

Tackle Pruitt earns rare sophomore Blackshirt job

By Bill Bennett

Sophomore defensive left tackle Ron Pruitt isn't related to former Oklahoma standout Greg Pruitt, but Ron is as important to Nebraska's defensive effort as Greg was to Oklahoma's feared wishbone attack.

"Seldom does a sophomore start for Nebraska on defense," defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin said. "Ron has done a real fine job for us and has held up well under pressure."

Just two years ago Pruitt was a senior at Centennial High School in Compton, California, where he played defensive tackle. He said about seven major colleges recruited him.

"I had it narrowed down between USC (University of Southern California) and here. But I really wanted USC, and then they stopped recruiting," he said. "So then I signed a letter of intent with UCLA."

He then smiled and said he's glad he finally chose Nebraska and that he "didn't like Pepper Rodgers anyway."

Pruitt, who played offensive tackle as a freshman, said he always had liked defense better. During this year's spring football sessions the coaches

were thinking about trying him at center.

"I talked to Coach Kiffin about playing defense, and I got a shot at defensive tackle," he said. "I guess I did pretty good for my first spring, but I could have done a lot of things better, too."

All Nebraska first string defensive players wear a Blackshirt. The Blackshirt stands for pride and toughness, and Pruitt got his shirt at the end of the 1973 spring football season.

"But the Blackshirt was nothing definite," he said. "This fall it was up for grabs, and it was up to me to keep it or somebody else would get it."

Pruitt kept it and has started every game this year despite being bothered by a nagging thigh injury.

So far this year, he has 44 total tackles, 17 of them unassisted. He has recovered two fumbles and broken up four passes. But he said he's still not satisfied.

"I guess for a sophomore I've been doing all right," he said. "But against Colorado I made a lot of mistakes."

He said he's always getting helpful



Photo by Mike Theiler

Sophomore defensive left tackle Ron Pruitt (91) moves around a Colorado lineman in an attempt to get to Buffalo quarterback David Williams (12).

advice from the other defensive players on the team.

"Guys like (John) Dutton, (John) Bell and (Steve) Manstedt are always giving me tips. With them around, it's like having three extra coaches."

Pruitt and his defensive teammates will face the Iowa State Cyclones Saturday.

When asked how big a win he'd be satisfied with, he grinned and said, "I'll be satisfied with just a win."

Sig Eps intramural football champs

By Bob Hill

For perhaps the first time in UNL intramural history, a Class B team became All-University flag football champion.

Sigma Phi Epsilon's B team Sunday defeated Hawks for the championship 14-0.

Halfback Hal Mack attributed much of his team's success to its teamwork. "There was never any one dominating individual," he said.

His team completed the season with a 14-0 record.

Sigma Phi Epsilon's A team won the Fraternity Class A championship, Abel X the Dormitory Class A championship, Phi Delta Phi the Independent championship and Sigma Phi Epsilon B the Dormitory-Fraternity Classes B and C

championship. These four teams and the runners-up in each division competed in the single elimination All-University playoffs.

Five fraternities and one dormitory floor have been placed on probation by the Dept. of Recreation and Intramurals. Any organization placed on probation becomes ineligible for the All-Sports championship.

"Most of the organizations were placed on probation for playing illegal players under an assumed name," said Phil Sienna, men's intramural coordinator. An ineligible player who is caught is suspended from intramural activities for one calendar year. The team he plays for forfeits the tournament and all its games.

He said it was decided early this year to watch closely for rule violations and to "crack down on offenders."

The final flag football Top 10:

1. Sigma Epsilon B (14-0)
2. Hawks (9-2)
3. Phi Delta Phi (9-1)
4. Sigma Phi Epsilon A (8-2)
5. Abel X (7-2)
6. Abel VIII A (6-3)
7. Abel VII B (6-2)
8. Beta Sigma Psi (6-3)
9. Pro Students (7-1)
10. Phi Delta Theta (6-2)

Honorable mentions are given to Rogers II (7-2), Harper VI (5-2), Alpha Tau Omega (5-3), Delta Upsilon (6-2) and Glenn VII (5-1).



Husker junior varsity coach and former varsity guard Al Nissen

Nissen returns after pro setbacks

By Dave McBride

About a month ago, former Husker cager Al Nissen was taking the court for his first professional basketball appearance.

The Kansas City-Omaha Kings were playing the Cleveland Cavaliers in a National Basketball Association exhibition contest, and Nissen, who had his Husker career in 1972 and was not drafted by the pros, drew the defensive assignment for Cleveland's standout guard Austin Carr.

"I was excited when I first got it," he recalls with a smile. "I was playing real aggressive right off, and I just flattened Carr. The ref blew the whistle and pointed at me, and Carr kind of looped up from the floor and said, 'Well, rookie, this is the way it is.'"

Nissen is back at UNL now. His pro tryout with the Kings lasted only through the first five exhibition games. But he is back on the court coaching the Husker junior varsity, and the pro experience is a pleasant memory.

"I had really started to feel part of the team," he said of the Kings. "It's always a good feeling when you're part of a team experience."

"You really get to know guys like Nate Archibald and the others, and it was a really exciting experience the whole time."

He said veteran players kidded the rookies, but there was no hostility. He said rookies had to do things like paying the cab fare on road trips and helping the trainers with the equipment and balls.

The only time he felt inferior, he said, was when he compared his car with the Lincolns and Cadillacs of the veterans.

Nissen said Kings Coach Bob Cousy never led him to believe his chances of making the team were good, but Cousy was willing to give him a chance.

Fifteen rookies reported to the first training camp, including twelve guards, and Nissen was the only walk-on rookie to survive the final cut before the exhibition season.

The Kings' tryout was Nissen's second pro basketball venture.

Nebraska cage coach Joe Cipriano encouraged him to try pro basketball, he said, after he spent the summer of 1972 playing ball in Europe.

He missed a chance to go to medical school that year because of the European season and returned to school second semester last year.

But Cipriano secured a tryout opportunity for him this summer with the Seattle SuperSonics, "and things just took off from there," he said.

The Kings' tryout made him miss five weeks of school this fall and he had to drop out again. He is finishing an incomplete and waiting to hear from the medical school acceptance board again.

Depending on the news from medical school, he said he may start work on his masters degree in January and then hope for a coaching job.

In the afternoons, he and graduate assistant John Breyer handle the Husker junior varsity squad.

"We're doing all the coaching for the JV's right now," he said, "and I've been doing some recruiting, plus I'll probably be doing some scouting when the season starts."

He and Breyer were given the responsibility for handling the junior varsity tryouts earlier this fall, he explained.

Nissen said the junior varsity will not have much height this year, but they may be able to use some of the scholarship underclassmen once the season starts.