

Sports

Despite lost toe, Krenk is ready to play football

By Cindy Gardner

A swollen foot kept Mitch Krenk out of this fall's first scrimmage Saturday, but the senior tight end says he plans on being 100 percent ready to play this season.

Krenk reported to fall camp after what he calls his hardest summer workout. Three months ago, he faced

the challenge of regaining the weight and stamina lost after two spring surgeries.

The first operation kept Krenk out of spring practice for 10 days. What were then thought to be calcium deposits were removed from his toe. Krenk returned to practice, but was told the day before the spring game that the tissue was cancerous.

"I didn't feel much like playing. My mind wasn't

really into it," said Krenk, who sat out the annual Red-White duel.

The remainder of the middle toe of Krenk's right foot was removed during surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. After the second operation, Krenk began the recovery and rebuilding process.

"I had to work out harder than I ever have," he said. "I knew if I didn't work out real hard, I'd never get back up to even where I was."

Nebraska strength coach Boyd Epley said Krenk has now surpassed where he was and is "back in the best shape of his life."

One week before the cancer was discovered, Krenk was voted Nebraska's weightlifter of the year by his teammates. He established position records in both the bench press (375 pounds) and the verticle jump (33½ inches). Krenk has equaled or bettered those marks this fall.

Epley reported that Krenk weighed 230 pounds at the start of fall camp, 5 pounds heavier than he was in the spring. He also established a new verticle jump record for tight ends at 34 inches.

Epley said that Krenk's determination and excellent physical condition helped him bounce back from his surgeries.

"Mitch is a very determined young man," Epley said. "He has worked so hard from the first day he came here."

Receivers coach Gene Huey said he is "thankful that Mitch has come away in such fine mental and physical condition." Huey attributed the swelling in Krenk's foot to problems readjusting to the harder Astroturf surface. He said he expects Krenk to play in this Saturday's scrimmage and to be ready for the start of the season.

Although cancer has changed Krenk's outlook, he said it has not decreased his determination to play his best football.

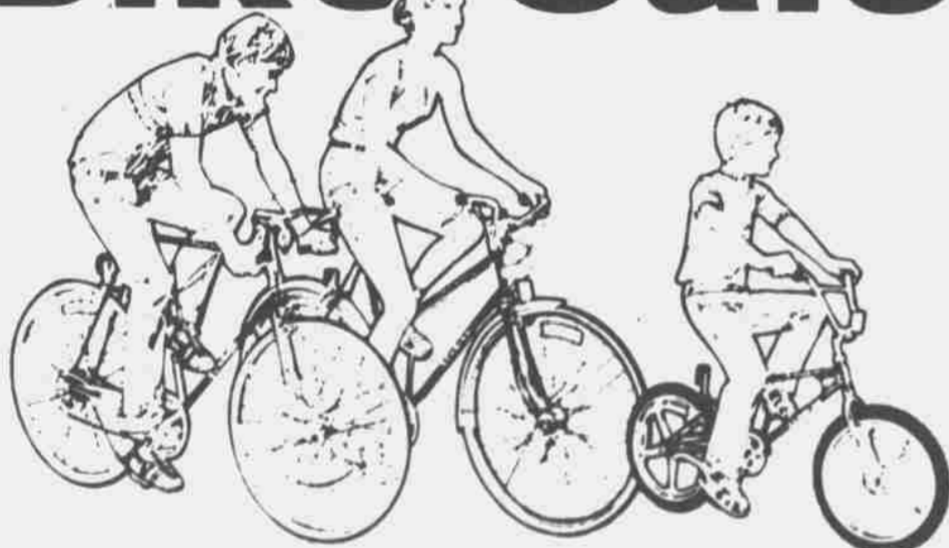
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Staff Photo by Dave Bentz

Nebraska tight end Mitch Krenk (89) hauls down a 6-yard touchdown pass in the first half of last year's 37-14 win against Oklahoma in Norman. The score gave the Cornhuskers a 24-7 lead and was the second touchdown in Krenk's career.

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