

## sports

# Bronc-riding roommates buck head-on for U.S. title

By John Ortman

Greg Swim and Barry Johnson are best friends, roommates and teammates. With one-half point separating them in the regional college rodeo standings, they also are in head-on competition for a place in the National Finals College Rodeo in Bozeman, Mont., this June.

Although Swim and Johnson both rope steers and calves, they are primarily bareback riders with the University of Nebraska Rodeo Association. Swim has 321 points to Johnson's 320.5 ranking which put them both in the national top ten, Johnson said.

However, both agreed they are not really in competition with each other, but against the animals they draw to ride.

"The first objective in rodeo is to beat the horse," Swim said. "If you make a good ride the points will come. It's similar to mountain climbing. Everyone wants to help the team, but everyone wants to be the first one to the top."

Johnson agreed, with one reservation. "I'd do anything for Greg," Johnson said. "If he was flat broke and had a chance of winning, I'd help him. But I'd try to beat him."

Swim said team members help each other by critiquing their rides and offering tips about the bucking styles of various horses. By knowing beforehand if a horse is a straight buck or a spinner, Johnson said, cowboys can better prepare and plan their rides.

Johnson said he favors horses with slow, high-kicking spins to the right. This allows him to "gas" the animal, which he defined as "riding the hair off him."

In bareback riding, as in bull and saddle bronc riding, rides are scored by two judges who award points to both the rider and horse. The highest possible score is 100, based on how hard the horse bucks and

how well the cowboy controls his body and spurs.

Johnson defined a good bareback rider as one who can rake his spurs back to the rigging as the horse rears up. He then will snap his feet back to the horse's shoulder before the horse's front feet hit the ground again.

Each cowboy receives the horse for his

ride in a random drawing, Johnson said. While they hope to draw hard-bucking horses, cowboys also look for such things as size (at least 1,300 pounds), muscle tone and a lack of excess fat. Johnson explained that excess fat rounds off the horse's withers or high point on the horse's back, making it difficult to keep the bareback rigging on the horse's back from slipping. The rigging, a rawhide handle cinched

over the horse's withers, is the cowboy's only hold on the horse. No stirrups or reins are used and the rider is not allowed to touch the horse with his free hand.

The riders wear a heavy leather protective glove, which is wedged into the handle of the rigging. The gloves have a bind, which Johnson explained is an extra flap of leather designed to make the glove fit the rigging more tightly.

"It's kind of a cheat," he said. "In the old days horses weren't that strong. Nowadays there are 1,300-pound bareback horses. There is no way a man could ride any of the horses coming out of the chutes today on strength alone."

Swim has never been hurt in the seven years since he began riding as a sophomore with the Springview, Neb. high school team.

Johnson, a Merriman native, has not been as lucky.

In three years of serious rodeoing he has broken a hand, dislocated six neck vertebrae, broken a collar bone (twice in three weeks), broken six ribs, punctured a long and received a neat row of stitches where he was kicked in the head by a horse.

The broken ribs put Johnson out of action for four weeks. He rode with a cast on his broken hand, which Johnson said was a drawback because the cast tended to flop around during violent bucking and nearly knocked him unconscious.

Johnson is already a member of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, which might be described as the NFL of Rodeo. He is encouraging Swim, a member of the Nebraska State Rodeo Association, an amateur group, to join the pro circuit.

Both men intend to make full-time professional careers of rodeo after graduation from UNL.

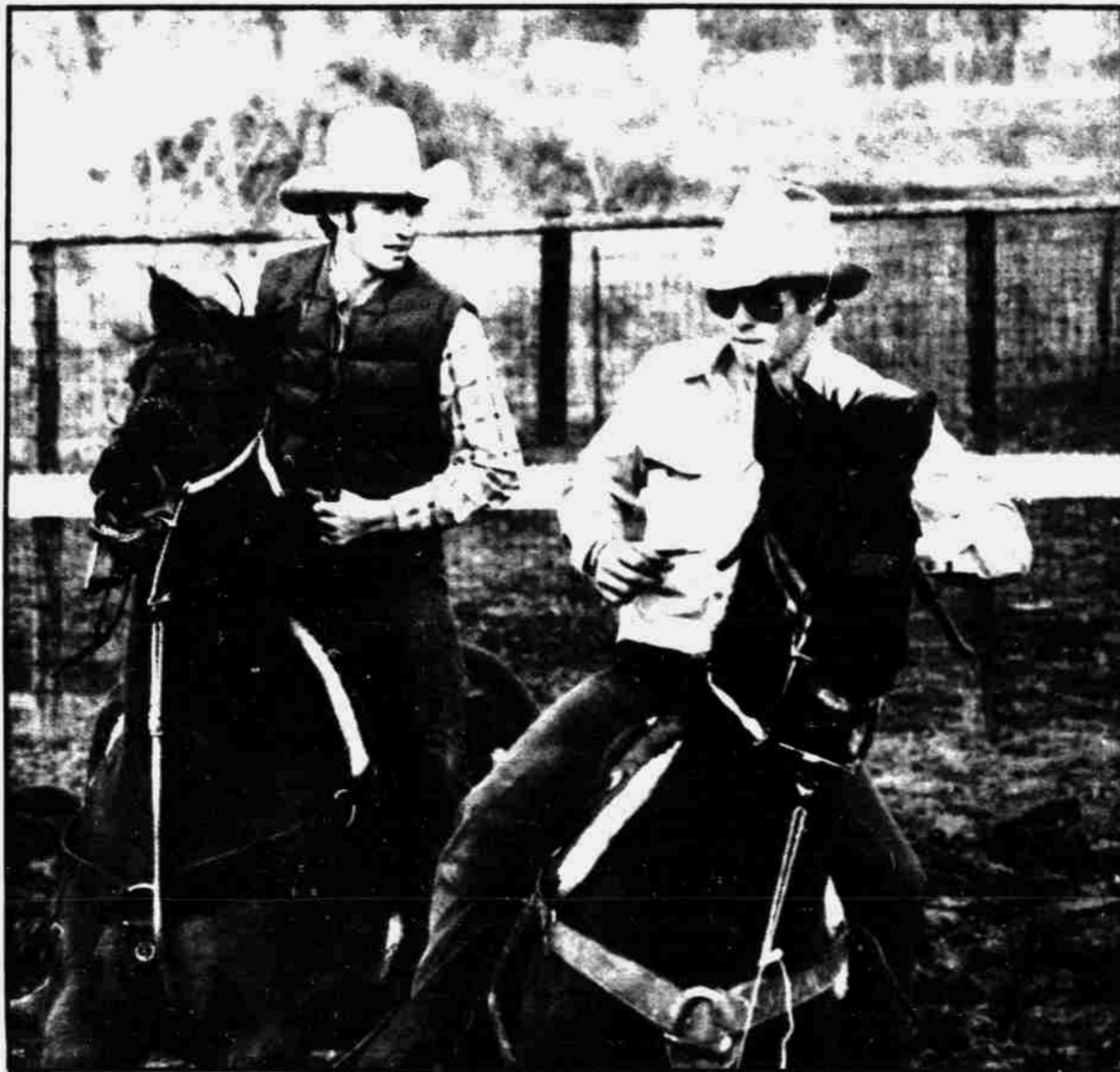


Photo by Bob Pearson

Sophomore Greg Swim (left) and senior Barry Johnson are friendly rivals in the contest between man and animal, animal and man.

## Osborne experiments with veer offense for Berns, Hipp

Analysis by Rick Huls

At the close of the 1977 UNL football season, many Husker fans had one thought on their minds for the 1978 squad—running backs Rick Berns and I.M. Hipp in the same backfield.

That thought may not become reality but it is drawing consideration from UNL coaches this spring.

The 1977 offensive backfield was one of the most explosive in Cornhusker history. However, Berns and Hipp were seldom in the game at the same time. Both run from the I-back position and one was substituted for the other.

The veer, an offense with a split backfield, seems to be the only way of using Berns and Hipp in the same backfield. Obviously, UNL head coach Tom Osborne

believes the same or he would not have spent half of Monday's first spring practice trying the formation.

Osborne insists the veer is just an experiment and might not be used at all.

"We'll look at the split backfield for two or three weeks or possibly all spring," Osborne said. "Then we'll look at the films and evaluate it. That's what we've done with other formations we've tried."

Returning senior quarterback Tom Sorley said the offense is worth experimenting with.

"We have nothing to lose and everything to gain," Sorley said. "We already had the leading offense in the Big Eight so we can't lose by trying it."

Sorley, 6-foot-2, 200 pounds, said UNL has the caliber of players who can adjust

quickly to a new formation.

Another offensive change involves returning defensive tackle Barney Cotton, who has played a different position every year at UNL. He was an offensive tackle as a freshman and a center his sophomore year. Cotton will be moved to offensive guard to replace graduated All-Big Eight player Greg Jorgensen.

At Monday's opening practice, Cotton became the first casualty of spring when he sprained his right ankle on the third play of the day.

If the move to offensive guard proves successful, Cotton would join three-year letterman Steve Lindquist to give the Huskers excellent size at that position. Lindquist is 6-foot-6, 250 pounds and Cotton is 6-foot-6 and 245 pounds.

## UNL national gym hopes hinge on two

By Mary Ryan

As Iowa State University gymnastics coach Ed Gagnier said, that was the way a meet should end—with the home fans cheering.

Until the end of the two-day Big Eight Conference Championship meet at the Sports Center last weekend, UNL gymnastics fans had little to cheer about. But in the last event, on the last day, two Nebraska gymnasts qualified for the national meet by placing first and third in the horizontal bars.

Sophomore Mark Williams took first with a score of 18.975 and junior Kirk Fridrich tied for third with 18.775 points.

Head coach Francis Allen said both are contenders for the national title in the high bar at the national meet in Eugene, Ore., April 6-8.

"They worked hard. It is a nice reward," Allen said. "I know it is something Fred (Fridrich) has wanted to do, to represent Nebraska, probably since high school.

It's good for Mark because he didn't make the all-around.

"This will help him to get to know what it's like (at nationals) because he'll be there next year."

Fridrich said he was disappointed the whole team would not be at nationals, but "individually, I am happy. My major goal was to qualify for nationals this season," he said.

Fridrich added that he and Williams were UNL's last chances to be represented at the national meet and that they wanted someone to compete for the team there.

"I'm happy Mark and I are going for Francis' sake," Fridrich said. "It says a lot for our high bar team. We're sending two and there are only three spots (from the Big Eight)."

He said they didn't need any "psyching up" because "all week we thought about the meet constantly."

He said when Iowa State sophomore

Stacy Maloney scored a 9.6 in the second part of the high bar even, he knew he would have to score a 9.5 to tie for third place. Fridrich scored the 9.5

Williams also scored a 9.5 in the optionals earlier placing fifth in the all-around competition.

Williams said he and Fridrich competed in the same order they had during the season and that may have helped them.

"Fred and I have been pretty consistent all year," Williams said. "It would have been pretty disappointing if one had gone and not the other."

Williams said that before the high bar event the gymnasts were concerned they would not qualify anyone for nationals.

"After Richard (Brindisi) didn't make it in the vault, it looked like we were the last ones," he said. "I said it looked like the only two teams to represent the Big Eight would be Oklahoma and Iowa State. Fred said, 'What do you mean? We're both going.'"

Kelvin Clark, at 6-foot-6 and 250 pounds, returns at one offensive tackle while Lawrence Cooley, 6-foot and 235, will head the race to replace graduating Stan Waldemore.

All-American center Tom Davis will likely be replaced by Kelly Saalfeld, 6-foot 4 and 237, who saw considerable action last season.

Tight ends Ken Spaeth and Mark Dufresne have graduated, but junior Junior Miller, 6-foot-4 and 222 pounds, is a top candidate for that position.

Split end Tim Smith returns and will again double as the Huskers punter. Smith, a 6-foot-3, 194-pound sophomore, led the Huskers with 371 yards on 23 receptions last year. He was also the Big Eight's second leading punter with an average of 41.1 yards a kick.

Billy Todd, who set and tied Nebraska placekicking records in 1977, will be back this year. Todd had 12 field goals, breaking the mark of 11, and tied the record for the longest field goal with a 55-yarder against Kansas.

While Sorley, Hipp and Berns return to lead a promising backfield, sophomore Andra Franklin and junior Tim Wurth hope to replace graduating fullbacks Monte Anthony and Dodie Donnell.

One of the many quarterbacks challenging Sorley this spring will be Jeff Quinn, a 6-foot-2, 200-pound sophomore. Quinn injured his knee last season and appears much stronger this spring after surgery.

At wingback, two-year lettermen Ken Brown, 6-foot and 176 pounds, will likely take over for graduating Curtis Craig.

Without a doubt, UNL's offensive backfield looks like one of the strong points for 1978. Sorley's experience, combined with Hipp, who rushed for 1,301 yards last year, Berns, who rushed for 662, Franklin, Wurth and Brown may add up to one of UNL's most productive backfields.