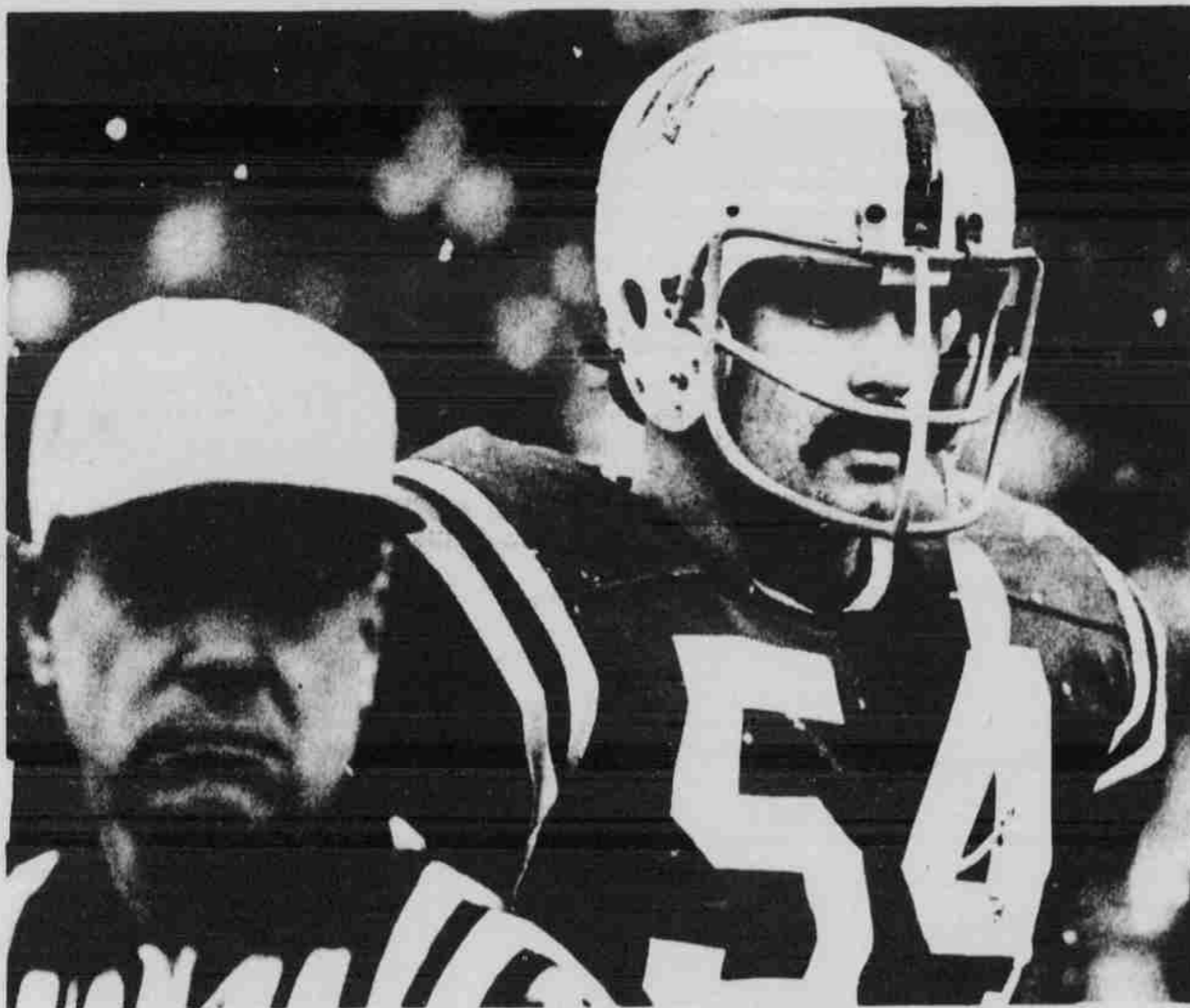


# For Jerry List, it means 'going out in style'



Jerry List



Doug Dumler



Joe Blahak

by Steve Kadel

There'll be quite a few college seniors playing the last regular season football game of their career this week, but none of them can make the same claim as five University of Nebraska seniors — that they started on a team in contention for a third straight national championship.

Joe Blahak, cornerback; Doug Dumler, center; Willie Harper, defensive end; Jerry List, tightend; and flanker Johnny Rodgers can make that statement, at least until after the bowl games on New Year's day. And although this Thursday's game with Oklahoma hasn't been billed as another Game of the Century, those Nebraska seniors aren't exactly going into it with a ho-hum attitude.

For some, the outcome will determine whether their years at Nebraska will be remembered as successful or frustrating.

"The last three years are hinging on this one game with Oklahoma," List said. "The last two years have been truly amazing and great, but you can't live in the past. Nothing would mean more to me now than to leave this town in victory and be remembered not only the two national championships, but for having gone out in style too."

Victories against Oklahoma and then Notre Dame in the Orange Bowl would, for Blahak, cap three unbelievably successful years.

## Looking back

"Looking back on the years of playing varsity football at Nebraska, I'm just thankful that I actually got a chance to play here," he said. "At first I didn't think I'd get to. I thought I wasn't big enough and it was shocking to find out that I could play on this level."

Although the national championship probably is out of reach for Nebraska this year, the Big Eight title is something no one is taking for granted.

"Playing for the national championship was in the back of our mind after the UCLA game," Dumler said. "The thought was sort of far fetched after that first loss, so since then our prime objective has been to win the Big Eight and that's on the line Thursday."

"To us the Big Eight is as important as the national championship," Blahak added. "The Big Eight is one of the toughest conferences around, if not the toughest, and we've always had a rivalry with Oklahoma."

## No letdown

There was no mental letdown after the UCLA game, according to Dumler.

"In fact, I think we've worked harder since losing the first one to prove that we aren't washed up like some people think," he said.

"Nobody likes to lose, but in a way I think the loss to UCLA was good for us," Blahak said. "It took the pressure off. This team has too much character to let that one loss put us down for the rest of the season."

"Despite our record this year I think this is the best team of the three I've played on," he said. "The competition we've had this year has been tougher because the entire conference is improved."

List agreed.

"Personnel-wise I certainly think this year's team is the best of the three I've played on," he said.

## Inexperience

Inexperience at key positions is the only thing that has bothered the team this year, according to List. He also feels the Big Eight is stronger this season.

Most of the players expect a close, low scoring game with Oklahoma.

Blahak, who holds beating Oklahoma last season as a thrill equal to the two national championships, said: "I expect the game to be just as tight as it was last year, although not as high scoring. I think our defense is better this year than last."

"Their defense is better than last year — they're more aggressive," List said. "We'll have to play near perfect football to beat them."

As for the Orange Bowl, Dumler has special reason for looking forward to it.

## Notre Dame

"I've always wanted to play Notre Dame because I'm from Chicago and everybody back there loves them," he said. "All the Chicago papers write about is Notre Dame and Ohio State, and half the people think Notre Dame's number one no matter what their record is. I'll go home in the summer and they'll ask me how our season was and I'll tell them 13 and 0."

"I had a chance to meet John Dampier of Notre Dame last summer during a NCAA-sponsored tour of Vietnam," Dumler said. "We spoke then about the possibility of meeting in a bowl game, so I'm looking forward to seeing him."

But nobody's going to be thinking about anyone except Oklahoma this week. The Big Eight title — even if not the number one ranking — again hangs in the balance, and somehow it seems that Nebraska-Oklahoma games have a way of meaning just a little more than another win or loss.