sports

'We've been here before' says Osborne of loss

By Larry Sparks

Nebraska's season opening loss to Iowa was a learning experience for the Cornhusker football team, Coach Tom Osborne said at the Extra Point Club luncheon Monday.

"We benefited from this. We learned a lot about ourselves," Osborne said. "We've been here before. The big question now is how we will respond to it.

"We have to get better in an awful big hurry. We're looking at a situation that could be really tough," he said, citing consecutive games against Florida State, Penn State, and Auburn as tough matches.

Osborne said the Hawkeyes are a much better team than last year, especially the defense which "may compare with any team we will see this year."

"We weren't overconfident," Osborne said. "If anything, I thought our new play-

ers went in there too tight."

Osborne said game films confirmed what most Huskers fans already knew about the Iowa game: Nebraska had a poor game. No player on the offensive line graded up to par, he said.

Offensively, we had as many problems as we've had since we went down to Alabama in 1978 (a 20-3 loss for UNL)," Osborne said.

"Part of our problem was Iowa but a major part of it was ourselves," he added.

Osborne said the Huskers looked like the better team going into the game, adding Iowa may have had an edge in having an experienced quarterback.

"But I think it's grossly unfair to blame the loss on the quarterback or any one player," Osborne said. "The prime culprit is me. I'm willing to say there's no doubt in my mind who is most reponsible for this."

Osborne said Nebraska's chances of

winning were diminished when Iowa took the second half kick-off and ate up almost eight minutes of time before the Huskers took over.

"We needed to get moving offensively," Osborne said. "That (IU drive) takes a lot out of you."

The quarterback position is still up in the air, Osborne said. Mark Mauer, Nate Mason and Turner Gill will all probably see action against Florida State this week, he said. Many fans are pointing to sophomore Gill as the answer to Nebraska's problems but Osborne said he is "partly a product of the press."

"Turner is going to be a great ball player. Sure, he played well in freshman ball, but hey, this is a different story. I don't want to put him in there until he's ready," Osborne said.

It would not have been wise to put in a third quarterback in Saturday's game despite the difficulty the Huskers had moving the ball, because Mauer and Mason already had the feel of the game, Osborne said.

"It's hard to put a third guy in there and expect him to pull it out," he said.

Tony Samuels, a member of the UNL coaching staff, scouted Florida State's 10-5 victory against Memphis State Saturday. He said the Huskers are in for another tough game this week.

"Florida State is just as good as they were last year, physically. Their punting situation is really good," Samuels said.

The injury situation doesn't appear too serious for the home opener. Osborne said left tackle Toby Williams will see some action Saturday, although it may be limited. Williams is recovering from a virus that put him in the University Health Center for several days.

Linebacker Steve McWhirter and cornerback Ric Lindquist are questionable, Osborne said. Both suffered knee injuries Saturday.

Coach changes depth chart

By Tad Stryker

In the wake of the Huskers' 10-7 loss to Iowa, Coach Tom Osborne announced several depth chart changes Monday, and even more unsettling news developed when split end Todd Brown sprained an ankle in practice.

Brown's injury occurred late in the practice, while he was running a crossing pattern. He hooked ankles with a defensive back and fell to the ground.

"He sprained it pretty bad," said trainer George Sullivan. "We iced it down, and if it doesn't swell any more he could play Saturday. We'll have to see how it comes along overnight."

Osborne said he would start Nate Mason at quarterback against Florida State Saturday, with Turner Gill as back-up.

"Turner will probably play some," he said. "I'd like to play Mark (Mauer) some too, because he's done pretty well over a long period of time for us (in practice) but I don't feel that we can get all three of them in, especially under these circumstances."

Two changes will be made in the offensive line, Osborne said. Kurt Glathar, a junior, will start at right guard ahead of Ic Tom Carlstrom and junior Jeff Kwapick M moves up to take Dan Hurley's spot at right tackle.

Jeff Merrell and Dave Ridder win start at middle guard and right defensive end, respectively. Osborne also said.

Toby Williams practiced Monday, complaining only of feeling "a little tired and sluggish," Osborne said. He said Williams will play Saturday, splitting time with Dave Stromath and Henry Waechter at the defensive tackle spots.

Cornerback Ric Lindquist, who missed the lowa game, had his leg X-rayed, but no fracture of any kind was revealed, Osborne

"We were worried that a hairline break might show up, but the results were negative," Osborne said. "Ric thinks he may be able to play Saturday."

Linebacker Steve McWhirter was not as fortunate. Osborne said McWhirter's knee, twisted in the Iowa game, was more swollen than before, and that it is unlikely he'll play against Florida State.

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Photo by Dave Bentz

Nebraska I-back Mike Rozier (30) tries to break away from Iowa tacklers in Saturday's 10-7 loss to the Hawkeyes.

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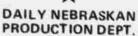
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-Greg-