

# Walk-on Burrow: Ole Miss's loss, Nebraska's gain

by Jim Johnston

Mississippi football coach Billy Kinard made it known last spring that he wasn't going to fool around with walk-ons. If you didn't have a scholarship you weren't going to play football at Ole Miss.

So Nebraska assistant coach Jim Walden, who recruits in Mississippi, decided to do some investigating.

Before coming to Nebraska, Walden coached high school football in Amory, Miss. On Walden's 1968 high school team, a sophomore named Jimmy Burrow started in the defensive secondary. He weighed just 118 pounds, but led the team in interceptions.

Walden left Amory after the 1968 season to join

the Nebraska staff.

Burrow was switched to quarterback his junior year and started at that position. By the time he was a senior, Burrow had zoomed to 138 pounds. But in the fifth game of his senior year he suffered a broken arm which hindered his chances of being recruited by a college team.

Walden, however, had kept an eye on Burrow.

"I knew Jimmy was capable of playing major college football," Walden said. "He was real quick and we liked him as an athlete, but we said we couldn't offer him a scholarship because of his size."

So Burrow decided to attend Mississippi and was a walk-on with the freshman team. He started every game for the freshmen as a defensive back, despite discouraging words from head coach Kinard.

"Coach Kinard told the freshman coach not to start that walk-on," Burrow said, "but the freshman coach said he was going to start the person who deserved the job regardless if he was on scholarship or not."

Burrow quickly was regarded as the best defensive

back on the team. In fact, the Mississippi freshman coach flip-flopped Burrow from side to side so he could cover the best receiver on every play.

Burrow, however, still was denied a scholarship. The situation didn't improve during spring drills. That's when Walden became interested.

"Some of the coaches in the area told me Jimmy was the best defensive back on the freshman team and possibly the third best defensive back at Mississippi," Walden said. "His folks told me he was up to 163 pounds, but it still appeared that he wasn't going to be given a scholarship."

Walden then approached Burrow.

"I didn't tell anybody except a couple of my friends about the offer from Nebraska," Burrow said. "If Ole Miss had offered me a scholarship I would have accepted it."

But Ole Miss never made such an offer. So Burrow accepted a full ride from Nebraska. Because he transferred, Burrow is ineligible this year.

He has no aspirations to play quarterback at Nebraska, but is serving as the scout team quarterback this season.

"We couldn't ask for a better scout team quarterback," Walden said. "He's quick and smart and really gives our defense a true picture of what to expect."

According to Walden, Burrow is quicker than some triple option quarterbacks the Black Shirts will face this season.

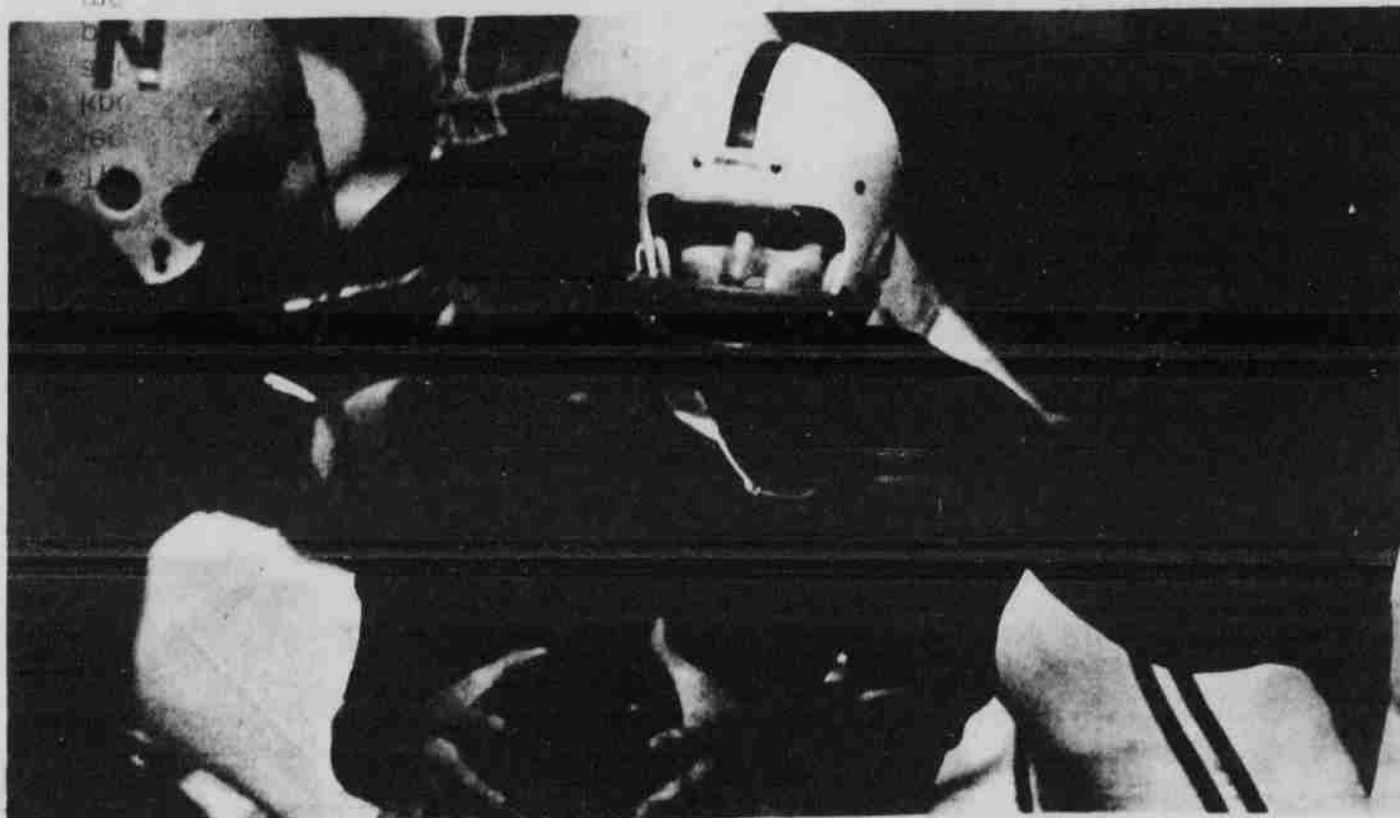
Nebraska linebacker Jim Branch had a difficult time catching Burrow in the Minnesota Veer-T offense during practice last week, but Branch encountered less problems in the game catching Gopher quarterback Bob Morgan.

"If we've got bad people running the scout team, then our defense goes into Saturday badly prepared," Walden explained. "I think our defense is thankful they don't have to face Jimmy in a game."

Because Burrow did not transfer within the conference, he will have three years of eligibility after this season.

But this year Burrow spends Monday through Friday quarterbacking against the most vaunted defense in the nation. His Saturdays are spent in the stands.

"It gets boring once in awhile," Burrow admitted, "but it sure beats sitting around at Ole Miss."



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