

Sports

Simmons adapts to split end position

By Bob Asmussen

During spring football practice last year, wingback Ricky Simmons was asked to move to the split end position. The idea didn't exactly thrill him at the time.

Simmons, a Greenville, Texas, native who will be a junior next fall, was recruited by Nebraska as a wingback. He had played running back at Greenville High School. "I like running with the ball," Simmons said. "When the idea of me changing positions was first brought up, I had my doubts."

Most of the schools that recruited Simmons saw him as a wingback prospect. Simmons said Iowa State recruited him to be an I-back, and Texas recruited him to be a receiver and to run track. Texas Tech, North Texas State and Tulsa recruited Simmons as a wingback.

"Wingbacks do a lot of different things," Simmons

said, adding that being a receiver is like being a wingback without running with the ball.

Simmons currently shares the No. 1 position at split end with Todd Brown. He said he has been able to overcome the problems of switching to a new position.

"The problem I had at first was that I couldn't catch the ball," Simmons said. "I've worked hard to improve my receiving. Working with Nate (Mason) has helped me a lot."

Simmons was a redshirt last season. The coaches approached him about redshirting a few days before the Iowa game. Simmons did not attend practice while he was deciding what to do.

"When the coaches first approached me about it, I wasn't real high on the idea," he said.

Simmons said he thought about transferring to another school. He said he talked to his father and to UNL Coach Tom Osborne, who he said was supportive.

"He (Osborne) encouraged me to stay," Simmons said. "It was just a problem, so I could run from it or stay and face it. I decided to face it now."

Like most athletes who come to Nebraska from Texas, Simmons had one thing in particular to adjust to — the weather. He said it was not easy at first.

"At first I couldn't believe how cold it was," Simmons said. "Being from Texas I wasn't prepared to handle it. Now the weather doesn't bother me."

The schools that recruited Simmons told him if he went to Nebraska he'd get lost in the shuffle of players. Simmons said that at Nebraska he would "just have to wait his turn to play like everyone else."

Simmons said his main attributes as a receiver are speed and the ability to run with the ball after he catches it. Simmons has participated on the Nebraska track team as a sprinter.

"I feel I can get deep if we need to go deep," Simmons said.

Simmons said he is looking forward to the start of next season. He said a national championship for Nebraska is a possibility.

"First we'll win the conference, then we'll worry about the national championship," he said.

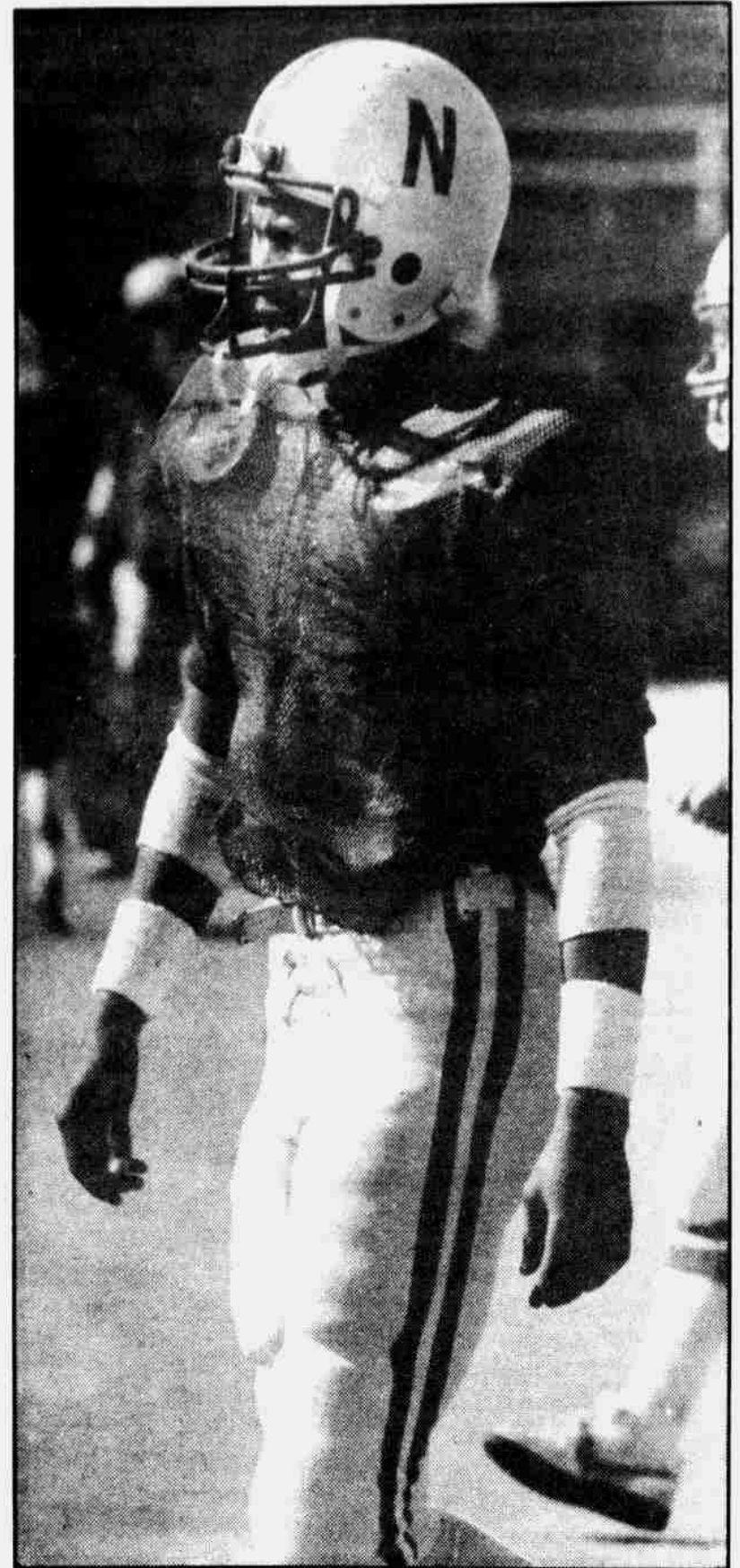


Photo by Jodie Fields

Ricky Simmons

Nebraska tennis team splits pair of matches

The Husker men's tennis team split a pair of weekend matches. Nebraska defeated Kansas 5-4, but lost to Missouri 6-3.

Results of the Kansas meet:

Craig Johnson (UNL) defeated Ed Bolen (KU) 6-2, 6-3; Rick Aubin (KU) defeated Jim Carson (UNL) 4-6, 6-2, 6-4; Scott Alexander (KU) defeated Ridge Smidt (UNL) 6-3, 6-0; Dave Schulze (UNL) defeated Craig Tidwell (KU) 6-4, 6-2; Brian Edwards (UNL) defeated Jim Syrett (KU) 7-6, 6-2; Doug Elsass (UNL) defeated Franco Cacippolini (KU) 7-6, 6-2; Tidwell-Bolen (KU) defeated Carson-Johnson (UNL) 6-4, 4-6, 6-4; Alexander-Aubin (KU) defeated Smidt-Edwards (UNL) 6-2, 2-6, 6-2; Elsass-Schulze (UNL) defeated Cacippolini-Syrett (KU) 7-6, 4-6, 7-5.

Results of the Missouri meet:

Jay Sims (MU) defeated Craig Johnson (UNL) 7-6, 7-6; Mark Cissell (MU) defeated Jim Carson (UNL) 4-6, 7-6, 4-6; Ridge Smidt (UNL) defeated Randy Freeman (MU) 6-3, 6-1; Scott Whaley (MU) defeated Dave Schulze (UNL) 6-2, 6-4; Brian Edwards (UNL) defeated Ken MacDougall (MU) 7-6, 6-2; Brian Filbert (MU) defeated Doug Elsass (UNL) 7-6, 6-4; Carson-Johnson (UNL) defeated MacDougall-Sims (MU) 7-5, 6-4; Whaley-Freeman (MU) defeated Edwards-Smidt (UNL) 6-2, 6-2; Cissell-Filbert (MU) defeated Elsass-Schulze (UNL) 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.

Sportsman Ed Weir relives glory days at NU

By Bob Asmussen

Nestled between the UNL Coliseum, Buck Beltzer Field and Memorial Stadium on the UNL campus is Ed Weir Track Stadium.

Most of the students at Nebraska weren't even born when Ed Weir last coached the Husker track team in 1955. Probably none of them were around when Weir was a member of the Nebraska football and track teams in the 1920s. Many students at Nebraska may not realize that the 79-year-old Superior native is one of

the true sports legends in Nebraska's history.

Weir's varsity career at Nebraska began in 1923; in both 1924 and 1925, he was selected as an all-American at tackle. Notre Dame Coach Knute Rockne said in 1925 that Weir was "the greatest tackle I've ever seen."

Weir is a member of the National Football Hall of Fame and the Nebraska Sports Hall of Fame. In 1974, Nebraska's track and field complex was dedicated to him, something Weir said he didn't expect.

"I feel it's quite an honor," Weir said.

"I'd had a good record here in coaching and it's one of those things that come about that I couldn't explain."

Weir coached the Nebraska track team from 1938 to 1955.

Weir's greatest fame came on the gridiron. He was team captain twice in his three years on the varsity. The Huskers beat Rockne's highly regarded Notre Dame team two out of the three years Weir played. Weir has fond memories of those games with the Fighting Irish.

"Red" Grange

"Ol' Rockne was always pretty good to Nebraska," he said. "They had come out here a couple of times with national teams or near national teams and gotten beat."

Another football opponent of Nebraska during the years Weir played was Illinois. Illinois was led by all-American running back Harold "Red" Grange. Weir said the key to stopping Illinois was stopping Grange.

"We had to keep him from getting started," Weir said. "We did that in two of the three games."

When Weir was a senior, the Huskers played Illinois at Illinois and defeated them 14-0. That same year, Nebraska beat Notre Dame 17-0. The Huskers record during that 1925 season was 4-2-2. Both losses came to teams Weir thought Nebraska could beat, Missouri and Drake.

"We shouldn't have ever lost that Missouri game," Weir said. "That's what Coach Rockne said. He said 'Yeah, you beat us today all right but why didn't you take care of Missouri?'"

After his final season at Nebraska, Weir went on to play in the National Football League for the Frankfurt, (Pa.) Yellowjackets. The Yellowjackets won a league championship in one of the three years Weir played.

Weir said there is a world of difference between football today and football when he played. He cited the fact that during his playing days there was no hashmarks, limited substitution and no communication be-

tween the coach and the players on the field.

No comparison

"It's definitely a different game today in so many ways because of the substitution," Weir said. "It's foolish for anyone to try and compare the game of yesterday to the game today because we used usually no more than seventeen or eighteen men a game."

Most of the players in Weir's time played the full 60 minutes of the game. Weir said since it was the same for both teams, the team that wore down the opponent at the beginning of the game had the edge.

"You didn't have the bench strength because our traveling squad was usually 22 or 23," Weir said.

"Here's another big item: When you came out of the game as a player you couldn't go back in that game until the next quarter," he continued. "Suppose you came out two minutes after the second quarter started. You couldn't go back in until the start of the next half."

When Weir played, coaches weren't allowed to send in plays.

"A coach could not do anything from the sidelines in the way of sending information until one play had been run," Weir said.

"One game we were backed up against our goal line and they (the coaches) didn't want to take a chance on fumbling down there. I saw our bench get penalized because Coach Schulte wanted them to kick on an early down, not wait until fourth down to kick. He was going this way (Weir moved his leg in a kicking motion) sitting on the bench and some official penalized him."

Weir said he was interested in coaching football but the track coaching opportunity opened, so he took it. Weir was an assistant to Schulte, then took over the program in 1938. Weir had participated as a hurdler on the Husker track team so the coaching of track seemed natural to him.

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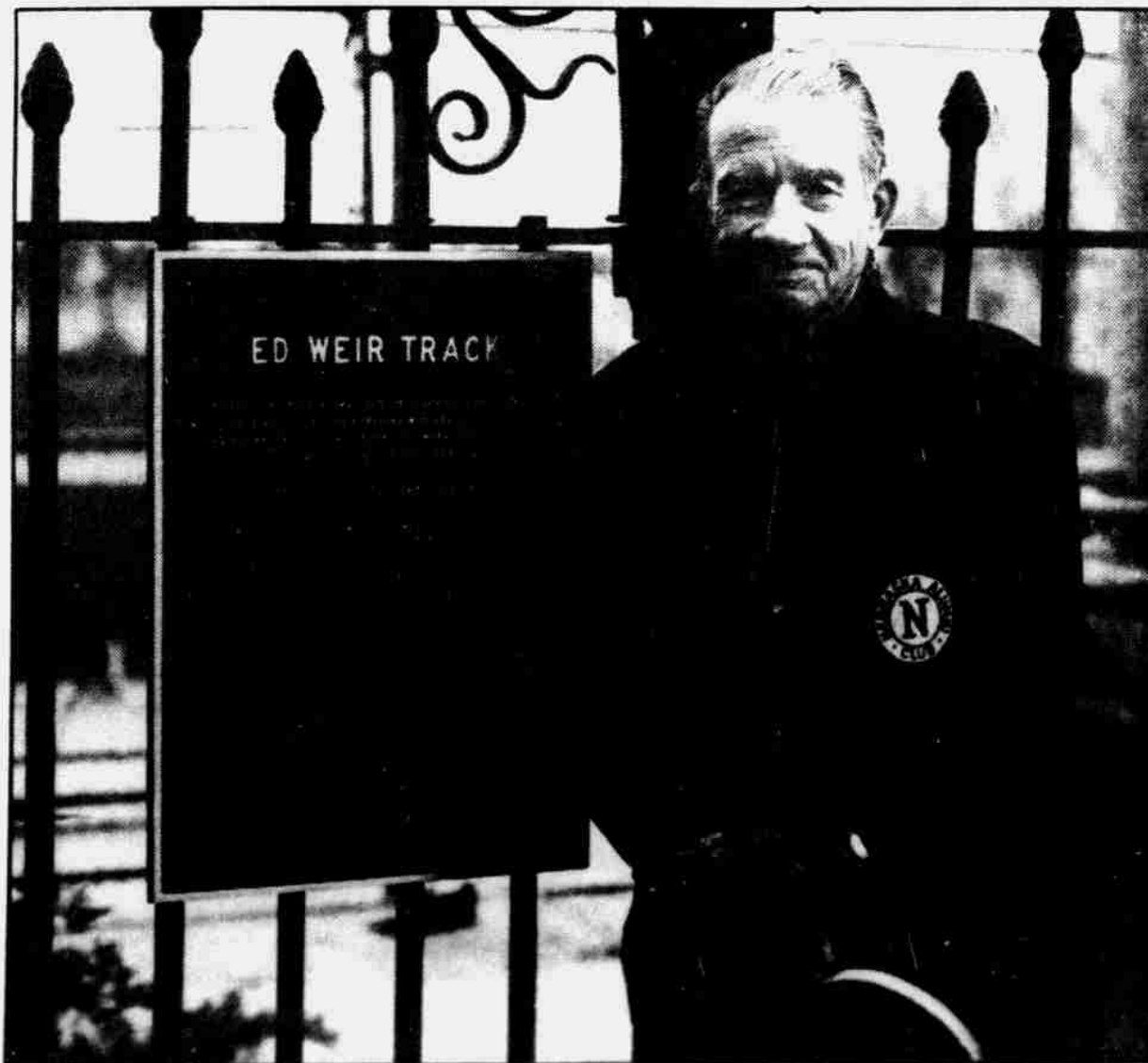


Photo by Dave Bentz

Former Husker athlete and track coach Ed Weir stands outside the stadium on the UNL campus which was named after him.