensate. Look for the Mildren-Wylie-Pruitt-Cross-white Fearsome Foursome to run wild.

Iowa State should have an even easier time with visiting Idaho (after all, the Vandals got whopped last week by Boise State, and that ain't good). Nevertheless, Coach Johnny Majors' offense will be hurting without super-soph halfback Jerry Moses, whose broken toe will keep him out of all non-conference action.

Kansas State and Missouri

will try to crank up sluggish offenses on trips to Tulsa and the Air Force Academy, respectively. Rookie Tiger Coach Al Onofrio tried four quarterbacks to no avail last Saturday in Mizzou's 19-0 loss to Stanford at Columbia. He'll go with senior Chuck Roper in the mountains this time, which is to say that Roper caused the least grief last time.

This is Air Force's opener. It should be a defensive contest, since all the Falcons have left off last year's offensive powerhouse is bulldozing running back Brian Bream. Fans viewing the regionally-televised game shouldn't expect too thrilling a show.

On the other hand, flashy aerial fireworks could develop in the K-State-Tulsa game. 'Cats' Coach Vince Gibson says the Hurricanes "will come out throwing." Gibson wants the Wildcats to run more this year, since Dennis Morrison is not the passer Lynn Dickey was. K-State should handle Tulsa with its defense and experience, but it won't be a rout.

Arkansas should bring Oklahoma State back down to earth in Little Rock Saturday night. The Cowboys, 26-7 victors over Mississippi State, are starting to compare their quarterback combination of Tony Pounds and Brent Blackman with a certain pair from Nebraska. But the Razorbacks' solitary signal-caller, 'Slingshot' Joe Ferguson, will overshadow everyone.

For the rest of the league, it could be track meet time. Colorado figures to trample Wyoming in Boulder, and Baylor shouldn't be too taxing for defensively-renewed Kansas at Lawrence.

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