

Sports

Rimington's future: Who and when?

By Randy Wymore

Dave Rimington's wife probably didn't get much sleep last night.

That's the price you pay when you attempt to sleep in the same waterbed with a 290-pound offensive lineman who's tossing and turning, waiting for a phone call.

Not just any phone call, but a call which could mean a job, large amounts of money, a new car, a new home and everything else that goes along with signing a professional football contract.

But then, all of that stuff is pretty certain.

It's the uncertain things — the wheres, whens and whos — that may have hampered slumber in the Rimington household last night.

Rimington says that he is certain that he'll get drafted in today's NFL draft, he just doesn't know in what round and by who.

The pressure builds.

"It's the goal of a lot of people (to be drafted in the first round)," Rimington said. "With all the awards and everything, it would be embarrassing to go in a low round."

The two-time All-American, two-time Outland Trophy winner and Lombardi Award winner knows that besides the cost of a little embarrassment, the difference between the first round and second round alone is worth thousands of dollars.

But Rimington's concern goes beyond the money. "After I get drafted," he said, "I have to make sure that I'm ready to play and make a contribution to the team."

Rumors and speculation have Rimington being drafted by everyone from the Kansas City Chiefs to the Los Angeles Raiders.

"That wouldn't be bad," he said. "Baltimore wouldn't be bad either."

Baltimore finished last season with the worst record in the NFL and therefore gets the privilege of being the first to choose this morning. However, a trade which was expected to take place Monday between the Colts and San Diego could give the Chargers that valuable honor, in addition to two other first-round picks. In that case, Stanford's brilliant quarterback John Elway could be chosen first and wind up close to home in a Charger uniform.

Rimington will contend right up to the time of the phone call from his new boss — whoever that may be — that he really doesn't care where he goes, just as long as he goes.

But what if a fairy Godmother appeared during Rimington's almost certain fit of insomnia and grants him the opportunity to pick his new home?

Rimington says that he would spend next season bent over in front of the Chargers' Dan Fouts or perhaps Elway.

San Diego's "really exciting offense" and the climate would make a suitable home, according to Rimington.

But, it just doesn't work that way.

Last winter the speculation was that the three-year Nebraska starter could possibly be the first player chosen in the draft. But fickle and meticulous scouts and coaches — along with some overly zealous sportswriters — have said that Rimington's stock has dropped lately.

Why? For a number of reasons.

First, Rimington's knees have become a question. "I knew I'd have to prove myself on the field," he said. "If my stock dropped, they looked at injuries. And I can't help that."

Injuries and durability are important to coaches. And, as impossible as it may seem, someone who stands 6-2 and weighs 290 pounds can still be subject to injury. According to Rimington, the concern is a legitimate one.

"If they draft you high, they want to know that you'll be around," he said.

The next possible reason for a supposed decline in interest in the Rimington Sweepstakes is his size.

Some coaches may feel that he is too short for their needs.

"Guards and centers are stuck in a mold," Rimington said, noting that a few coaches and owners desire taller centers.

Will he be the one to break that mold?

"I think guys like Mike Webster (Pittsburgh Steelers center) broke the mold already" because of his shorter stockier base.

Finally, some teams prefer to draft by position while others choose to draft the best available athlete. If the latter is the case, Rimington thinks he could have a longer wait.

"If you're a center or a running back," he said, "it's like comparing apples and oranges."

He doubts that a lineman could ever be a better athlete than a running back. Plus, if there is a choice between a line-man and a flashy, quick, exciting running back — most coaches would probably be inclined to go with the back.

It's like having money for both a truck and a sports car, but only being able to get one at a time.

Through all the rumors, guesses and statistics, one thing remains very certain to Rimington.

"The future rides on the next 24 hours."

Huskers face Wayne State today, look ahead to conference playoffs

By Barry Trevarrow

After splitting a weekend series with Oklahoma, the Nebraska baseball team is scheduled to play Wayne State today in their last home games of the season. The team will then travel to Omaha to play the red-hot Creighton Bluejays in what amounts to be a battle for area baseball bragging rights.

"The fact that they're the only other Division I (NCAA) school in this area provides some special incentive for us," Nebraska Coach John Sanders said.

After Creighton, the Huskers only have Wichita State and Oklahoma State left before the Big Eight playoffs in Oklahoma City May 12 through 15.

"Even though the season is winding down, we're gearing up for the tournament," Sanders said. "It's a second season for us."

Nebraska has split with every conference opponent they have played this season except Kansas State, who they only played twice and won both games.

"We can't take anybody lightly," Sanders said. "Any team can win the tournament and we just have to shift

gears and maintain a positive outlook."

Nebraska's record is now 38-6 overall and 8-6 in the Big Eight. Sanders said the losses to league-leading Oklahoma Sunday were hard to swallow.

"It's a hard situation to lose when I thought we had a good chance to win at least one more than we did," Sanders said. "That's behind us now, though. We have to evaluate our strengths and weaknesses at this point and make some moves accordingly."

Oklahoma's record is now 28-15 and 12-4 in the conference.

"They saw some cracks and they capitalized — they're a good team," Sanders said.

The Big Eight team with the best regular season record will get a first-round bye in the conference tourney. Sanders said a good finish is essential.

"Wayne State is a NAIA school and they're coming in here with everything to gain and nothing to lose," Sanders said. "If we don't play hard, we'll lose. Creighton is playing good ball right now and they score a lot of runs. We have to go out and play like we're capable every game."

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